

SOCRATES IN THE CLASSROOM  
Rationales and Effects of Philosophizing with Children  
Ann S. Pihlgren



# **Socrates in the Classroom**

Rationales and Effects of Philosophizing with Children

**Ann S. Pihlgren**



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To Kjell  
with love  
and gratitude.



# Contents

Contents .....	vii
Preface .....	1
1 Introduction .....	3
1.1 Philosophizing and teaching ethics.....	4
1.2 Some guidance for the reader .....	5
1.3 Considerations .....	8
2 Research Goals and Design .....	9
2.1 Classroom interaction.....	9
2.2 Studying Socratic interaction .....	10
2.3 Research questions.....	10
2.4 Research design and data collection.....	11
2.4.1 The literature review .....	11
2.4.2 The seminar study .....	12
2.5 Ethical considerations.....	18
2.6 Validity and reliability .....	19
SECTION I Literature on Socratic Interlocution Review and Analysis.....	23
3 Catching the Spirit of Socratic Dialogue .....	25
4 Dialogues as Maieutike.....	27
4.1 The allegory of Socrates.....	27
4.1.1 Socrates and the voice of Plato .....	28
4.2 Dialogues as elenchus, maieutike and aporia .....	30
4.2.1 Socratic ignorance and knowledge .....	30
4.2.2 Events in Socrates' interlocutions .....	31
4.2.3 Teaching by elenchus .....	31
4.2.4 Dialogic "rules" of conduct .....	32
4.2.5 The role of Socrates' questioner .....	33
4.2.6 Socrates: the gadfly, the midwife and the stingray .....	34
4.3 Socratic dialogue in Platonic pedagogy .....	35
4.4 Perplexity and virtues in Aristotelian pedagogy .....	35
4.4.1 Aristotle's habits, virtues and practical wisdom .....	36
5 Progressive Education and Dialogue as Education in Democracy .....	38

5.1	Progressive education .....	38
5.2	Freinet and dialogue in community meetings .....	39
5.3	John Dewey and dialogues as recitations.....	40
5.3.1	Deliberative democracy .....	41
6	Dialogue as Folkbildning-Swedish Popular Education .....	42
6.1	Bildning .....	42
6.2	Swedish popular education .....	44
6.2.1	The ideas of Hans Larsson, Ellen Key, and Oscar Olsson.....	45
6.3	The methods of dialogue as study circle.....	46
6.3.1	The circle leader .....	47
6.3.2	The goals and functions of the circle.....	47
6.4	The methods of dialogues as discussions .....	48
6.4.1	“Rules” and steps of the discussion .....	49
7	Dialogue as Das Sokratische Gespräch .....	50
7.1	Leonard Nelson and das Sokratische Gespräch.....	50
7.2	The methods of das Sokratische Gespräch.....	51
7.2.1	The role of the teacher.....	51
7.2.2	Demands on the student.....	51
7.2.3	The steps of das Sokratische Gespräch .....	52
8	Dialogues as Great Conversation.....	53
8.1	Mortimer J. Adler and Robert M. Hutchins.....	53
8.2	Dialogues as shared inquiry .....	56
8.2.1	The methodology of shared inquiry.....	57
8.2.2	“Rules” in shared inquiry .....	58
8.2.3	The steps of shared inquiry.....	58
8.3	Dialogues as Paideia seminars .....	59
8.3.1	The goals and methodology of the Paideia seminar .....	60
8.3.2	The steps of the Paideia seminar.....	61
8.3.3	“Rules” of the Paideia seminar.....	62
8.3.4	The role of the facilitator in the Paideia seminar .....	62
8.3.5	Assessing the outcomes of the Paideia seminar.....	63
9	Dialogue as Sokratiska samtal .....	64
9.1	Lars Lindström and Sokratiska samtal.....	64
9.1.1	The role of the facilitator in Sokratiska samtal.....	64
9.2	Identificatory reading .....	65
9.3	The context of Sokratiska samtal.....	66
9.3.1	“Rules” and dialogical virtues.....	67
10	Dialogue with Children.....	69
10.1	Should children be exposed to Socratic dialogue? .....	69
10.1.1	Are children too immature to philosophize? .....	69



10.1.2	Is the Socratic method dangerous to society? .....	71
10.2	Gareth B Matthews philosophizing with children .....	71
10.3	P4C and PWC.....	72
10.3.1	The methods of P4C and PWC.....	73
10.3.2	The steps of P4C and PWC.....	73
10.4	Philosophizing with children in the earlier presented traditions.....	74
<b>11</b>	<b>Results of the Literature Review .....</b>	<b>75</b>
11.1	The major goals of the presented traditions .....	75
11.1.1	Sorting out the “Socratic” traditions.....	76
11.2	Abilities trained in the Socratic seminar.....	78
11.2.1	Intellectual character.....	79
11.2.2	Moral character.....	79
11.3	The context of the seminar.....	80
11.3.1	The methodology of the seminar.....	80
11.3.2	The role of the facilitator .....	82
11.4	Critical events and possible breakdowns .....	83
	<b>SECTION II The Seminar Study .....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>Catching the Learning in Seminar .....</b>	<b>87</b>
12.1	Presentation of the seminar study.....	87
12.2	Guidance for the reader of Section II.....	88
12.3	The data-presentation .....	89
12.3.1	Filmed seminars .....	89
12.3.2	Conventions used in the presented “manuscript” .....	90
<b>13</b>	<b>Previous Research and Theoretical Tools for Analysis .....</b>	<b>92</b>
13.1	Research on Socratic seminars and closely related activities .....	92
13.1.1	Effects of seminars .....	92
13.1.2	Exposed interaction .....	93
13.1.3	Development over time.....	94
13.1.4	Motives for this study .....	94
13.2	Tools for analyzing the seminars.....	94
13.2.1	The pedagogical dialogue.....	94
13.2.2	Types of dialogues.....	95
13.2.3	Karl Popper’s critical problem solving strategy.....	96
<b>14</b>	<b>Seminar Analyzes .....</b>	<b>98</b>
14.1	Five-year-olds (group A) .....	98
14.1.1	Five-year-olds discussing “Pippi Longstocking” .....	98
14.1.2	Analyzing the “Pippi Longstocking” seminar .....	105
14.1.3	Five-year-olds discussing “There goes Alfie the thief”.....	108
14.1.4	Analyzing the “There goes Alfie the thief” seminar.....	111
14.1.5	Five-year-olds discussing “All together” .....	112

14.1.6	Analyzing the “All together” seminar .....	118
14.1.7	Comparing the seminars of group A .....	120
14.2	K to first grade (group B) .....	120
14.2.1	Grade K discussing “The dandelion and the apple twig” .....	120
14.2.2	Analyzing the “The dandelion and the apple twig” seminar .....	122
14.2.3	First grade discussing “Ronny and Julia” .....	123
14.2.4	Analyzing the “Ronny and Julia” seminar .....	127
14.2.5	Comparing the seminars of group B .....	128
14.3	Second to fourth grade (group C) .....	129
14.3.1	Second grade discussing “Jack and the beanstalk” .....	129
14.3.2	Analyzing the “Jack and the beanstalk” seminar .....	133
14.3.3	Forth grade discussing “Rode and Rode” .....	133
14.3.4	Analyzing the “Rode and Rode” seminar .....	137
14.3.5	Comparing the seminars of group C .....	138
14.4	Fourth to fifth grade (group D) .....	140
14.4.1	Fourth grade discussing “The hunchback of Notre Dame” .....	140
14.4.2	Analyzing the “The hunchback of Notre Dame” seminar .....	143
14.4.3	Fifth grade discussing “Who will comfort Toffle?” .....	144
14.4.4	Analyzing the “Who will comfort Toffle?” seminar .....	147
14.4.5	Comparing the seminars of group D .....	149
14.5	Fifth to sixth grade (group E) .....	149
14.5.1	Fifth grade discussing “Diabolo baby” .....	149
14.5.2	Analyzing the “Diabolo baby” seminar .....	153
14.5.3	Sixth grade discussing “Portrait” .....	154
14.5.4	Analyzing the “Portrait” seminar .....	158
14.5.5	Comparing the seminars of group E .....	159
14.6	Fifth grade to seventh grade (group F) .....	160
14.6.1	Fifth grade discussing “Let the ice bears dance” .....	160
14.6.2	Analyzing “Let the ice bears dance” seminar .....	166
14.6.3	Seventh grade group 1 discussing “Dress codes” .....	167
14.6.4	Analyzing the “Dress codes” seminar, group 1 .....	172
14.6.5	Seventh grade group 2 discussing “Dress codes” .....	174
14.6.6	Analyzing the “Dress codes” seminar, group 2 .....	182
14.6.7	Comparing the seminars of group F .....	184
14.7	Eight to ninth grade (group G) .....	185
14.7.1	Eight grade discussing “Jack and the beanstalk” .....	185
14.7.2	Analyzing the “Jack and the beanstalk” seminar .....	189
14.7.3	Ninth grade discussing “Sandor/Ida” .....	190
14.7.4	Analyzing the “Sandor/Ida” seminar .....	192
14.7.5	Comparing the seminars of group G .....	193
15	Seminar Study Interpretations and Conclusions .....	194
15.1	Learning the game .....	195
15.1.1	Learning the game over time .....	195

15.1.2	Learning the game at different ages .....	196
15.1.3	Summary and conclusions from learning the game .....	198
15.2	Teaching the game .....	199
15.2.1	Creating a safe seminar circle .....	199
15.2.2	Creating a community of inquiry.....	200
15.2.3	Contextual factors.....	200
15.2.4	Tricks of the trade .....	201
15.2.5	Summary and conclusions from teaching the game.....	202
15.3	Rule breaking.....	203
15.3.1	Not understanding the rules.....	203
15.3.2	Testing the rules and using them for own purposes.....	204
15.3.3	Breaking rules to guard seminar or for a higher purpose .....	206
15.3.4	Actions to restore order.....	206
15.3.5	Summary and conclusions of rule breaking .....	207
15.4	Playing the game .....	208
15.4.1	Verbal participation .....	209
15.4.2	"Silent" participation .....	210
15.4.3	Moves within the recognized conversation.....	212
15.4.4	Unrecognized conversations.....	213
15.4.5	Playing some other game .....	214
15.4.6	Saving the game.....	214
15.4.7	Summary and conclusions of playing the game .....	215
15.5	Intellectual habits .....	216
15.5.1	Methodology to foster intellectual habits .....	218
15.5.2	Summary and conclusions of intellectual habits.....	222
15.6	Distribution of power .....	224
15.6.1	Cameras and microphones in focus.....	226
15.6.2	Power distribution among students .....	226
15.6.3	Summary and conclusions of distribution of power .....	227
15.7	Summary of seminar study results .....	227
SECTION III Conclusions and Discussion .....		229
16	Overall Conclusions and Discussion .....	231
16.1	Answers to the research questions .....	231
16.1.1	How are goals and effects of the Socratic dialogues described in literature?.....	231
16.1.2	How are Socratic seminars described as a method in literature?.....	232
16.1.3	How do the seminars differ from other types of classroom dialogue? ..	232
16.1.4	How are the effects of the Socratic dialogue achieved?.....	233
16.1.5	What critical events or actions threaten the seminar? .....	233
16.1.6	How do participants develop and protect the seminar culture? .....	234
16.2	Discussion.....	234
16.2.1	How DO we think? .....	235

16.2.2	The open society and its friends .....	235
16.2.3	Should Socrates apologize? .....	236
16.2.4	Implications for teachers' education.....	237
16.2.5	Further research .....	237
	Svensk sammanfattning.....	238
	Resumen en Español.....	245
	References .....	252
	Appendix .....	266

# Preface

Whether we know it or not, we are all philosophers. We all think – well or sloppy, enthusiastically or inattentively. The slightest sense perception – a falling leaf, a twinkling star, a smiling child – awakens our minds as well as arouses our feelings and forces us to ask: Why? What? Whence? Whither?

Mortimer J Adler<sup>1</sup>

In the year 2000, I started to work as principal of a charter school in Sweden. The school is inspired by the French pedagogue Celestin Freinet (1896-1966) who developed a practical pedagogic approach to progressive education. Being an experienced Freinet-teacher myself, I was convinced of the pedagogical strength of Freinet's educational ideas, but I knew that too much emphasis on the students' own activities might sometimes lead to a belief that the experimentations of the child were sufficient for learning. One of my own chief interests as a doctoral student was intersubjective learning. After assessing the pedagogic work at the school I felt that we could do more to challenge the intellectual and cooperative skills of the students, by teaching them to cope with complex ideas.

I had worked for more than a decade with Professor Lars Lindström educating teachers and student teachers in Socratic seminars, "Sokratiska samtal", a method that promoted thinking and cooperative skills, through the discussion of complex ideas and values. We had positive results with projects in Norrtälje and Gotland and at the Stockholm Institute of Education (Läraryhögskolan), but we did not have much research to support our own experiences. I presented Sokratiska samtal as a project to the school staff. At the same time, I presented the idea to Lars as a possible research object for my dissertation.

I had a good notion from my previous practical work with children as well as with adults in Socratic seminars that the participants not only found the seminars enjoyable but also important. As an educator I had often heard teachers say – "Oh, I already teach that way." But I had also seen them change their mind when they had participated in their first seminar. Seminars are not the same thing as an ordinary classroom discussions. But what differs and how? I had observed that some teachers find the role of facilitating

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<sup>1</sup> Adler (1990), p. 230.

quite easy but that some never really seem to get it right. What risks are at hand when working with seminar teaching and can they be avoided? These were my personal concerns when I started collecting the data.

I actually started my career as a scientist at the age of two. My mother had read me *Nasse Nöff (Piggy Oink)*<sup>2</sup>, at that moment my favourite literature. In short it's a story about birthday cakes and eggs, and the reading resulted in me dropping an egg from our balcony on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor down on the pavement. I am grateful to my mother who, throughout my childhood, still continued reading stories to me, and to my father for telling me stories of great and intelligent female researchers like Nanna Svartz and Marie Curie. Later on, when accepted as a student of pedagogy at the Stockholm Institute of Education, I was helped and inspired by Inger William-Olsson, a "real-life" intelligent female researcher and an important role-model to me when entering the academic world, by Bengt-Erik Andersson, my first tutor when having been accepted as a doctoral student, and by Lars Lindström, my friend and tutor, whose kind reflections and advice have helped me to complete this work and to grow intellectually.

This project wouldn't have been possible without the participating teachers and students. Thank you for your courageous participation and for your dedicated work. The Freinet Akademien supported this project from the beginning and I like to express my gratitude – your contribution made the start and the data collection possible. My research group FEST (forskningsgruppen för Estetiska, Sokratiska/Slöjd och Teknikprocesser): Anna Ekström, Peter Hasselskog, Lars Björklund, and Leif Ulriksson, and my American colleague Laura Billings, have read, criticized, and supported the work from the beginning. Karin Aronsson, Liza Haglund, Sven Hartman, Gunnar Sundgren, Marita Sandin-Larsson, and Anneli Vossman-Strömberg gave me valuable advice by reading the final draft. Erin Gustavsson, Lars Hed, Mariana Caceres, and Pelusa Orellana helped me revise the text, and Anders Dahlin, Linnea Ericsson, and Freinetskolan Tallbacken helped with technical support. Marcia Lakovitch and Terry Roberts spent hours teaching me how to write in American. My "cousin-in-law" Jan Börjesson provided a wonderful place of work in Miami. I would like to thank you all, and all the supportive and caring persons whom I haven't mentioned, for the invaluable help. I am truly blessed to have such friends.

My daughters Kerstin, Malin, and Hedvig have contributed in various ways, by making tea, by discussing the material, and by not taking any notice when I have been distracted.

Without the patient and loving support of my husband Kjell Pihlgren, this book wouldn't be here for you to read.

Tack. Jag älskar dig.

---

<sup>2</sup> Jackson, Kathryn; Byron Jackson (1954), original title "The Party Pig".

# 1 Introduction

There are children playing in the street who could solve some of my top problems in physics, because they have modes of sensory perception that I lost long ago.

J Robert Oppenheimer<sup>3</sup>

For a couple of days, the group has been watching a sequence from the film *Mardie* by Astrid Lindgren over and over again. They have been watching the sequence where the maid in the family household, Alva, has been invited to accompany the 19<sup>th</sup> century middleclass family to the high society Autumn Ball. Alva is looking forward to the ball: she loves to dance. Alva is pretty and at the ball it seems as if all the young gentlemen want to dance with her. However, this is prevented by the actions of the mayor's wife, who acts as hostess of the ball.

I am seated in a circle with six children three to five years of age. I ask why they think Alva is happy when she is told that she will attend the ball. Everyone sits quiet for a while. A lot of ideas are then presented. She wants to dance, someone says. Someone else thinks that she is happy because she is to dance with the chimney sweeper. But does she know that she will dance with him? No, she doesn't of course. Maybe she is happy to be together with Mardie. But when she's not allowed to dance later on, that makes her sad. It's the one with the purple dress that doesn't want Alva to dance, the mayor's wife. Why not? She gets cross when Alva comes to the ball. Maybe Alva wasn't invited? Maybe the mayor's wife thinks that she will not get to dance herself? Maybe she wants all the guys to herself? The guys seem to like Alva. That will make it worse for the mayor's wife, if she wants the guys to herself. The mayor has done a number two in his pants earlier in the film: maybe that's why she wants a new man? When nobody wants to dance with Alva, she feels really sad, but then she falls in love with the chimney sweeper! The chimney sweeper is not invited to the ball either, but he goes in there just to dance with Alva. Why does he do that? Maybe he wants to save her. Or he might be in love with her.

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<sup>3</sup> J Robert Oppenheimer in (1991), p. 138.

If someone had a birthday party and you were not invited, would you go anyway? Everyone thinks silently for a minute or two. No, nobody would, the children agree. But why does Alva go to the ball if she's not invited? She wanted to go and meet guys, so she didn't think about having an invitation, someone suggests. She wanted to dance, someone else says. Did Alva do the right or the wrong thing? She probably didn't want to be home alone and not have anyone to speak to. Maybe it was more fun at the ball anyway: after all she did meet the chimney sweeper. It was not her fault: she did not know that she wasn't welcome. It was actually Mardie's mother who said she could come.

This ended the Socratic seminar and we thanked each other. The dialogue lasted for 20 intense minutes, and we had a lot of fun, but I can see that all are tired. It's hard work thinking. I realize to my surprise that I have discovered a couple of aspects to the film sequence that I hadn't thought of before. That the mayor's wife is jealous of or at least envious of Alva enriches my understanding. I have previously looked at the sequence as a debate about social classes. I had not thought that Mardie's mother was responsible for Alva being exposed to the cruel treatment of the upper class guests until the children pointed it out. She must have known that something like this was bound to happen. When I returned to the day-care centre the next week, Tom, Saari, and Marie wanted to continue the dialogue about the film sequence. They had new ideas that they had discussed together and now they wanted to try them on me<sup>4</sup>.

## 1.1 Philosophizing and teaching ethics

There is a difference between teaching philosophy to students and teaching them to philosophize. Teaching philosophy will inform the students of the great philosophical thinkers, their ideas, and the opposition to those ideas. It will give them access to the important historical lines of philosophy, and the content and structure of the subject. Philosophizing with students aims at giving the students tools and strategies to think and reflect, intellectually and ethically. It is, as Leonard Nelson (Nelson 1965) says, "*the art not of teaching about philosophers but of making philosophers of the students*<sup>5</sup>." This study deals with children philosophizing.

In Sweden, as well as in the rest of the western world, discussions about how the educational system teaches ethics, values and democracy to students has increased during the recent years. One explanation for this increased interest seems to be the changes towards less static, predictable norms that

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4 The text is a translation of Pihlgren (2006c), p. 29-30. The film is a chapter from Astrid Lindgren's (1993) *Mardie's Adventures*.

5 In Nelson (Nelson 1965), p. 1.



are considered general in society (Bäckström, Edgardh Beckman et al. 2004, Friedman 2005, Friedman 2005, Hareide 2002). When society becomes less homogenous, values seem to go from conventions within a group to relativism or to heterogeneous values in many groups. In the political and educational debate, demands for better order in schools and stricter rules are heard. In Sweden, the latest national curriculum stresses the pedagogical importance of working with mutual fundamental values as a foundation for society, “värdegrund” (*Curriculum for the Compulsory School System, the Preschool Class and the Leisure Centre Lpo 94*, 2006, Tham 2000).<sup>6</sup> The problem is that it is very hard to define natural fundamental values (Hedin, Ladenperä 2002). There are also problems in finding methods to work with values and democracy. A recent study in Swedish schools shows that, while deliberative open classroom-climate had a positive effect on the students' political knowledge, direct student influence had a negative effect on the fostering of democrats (Almgren 1996). Educational material that presents a number of exercises are made available to schools from various publishers, but are often criticized for being too static or too unsophisticated. The Swedish philosopher Torbjörn Tännsjö and others question teaching students certain values instead of encouraging the students' own search for ethics (Lindgren 2004). There are attempts to find other ways to educate students to cope with the complexity of different values in society than working with ready made materials. The University of Örebro, the University of Stockholm, and Värdegrundscentrum at the University of Umeå, all study different approaches to working with ethics and democracy. The Socratic seminar is one possible way to approach these questions (Frånberg, Kallós 2002, Hansen 2002, Villa 2001).

## 1.2 Some guidance for the reader

In the introduction, the complete work is introduced, and the research goals and design. The work is then presented in three main sections. The first section presents a theoretical literature study and the conclusions from that survey. The second section presents data and results from video-taped seminars. In the last section, the results from both studies are considered together. A graphic presentation of the sections and their chapters is displayed in table 1.

### **Introduction**

In the next chapter “Research Goals and Design,” my goals, methods and research design, as well as validity and ethical issues are presented.

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<sup>6</sup> The Swedish word värdegrund is by Skolverket, Swedish Agency for Education, translated to “fundamental values”.

## **Section I. Literature on Socratic Interlocution, Review and Analysis**

In the first section a literature review and analysis are presented in search of the rationales for using a Socratic methodology, what is intended in seminars, and for means to analyze the group and individual actions in the seminars. “Catching the Spirit of Socratic Dialogue” presents this work. It is followed by presentations of different Socratic traditions: In “Dialogue as Maieutike”, Socrates and the basic ideas of Socratic tradition are described with comments on Aristotle’s and Plato’s ideas. The next chapter, “Progressive Education and Dialogue as Education in Democracy”, will give the reader a short encounter of the progressive pedagogical ideas of Celestin Freinet and John Dewey concerning dialogue in education. Modern attempts to introduce seminars with methodological steps are then presented: Swedish popular education: folkbildning; Das Sochratische Gespräch; Great conversation: Great Books and Paideia; Sokratiska Samtal; dialogues with children. “Results of the Literature Review” presents a summary and comparison of what has been brought forward in the traditions as important.

## **Section II. The Seminar Study**

This section presents an analysis of videotaped Socratic seminars conducted with children and youngsters 5-16 years old. In “Catching the Learning in Seminar” this work is presented. Previous research and theoretical tools for analysis are then accounted for. The videotaped seminars are presented per group and analyzed. Finally, the results emerging from the analysis are interpreted in six themes: learning the game, teaching the game, rule breaking, playing the game, intellectual habits, and distribution of power.

## **Section III. Conclusions and Discussion**

Finally the chief conclusions of sections I and II are presented, related to the research questions. The relationship between individual thinking and “group thinking”, the role of the Socratic seminars in a democratic society, implications in teachers’ education, and suggestions on further research are discussed.

## **Appendix**

A digital appendix is provided with the book.

Table 1. Sections and chapter relations.

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>					
Research Goals and Design					
<b>SECTION I</b>				<b>SECTION II</b>	
Literature Review and Analysis				The seminar study	
<b>Catching the Spirit of Socratic Dialogue</b>				<b>Catching the Learning in Seminar</b>	
-introducing the literature review and analysis				-introducing the seminar study	
<b>Dialogue as Maieutike</b>				<b>Previous Research and Theoretical Tools for Analysis</b>	
- the Socratic tradition, Plato, and Aristotle					
<b>Progressive Education and Dialogue</b>	<b>Dialogue as folkbildning – Swedish Popular Education</b>	<b>Dialogue as Das Sokratische Gespräch</b>	<b>Dialogue as Great Conversation</b>	<b>Dialogue as Sokratiska Samtal</b>	<b>Dialogue with Children</b>
- John Dewey, Celestin Freinet, and deliberative dialogues	-Hans Larsson, Oscar Olsson, and Alf Ahlberg	- Leonard Nelson	- Great Books and Paideia seminars, Mortimer J. Adler, and Robert M. Hutchins	- Lars Lindström	- Philosophy for children, Matthew Lipman, and Gareth B. Matthews
<b>Results of the Literature Review</b>				<b>Seminar Study Interpretations and Conclusions</b>	
-a general description				-presenting interpretations and conclusions in six themes:	
				Learning the game, teaching the game, rule breaking, playing the game, intellectual habits, and distribution of power	
<b>SECTION III</b>					
<b>Conclusions and Discussion</b>					
-answers to research questions					
-implications for teachers education and suggestions for further research					
<b>References</b>					
<b>Appendix, digital</b>					

## 1.3 Considerations

I made several assumptions concerning my potential audience when writing. I imagine that the forthcoming text will be of interest to rather divergent groups of readers: researchers from different traditions of Socratic dialogue from a variety of countries as well as teachers with a special interest in Socratic seminars. The reader can be very familiar with one area or phenomenon described here and unfamiliar with others: the Swedish folkbildning and the Sokratiska samtal tradition are practically unknown to American readers, the Nelsonian tradition is not well known in Sweden or in the USA, and the Paideia tradition is not generally familiar to the European community. The teachers might be familiar with the methods but not with the research work and researchers might not be familiar with the Socratic methods. My intention therefore has been to make the text readable to these potential readers, and to give more elaborate information and references for those who want to follow up on a tradition or extend the information in a certain area. The comments are therefore more extensive in some chapters than they might have been if I had imagined a more homogeneous group of readers. I ask the reader to bear with this.

## 2 Research Goals and Design

In philosophy, what is important is not so much the answers that are given, but rather the questions that are asked.

Bertrand Russell<sup>7</sup>

### 2.1 Classroom interaction

We know from various research studies that the teacher's voice dominates the classroom: a teacher talks 70-75 % of the time, even at classroom discussions and with the following pattern: teacher-student-teacher-student (Bellack, Kliebard et al. 1966, Dysthe 1996, Gustafson 1977, Hillocks Jr. 1989, Nystrand 1997, Liljestränd 2002, 2004). Where individual work or work in small groups is practiced, this pattern changes: half to two thirds of the talk becomes "desk-talk", students talking to each other during teacher conducted discussions (Lindblad, Sahlström, 2001, Lindström, Arnegård et al. 2003, Tholander 2002, Sahlström, Lindblad 1998). The conversational pattern of the classroom is often restricted to I-R-E: teacher (I)nitiates question, gives instructions, answers; student (R)esponds, more than half the answers are given beforehand; teacher (E)valuates the answer (Lundgren 1981, Liljestränd 2002). The lessons follow certain "rules" for interaction, during which the teacher dominates (Lemke 1990, Samuelsson 2008). The communication often results in the students trying to discern from the teacher's action and talk what the required solution is (Edwards, Mercer 1987). The teacher poses in average 300-400 questions during an ordinary school day and waits only one second before asking a student to answer (Lindström 1995). One percent of instructional time is devoted to open questioning where students have to interpret, analyze, or evaluate information (Goodlad 1983). Talk moves regarding knowledge or reasoning are relatively prevalent, but talk moves linking participants' ideas are not (Wolf, Crosson et al. 2006). There are also great differences in verbal participation by students: a small group of students is talking a lot of the time and a large group rarely or never speaks (Dysthe 1996, Sahlström 1999).

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<sup>7</sup> Bertrand Russell, *The Wisdom of the West*, (in Emmet 1986), p. 17.

## 2.2 Studying Socratic interaction

The Socratic seminars aim at changing the domination of the teacher's voice in classroom and the common pattern of I-R-E in favor of a more egalitarian, polyphonic dialogue, promoting the students critical thinking. The seminars are carried out as group dialogues about a chosen subject, and attempt an open and inquiring culture. The limited previous research studies on Socratic seminars show that the seminars achieve part of the intended positive effects (Bird 1984, Cashman 1977, Feiertag, Chernoff 1987, Graup 1985, Billings 1999, Billings, Fitzgerald 2002, Haroutunian-Gordon 1991, Robinsso 2006, Wortham 2003, Tarkington 1989). However, most of this research has been conducted during a short time (i.e. a year) in groups of beginners and has concentrated on the teacher's role and interplay with individual students. By studying groups which have been having seminars for a longer time this study might challenge or at least broaden earlier results concerning Socratic seminars.

Seminars are intended to be group dialogues. Studying Socratic seminars would mean studying interaction in a bigger group in search for types of group interaction and, if found: how it is generated, supported and/or obstructed by the participants. By studying this, we might understand more about the features of group interaction in seminars, how the culture is taught and understood and possibly something about how positive group interaction might be achieved. It might to some extent also shed light on the group dialogue process in general. By comparing the results of seminar group interaction with what is intended in seminars we might find whether or not the intended effects are possible to achieve in a group (which at length might answer the question whether or not it's worth while to conduct seminars in school). This might also contribute to better methods in Socratic teaching.

Earlier studies on Socratic seminars have focused on verbal communication. Interaction in larger groups than a pair means that speech time is limited to a few. It is fair to suppose that the rest of the participants are still participating in the seminar in some way or another; although, they are not speaking. This "silent" participation might be shown by gestures/movements and glances: different "modes" will cooperate or work against each other to reinforce or complement each other (Kress, van Leewen 2001). This study would have to present a way to look at the group interplay on a multimodal basis, which would mean finding or developing methods to do this.

## 2.3 Research questions

Socratic seminars and closely related activities have traditionally been practiced in various countries to teach thinking skills, and as a supplement to classroom education. The traditions presuppose the construction of a certain

culture in group discussion, and suggest certain techniques. However, the rationales and effects of this methodology, including how these effects are achieved have not been thoroughly investigated or systematically analyzed. One of the chief critiques of the dialogic tradition is that it is utopian and has no practical use (Fritzell 2001, Burbules 2000). Is it at all possible to teach? These were the final set of questions to be answered:

#### I. The theoretical literature study

*How are goals and effects of the Socratic dialogues described in literature?*

*How are Socratic seminars described as a method in literature?*

#### II. The empirical seminar study

*How do the seminars differ from other types of classroom dialogues?*

*How are the effects of Socratic dialogues achieved?*

*What critical events and actions threaten the seminar?*

*How do participants develop and protect the seminar culture?*

## 2.4 Research design and data collection

The research design resulted in two different sections, each with its own focus: Section I presents a literature study on Socratic interlocution, with review and analysis of the different traditions; section II presents a seminar study, analyzing and interpreting videotaped seminars.

### 2.4.1 The literature review

The goal of the literature study was to find out what pedagogical intention (if any) was related to the methodology. I decided to do a literature review and analysis in search of the rationales for using a Socratic methodology, what is intended in seminars, and for means to analyze the group and individual actions in the seminar. This proved necessary when trying to answer how literature described the Socratic seminar: No overall description had been attempted before. Relevant literature about Socratic dialogue and similar traditions was read and organized and finally compared and analyzed. The traditions were found by searching for literature with connections to Socratic dialogue, pedagogical dialogue, or seminar teaching. I followed the influences of the different traditions by checking and reading the references made in literature; I was also introduced to new methods and traditions by participating in several international and Nordic conferences concerned with dialogic teaching, thinking, and philosophy with children and youngsters. To organize the traditions and methods was sometimes tricky work. Traditions or methods that in the beginning seemed to be closely related to the Socratic tradition could, when analyzed more closely, show little connection in theory

or practice. I chose to exclude the methods which didn't describe a specific dialogic culture, something described as essential to Socratic dialogue. Other considerations are related in the literature review and analysis.

## 2.4.2 The seminar study

I also decided to videotape seminars over a period of time (2002-2005) to make it possible to track the multimodal actions of the whole group and compare this to the intended seminar process<sup>8</sup>. The intention was to study the seminars at their best; as far as possible to try to give the seminars studied good prerequisites. I wanted part of the study to be conducted at the school where I was the principal to be able to control the data collection. I did not want to risk having it collapse because of organizational problems or because of a lack of understanding from the administration, which could have been a possibility if much of the research data had been collected somewhere else. On the other hand this called for some ethical considerations.

### 2.4.2.1 Participating teachers

I asked for volunteering Freinet-skolan teachers, who would participate in the research work and I also choose to ask experienced teachers from five municipal schools in the area. They all had participated in the first course on Socratic seminars held in the autumn of 2001. They agreed to participate. Finally three groups (and teachers) were excluded from the material and the teachers represented in this work are (the names of teachers and children are pseudonyms): Anna, Charlotte, Jennifer, Margit, Maria, Sandra – pre-school to secondary school teachers, working with pre-school children to students in ninth grade. The teachers' assignment was to conduct Socratic seminars, *Sokratiska samtal*, regularly every week or every other week. I did not ask for any specific topic in the seminars, as the teachers were encouraged to integrate the seminar into their curriculum. This resulted in an overabundance of filmed seminars based on literature, and a few on art works and on newspaper articles, as presented below. Although the classes during the period had seminars on other topics, these were not represented in the material.

### 2.4.2.2 Participating student groups

Ten groups, totaling 116 students were chosen to participate in the research project. Three groups were later excluded from the material, to make identification harder, leaving 101 students. The groups were chosen from the grades that the participating teachers normally met on a daily basis and were chosen to cover children between five years of age to grade nine (15 to 16 years old). No other considerations were made:

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<sup>8</sup> Initially, I collected other material such as interviews and teachers diaries. I finally resolved to use only the video-taped seminars.



Group A: day-care five-years-old- grade K (here five-year-olds)

Group B: day-care four-year-olds- grade 1 (here K- grade 1)

Group C: grade 2- 4

Group D: grade 4-5

Group E: grade 3-6 (here grade 5-6)

Group F: grade 5-7

Group G: grade 8-9

All students (and their parents) except two agreed to participate in the filmed seminars. These two participated in the non-filmed seminars in the class during the period. The participating students in the groups sometimes differ slightly from one filmed seminar to another, due to sickness, leaving school, etc. The individuals and how they are seated are presented in appendix C.

### **2.4.2.3 Using videotaping**

Using videotaped material in research means transcribing what happens in one way or another. How the transcription is made is affected by what intentions and questions the researcher has. How the transcribing is done also affects what results can be seen and interpreted from the material. Video transcription and analysis is still a relatively new field and there is an ongoing development (Jordan, Henderson 1995). Linguistics, anthropology, sociology and psychology have developed different methods to study interactions from the particular perspective of the tradition. Phenomenological, ethnological and cognitive methods result in different ways to transcribe and analyze the material (Duranti, Goodwin 1992). The theoretical approach and the chosen tools for transcription and analysis affect what is interpreted from the filmed interaction (Koschmann 1999). Depending on method and tradition, sometimes only verbal communication is transcribed with varying levels of detail. Sometimes gestures and movements are noted in the text. Sometimes photographs or drawings are added.

### **2.4.2.4 Choice of sequences**

As common to qualitative research, I worked in steps, formulating or reformulating new questions while working with the material (Maxwell 2005). The literature review and analysis showed that a certain seminar culture and its rules were considered vital to the outcome of the seminar. Another vital incident was how new ideas were accepted. The outcome of a critical event or action is either successful or not and will reveal vital information of what is important in a situation (Dascal 1985, Maracondes de Souza Filho, Danilo 1985)<sup>9</sup>. It will make the implicit rules of the dialogic “game” explicit (Koschmann, Kuutti et al. 1998), an idea I used when selecting sequences to transcribe.

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<sup>9</sup> This is also the assumption of the (quantitative) method of “critical incidents” (Andersson, Nilsson 1970).

From most seminars at least three sequences of approximately 1-5 minutes, were chosen. The chosen sequences recorded what actions followed after a new idea was presented and when a seminar rule was broken. The seminar rules will be more closely defined in the literature section of the study. I used two criteria when picking out the sequences: the new idea or the break had to be apparent so that it was clear what was happening, and there had to be a noticeable reaction in the group. If there was no reaction, what I thought was a new idea or a break was probably not considered so by the group; they were not taking any actions to demonstrate what was accepted or not in the seminar culture. I started by marking all the sequences that met the criteria in a rough transcription, watched all the sequences through once more, marking the 3-4 sequences that I felt were more rich than others, using my experience from years as seminar leader and participant, and finished by looking through all the marked sequences again and possibly adjusting by taking away from or adding to the chosen sequences. The third viewing led to some adjustments but not many. While doing the analysis, I viewed the whole seminar through and checked the choices once more. Every chosen sequence did uncover many more activities than the one I used when marking the selection.

#### 2.4.2.5 Choice of transcript tools

My transcription was done on two levels. In a rough transcript of the complete seminar the sequences of the seminar were accounted for by noting the main content and length of the sequence and whether speech originated mainly from the facilitator or from the participants or from both. This made it possible to choose the sequences that should be thoroughly transcribed. It was also used to make a chart over the steps taken in the seminar to make it possible to analyze whether the methodology suggested in the literature were carried out and with what effect (see Appendix A).

Table 2. Example of rough transcript of the complete seminar<sup>10</sup>

Version: Cam 2			activity	theme	subject	code	dominating speech		idea	break
time start	time end	time length					facilitator	participant		
4,54	0	-4,54	investigates the question, presents ideas in partly new direction	statement from participant results in new question	pippi's dress she looks crazy, does that matter, ricki martin	3a 3b	X	x	x	

10 Sequence from beginning of seminar on Pippi Longstocking in group A: five-year-olds. "Dominating speech" has been roughly coded by marking the columns with X or x, showing if the participants or facilitator or both speaks more or less in the sequence.

One of the problems I had to face was how to transcribe the sequences that I wanted to study more thoroughly. For instance, it could be possible that one participant would say “I don’t agree with you”, displaying one of the appropriate behaviors in seminar, critical examination. But the seminar culture also would encourage the participants to show respect, to cooperate, and to be civil. How will this be done if the spoken message is that of disagreement? Possibly by gestures and glances. The transcription had to be able to handle what was communicated by a lot of participants at the same time and had to make it possible to study what happened in the group at every new talk-turn, not only in verbal communication, but also in gestures, movements, and glances among all participants. It had to be possible to check on the interplay of different “modes” to create meaning to the participants as well as how they reacted to different moves (Kress, van Leeuwen 2001). At the same time I wanted the transcript to be open so that the material could “speak”, not to exclude new discoveries by a too rigidly coded system.

I tried three transcript tools more closely: CLAN, TRANSANA and ARTT<sup>11</sup>. The first two, CLAN and TRANSANA, are focused on verbal communication and are able to cope with big amounts of material. They present the transcripts in a manuscript form. ARTT attempts a “multimodal” transcription with opportunity to show several participants’ simultaneous actions (Rostvall, West 2003a). ARTT presents the transcript as a matrix. I transcribed the same sequence from one seminar in CLAN, TRANSANA and ARTT and realized that the matrix transcript made me see things that the manuscript did not. I suddenly became aware of the interaction going on in the whole group and how gestures and glances affected it. I realized that the matrix form gave the focus on group interaction that I was looking for. The manuscript and matrix transcript can be compared in table 3 and 4<sup>12</sup>.

Table 3. *Example of manuscript transcription of sequence*

34	facilitator:	yes
35	anders:	but (1) if (.) ha can’t be (points) the DEVIL (0,7) because ha
36		has got the devil tattooed
37		on his belly
38	lisa:	but there can’t be only one devil, can there
39	susanne:	but isn’t there
40	lisa:	there must have been a devil before (.) that’s what I think
41	susanne:	a have a daddy
42	pia:	yeas

11 CLAN is a transcription tool generated from a psycholinguistic tradition and is mainly a linguistic tool; TRANSANA has been adapted to cope with organizing and storing huge amounts of digital video material. ARTT admits “multimodal” transcription.

12 Both transcripts are from the same sequence from the seminar on “Diabolo baby” in group E: 5th grade.



ing to study closer. This gave me a pretty good idea of what was going on in the seminar. I then looked through the marked sequences and made a choice of which to transcribe thoroughly. I made notes on discoveries and reflections both during the transcribing and after having finished. When doing the multimodal transcription I started with the verbal communication. After this was done I focused on one participant at the time, registering his or her gestures and what he or she was looking at. I was constantly surprised to find that this revealed completely new things that I had not registered or realized when focusing on the verbal conversation or when looking at the whole seminar. This way of working made me see the film over and over again and made me thoroughly familiar with what was happening in the group. I used the notes made during this work when doing the analysis of the sequences, compared closely to what was registered in the transcript.

A lot of research using transcribed interaction analyzes the transcripts by coding them in different ways and making interpretations from what is shown (Kumpulainen, Mutanen 1999, Billings 1999, Keefer, Zeitz et al. 2000, Rostvall, West 2001). At an early stage of working with the transcripts, I did try to code them by different categories, for instance by coding the utterances from what “dialogical virtue” was displayed, or by using Billings’ (1999) code categories of form, sequence step, relation, and cognitive content, extended to gestures and glances (also see Appendix G). I soon realized that important information that could help answering my research questions was lost when categorized. Pre-classification can help to give legitimacy to the material, but can hinder the chance to see new and different things since there has already been a selection (Edwards, Mercer 1987). It presupposes having a fair idea of what one is supposed to find in the material. This was not the case here. By asking what actions participants take in the seminar culture, I was in fact looking for the categories.

#### **2.4.2.8 Using critical educational connoisseurship**

An open approach to analyzing data is taken by the ethnomethodological and other closely related traditions. Here, the importance of looking at verbal conversation as talk-in-action is stressed (Edwards 1997), where the researcher seeks to become “vulgarly competent”, to be indifferent to formal analytic methods and to focus on instructed action (Lindwall, Lymer 2005). In analyzing the transcripts, I have used another but somewhat similar, phenomenological, open approach. I have tried to apply Elliot W. Eisner’s (1991) ideas of using “educational connoisseurship” and “educational criticism” when analyzing. “Connoisseurship” comes from knowing the area under investigation thoroughly, allowing the “connoisseur” to sense the important nuances and features. “Connoisseurship” in this work refers to using my expertise in Socratic seminars. However, this is not enough. The “connoisseurship” has to be combined with a critical approach, where the findings are assessed. Eisner identifies some important dimensions in this work:

describing the events or findings so that the reader can visualize and experience them, interpreting the events or findings so that they are decoded as to why and how they occur, evaluating them as to how they contribute to educational value, and finally formulating themes and dominant features, by identifying the recurrent messages. Thus conclusions are made from a qualitative, inductive analysis of the effects, trying to find clusters of reoccurring actions and reactions (Patton 1990). The findings from each film analysis were matched up with the notes made during transcription and compared to what was intended in seminar, sorted thematically, and presented in six themes: learning the game, teaching the game, rule breaking, playing the game, intellectual habits, and distribution of power.

## 2.5 Ethical considerations

The ethical principles applied to this type of research work by the Swedish Research Council, Vetenskapsrådet were considered and applied in the different steps of the research process with focus on the seminar study (*Etik – god praxis vid forskning med video*. 1998, *Forskningsetiska principer inom humanistisk-samhällsvetenskaplig forskning*. 2002). The participating students and their parents were informed both at a meeting and by written information, where both student and parent agreed to the student participating. The letter displayed two boxes, one for agreeing and one for not agreeing to participate. The information was distributed and the answers were collected before starting the data collection. Confidentiality is made possible by the data being coded; all the names are changed and the participants are guaranteed anonymity. An exclusion of films and groups were made, making identification harder. The chief parts of the material will only be used in this research work. The video sequences (Appendix F) included as examples of actions have been remade into cartoons.

There is one area where ethics had to be considered more closely. Some of the data was collected at the school where I used to work as a principal. This was an important venue, since it offered a guarantee that the project would continue. Research can benefit from developing projects close to the action studied, familiarity helps navigate the complexity of studied objects and actions since the participating researchers have a thorough knowledge of the field (*Forskning av denna världen – praxisnära forskning inom utbildningsvetenskap*. 2003). There is, however, a risk of dependence that might affect the result and this had to be considered (Hermerén, 1996). It is important to find out who has the power over whom. It is difficult to reach a level where there is no dependence between participants, informants, and researcher. The consequences for the individuals in dependence must be considered before starting. The voluntary acceptance is of vital importance. I was the head of some of the teachers during the data collection. I also was

the leader of one of the schools and had in that position other relations to children and parents. On the other hand, the school was owned by parents and staff together and run by a board of elected parents and staff. Hence, I was their employee. The different groups were interdependent in this way. The parents and the students have been very supportive of the Socratic project. Parents and students were informed in the beginning and also during the data collection. The participating teachers were informed two times a year during the data collection. All participants agreed to participate, and the teachers volunteered. All participants, including the teachers, had the possibility to refrain from participating during the whole process. No one did so. Whether or not the result was affected by dependency in relations was stressed when the material was transcribed and analyzed. The seminars from the schools where I was not the principal have functioned as a reassurance and have also been a guarantee for anonymity as have groups that were filmed and later were excluded. By the time the findings were interpreted I had finished my work at the school. The risk that someone might feel compromised has at all times been considered.

## 2.6 Validity and reliability

A qualitative study has to deal with validity in a different way than a quantitative study (Maxwell 2005). The main emphasis of a qualitative proposal is to rule out *specific* plausible alternatives and explanations. For example, this can be done by taking into consideration the researcher's preconceptions and bias (Becker 1998).

Validity in the literature study concerns having found the relevant literature and making valid conclusions about what was found. To try to ensure this, I have asked researchers and practicing teachers connected to the different fields to read the chapters and comment on them, and I have also presented findings on conferences on related topics.

In studying the seminar, one potential problem might be that the teachers and students might have tried to "perform at their best", causing a validity threat, skewing the results in a more positive direction. Some measures were taken in the research design to deal with this danger. All video taped data was collected before any was examined, or any transcription and analysis was done. Groups from various participating schools functioned as a reassurance. There was no real disadvantage with "best performance" since the aim was to look at as good a performance as possible.

Statistics show marginal differences in parents' income- and educational level in the three participating schools<sup>13</sup>. Open ended dialogues and questions were already used at Freinetskolan, which could mean that the results there

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13 (Web-siteSCB 2008, web-siteSkolverket 2008).

actually stemmed from other methodological approaches. The parents at Freinetskolan register their children there as a school of choice. Paying more attention to choice of school might lead to an attitude towards the child, resulting in open ended questioning and seminar-like dialogues at home. By comparing the results from the groups in other schools with those from Freinetskolan this was also controlled. On the other hand, there couldn't be any real disadvantage to the study if there were supporting pedagogical systems.

All volunteering teachers were female. One explanation for this is probably the low representation of men teaching in these grades. I did not take any action to get male teachers to participate. It was more important to me that the teachers had showed interest in being a part of the research. My intention has not been to look primarily at the role of the facilitator but at the group interaction. Einarsson (2003) found no significant effect of the sex of the teacher on interaction in the classroom. When comparing student gender, student age, and teacher gender, she found that female teachers teaching lower grades and male teachers teaching upper grades were better at interacting with both boys and girls to the same extent than teachers of the opposite sex teaching the same grade. Because there were no male teachers in the study, I was unable to collect data on the effect of facilitator gender.

The presence of the cameras and microphones at the recorded seminars might have affected the results in different ways (like promoting "best performance"). There are some findings in the transcribed material that suggest that participants did consider the presence of the cameras and the microphones. These incidents are commented on in the presentations of seminars.

Every choice made in the processing of data influences the results (Green, Franquiz et al. 2003, Koschmann 1999, Rostvall, West 2003b), and will therefore also involve a possible validity threat. There are at least four critical choices in this study: the choice of sequences to be transcribed, the choice of transcription tool, how the analysis was done and how the dialogue was translated. The choice of sequences was, as said earlier, guided by what was found in the literature review and concentrated on when new ideas were presented and when the seminar rules were broken. There are sequences showing new ideas presented or breaks that have not been chosen and consequently there might be a loss of information. I might have missed important information due to my previous experiences with seminars, my bias. The rejected sequences might show other patterns of interaction. I cannot presume to have found all the interactional patterns that occur in seminar groups when a new idea is presented or when somebody breaks the seminar rules. I have however found some that do occur when the idea or the break is apparent and the group reaction is noticeable.

The threat to validity due to choice of transcription tool and method of analysis also had to be considered. I tried to ensure that important information was captured by experimenting with different tools and choosing the tool that best helped to answer my questions. The time-consuming and tho-



rough way of transcribing makes it more likely that I have seen many of the important actions. I noticed that in the first half of transcribing time, I still discovered new group actions or had to revise my first impression. The second half seldom led to this. I could find new information on an individual level, but I seemed to have grasped most of the group's interaction in relation to my research questions. The validity of the analyzed sequences has been discussed with fellow researchers and with teachers experienced in seminars. A comparison of findings from related studies was also used to assure validity. However, another method of transcribing and of analyzing would possibly have showed other things.

The transcripts were translated from Swedish to English for the benefit of the reader. This affects the information when it comes to meaning. The analysis, however, was done on the Swedish transcript and wasn't translated until after the analysis. The translation has been reviewed by two independent Swedish-English speaking persons and has been accordingly adjusted.

Part of the research project was financed by Freinetskolan as the board granted me the opportunity to use 20 % of my working hours as a principal for research. The board, however, never set any conditions on how, what, or when the work was done, and I completed my role as principal there before the results were interpreted. Having worked with seminars and believing them to be a productive pedagogical activity, I understood the danger of my own bias affecting the results more positively. I worked with presumptions which might have influenced important explanations (having this tacit knowledge was also positive since it might give me ideas of what to look for). This understanding has been a constant focus in the process, and sometimes I have kept brooding about it to the extent that I thought it would lead to the opposite result – being too negative in presenting the results. The recurrent discussions of my material with other researchers and teachers have hopefully dealt with both problems.

Finally, is it possible for another researcher to repeat this study and would he or she come to the same conclusions? In the literature study I have tried to relate to interpretations or views advocated by others. In the seminar study, I have tried to strengthen the reliability by revealing all of my choices, by describing the methods used, and by discussing the choices, methods, and results with others.



SECTION I  
Literature on Socratic Interlocution  
Review and Analysis



### 3 Catching the Spirit of Socratic Dialogue

It is on the way over the bridge,  
not at its root,  
where the paradoxes meet  
and dialogue starts.  
Siv Arb<sup>14</sup>

This section presents a literature review and analysis to discover the rationales for using a Socratic methodology, what pedagogical intention (if any) was related to the methodology, and for means to analyze the group and individual actions in the seminar. I will attempt to summarize how goals and effects and pedagogical methods of Socratic and similar dialogues are described in literature. The literature presented has been chosen because the different sources describe similar types of dialogues and can contribute to answer the research questions. Some of the modern traditions, although almost identical in their methods, goals and theoretical assumptions, have had little or no knowledge of each other, partly because their practitioners belong to different language and cultural spheres. A comprehensive description has not been attempted before. The main problem in describing the intended dialogues is that no one really seems to “catch the spirit” of the Socratic process completely. There are apt and clear descriptions of techniques, methods and of intended goals and outcomes, but not really of why this type of dialogue will achieve the stated effects. As we will see in the forthcoming chapters, none of the descriptions covers all areas. By juxtaposition descriptions from different sources, I will try to discover what factors are intended to give positive effects.

Section I is an attempt to organize traditions which are not easily categorized, since they blend and mix together and are inspired by the same sources. I have added some short explanations of the main inspirational sources, to enable the reader to make his or her own connections between the different sources. I will start by examining how Socrates introduces the basic ideas of Socratic tradition, with short comments on Plato and Aristotle. This chapter presents the chief inspirational source to the modern attempts to introduce seminars with recurring methodological steps. The next chapter, “Progressive Education and Dialogue as Education in Democracy”, will give

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14 Siv Arb (1971), poet (author’s translation): “Det är på vägen över bron, inte vid dess fäste, som paradoxerna möts och dialogen börjar.”

the reader a short encounter with John Dewey’s and Celestin Freinet’s ideas concerning dialogue in progressive education. Modern Socratic traditions are presented in the following chapters: Swedish popular education, folkbildning; *Das Sokratische Gespräch*; Great Books and the Paideia seminar; *Sokratiska Samtal* and the type of dialogues that were intended in the research project; dialogues with children and philosophy for/with children and Gareth B Matthews. After comparing the literature from these traditions in “Results of the literature review”, the elements were merged into a general description of the Socratic seminar.

Table 5. *Chapter relations in literature review and analysis section*

<b>SECTION I</b>					
Literature Review and Analysis					
<b>Catching the Spirit of Socratic Dialogue</b>					
-introducing the literature review and analysis					
<b>Progressive Education and Dialogue as Education in Democracy</b>	<b>Dialogue as folkbildning</b>	<b>Dialogue as Das Sokratische Gespräch</b>	<b>Dialogue as Great Conversation</b>	<b>Dialogue as Sokratiska Samtal</b>	<b>Dialogue with Children</b>
- John Dewey, Celestin Freinet, and deliberative dialogue	- Swedish popular education, Hans Larsson, Oscar Olsson, and Alf Ahlberg	- Leonard Nelson	- Great Books and Paideia seminars, Mortimer J. Adler, and Robert M Hutchins	- Lars Lindström	- Philosophy for children, Matthew Lipman, and Gareth B Matthews
<b>Results of the Literature Review</b>					
-a general description					

I have strived to use the terminology of the tradition. This means that similar manifestations are called by different names. Thus the terms “dialogue”, “interlocution”, and “seminar” have overlapping and sometimes the same meaning in different traditions. I trust the reader to be able to make connections between their ideas. Where nothing else is presented, I have used the words “facilitator” (for the leader) and “participants”.

## 4 Dialogues as Maieutike

The unexamined life is not worth living for man.  
Socrates<sup>15</sup>

### 4.1 The allegory of Socrates

Socratic seminars are, of course, named after Socrates, the Greek philosopher, who lived approximately 470-399 B.C. in Athens. Referring to Socrates has its problems. Socrates is an almost mythical figure, illusive and hard to catch, even though many attempts have been made. We know him from some contemporary sources, such as Plato<sup>16</sup>, Xenophon<sup>17</sup>, Aristophanes,<sup>18</sup> and Aristotle<sup>19</sup>, all of whom give different testimonies. Socrates himself left no written record of his philosophic or pedagogic ideas; we know these mainly from Plato's dialogues and they give a somewhat contradictory picture, open for differing interpretations. It is hence of some importance to make clear *what* Socrates is referred to as inspiration here.

Socrates' life might well be an allegory of his philosophy. The oracle of Delphi had stated to one of Socrates' friends that Socrates was the wisest of all men. This was incomprehensible to Socrates, so he set forth to find out what could have been the meaning of this statement. This led him to engage in interlocution with the citizens of Athens, often men of authority, considered wise (or considering themselves wise), to find out if the oracle was

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15 In Scolnicov (1988), p. 13. Tredennick's & Tarrant's translation is "life without this sort of examination is not worth living".

16 Plato (approx. 428/427-348/347 B.C.), born in an aristocratic family and well educated. He started his own school, the Academia in Athens, and wrote from the 380s and continued until his death, 81 years old, (Filosofilexikonet, 1983).

17 Xenophon of Athens (approx. 431/425-354 B.C.) most known for his "Memorabilier" picturing Socrates, as a somewhat know-all person, far from Plato's brilliantly discussing and ironic Socrates (Filosofilexikonet, 1983).

18 Aristophanes (approx. 445-385 B.C.) depicted Socrates satirically in the play "the Clouds" as a wind-bag in charge of a weird school of philosophy, teaching sophism. The same year another play by Ameipsias, "Connus", also depicted Socrates, (Tarrant 1993).

19 Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) entered Plato's Academia to study and stayed at there for 20 years, working on his own philosophy, more and more diverging from Plato's. In 343 he became tutor of Alexander (later "the Great"). Aristotle had a most productive period in Macedonia, working on manuscripts on science, psychology, metaphysics ethics, poetry and rhetoric. In Athens he established a school, Lykeion, and lectured there until Alexander's death, when the Athenians turned against Macedonia.

telling the truth. His dialogues in streets, at squares and market places were observed by many people: his followers<sup>20</sup>, youngsters, and mere spectators. Socrates concluded that he was wise in the sense that he was conscious of his own ignorance. When he was seventy years old, Socrates was taken to court, accused of having corrupted the youth and of not respecting the Gods of the state. He was finally condemned to death and, in the circle of close friends, emptied the cup of hemlock, stating that free investigation was more important to him than life. One can ask why this devotion to a mission that almost seems impossible. Kenneth Seeskin (1987) refers to the ancient Greek historian Thucydides: something at the heart of the Athenian society had gone wrong so that commonly accepted judgments could not be trusted. During Socrates' adult life, disturbing events like the plague of Athens, the reign of Cleon, the massacres of Melos and Mycalessus, the treatment of Athenian prisoners at Syracuse, the rule of the Thirty Tyrants all happened. The ordinary ways of coping with moral problems, by induction or demonstration, were not working. In response, Socrates presented a different way to cope with the dilemmas faced by the Athenians: *elenchus*, or refutation.

#### 4.1.1 Socrates and the voice of Plato

Socrates made a great impression on Plato, one of his young followers. Soon after Socrates' death, Plato probably started to write down Socrates' dialogues. He continued to use Socrates as a main character in his writings for years to come. This causes one of the major problems in trying to pinpoint Socrates' ideas: deciding what are Socrates' own ideas and when the figure of Socrates is used by Plato to articulate Plato's own ideas. Since the early nineteenth century, two major tendencies in interpreting Plato have surfaced. A unitarian view going back to Schleiermacher, assumes that the various dialogues are composed from a single point of view, and that the differences between the earlier and later texts are explained on either literary or pedagogical grounds. A developmental view, on the other hand, going back to Karl Friedrich Hermann, assumes that Plato changed his philosophy over time. An important contemporary representative for the first school is Charles H Kahn, who stresses the elements of continuity in Plato's thought and who rejects the notion of any sharp metaphysical contrast between the early dialogues and the middle works. Kahn states that the dialogues are to be looked upon as a fictional form and the different dialogues as different literary moments in Plato's presentation of his ideas, the ideas being quite consistent over time. Looked upon in this way, the early presentation of Socrates would not be an image of Socrates' thinking (as the developmentalists

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20 Among Socrates most important disciples are Euklides, Aristippos, Xenophon and Plato, (Ringbom 1993).



argue) but a way for Plato to prepare the readers for a new way to look at the world, presented in the middle and later dialogues (Kahn 1996).

On the other hand, a general view embraced by the second school is that Plato, during the first period of his writing, remains convinced of the soundness of Socrates' teaching methods and therefore describes them pretty accurate (even if some or all of the material in the dialogues could have been invented by Plato). As Plato evolved, his "Socrates" was made to change, absorbing and expressing the writer's new convictions. Socrates' own ideas hence are to be found in the early dialogues. The later dialogues, in the middle and late period of Plato's production, mirror Plato's own doctrines, many of them anti-Socratic by nature (Vlastos 1991)<sup>21</sup>. By thoroughly examining Plato's dialogues and the evidence of Socrates from Aristotle and Xenophon, Gregory Vlastos and others show that the early dialogues are in a sharp contrast to the later (Larsson 1924, Popper 1971, Scolnicov 1988, Vlastos 1991). Vlastos (1991) describes the early Socrates as exclusively a moral philosopher, seeking knowledge *elenctically*, with a populist conception of philosophy. His method is adversative: he pursues moral truths by refuting theses defended by uncooperative interlocutors. To the early Socrates, "*our soul is our self – whatever that might turn out to be*" (Vlastos 1991, p. 55). The later Socrates, on the other hand, presents a metaphysical theory and covers a wide range of philosophical topics, has an elaborate political theory, and is an elitist. He seeks demonstrative knowledge and is confident that he finds it, illuminating truth to consenting interlocutors. He sees knowledge as innate; all learning is recovery of what our soul carries along from its prehistoric past. Vlastos' (and Scolnicov<sup>22</sup>) claim is that it is Socrates speaking in the early texts of Plato and Plato speaking in the latter.

It is not important to this study whether it is Socrates or Plato talking to us in the early texts of Plato. What is important is that the Socratic method is described clearly in the early dialogues, but not in the middle or later. Henceforth in the text, I will refer to the ideas and the method in the early texts of Plato as the ideas and method of Socrates.

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21 Vlastos (1991) considers the following dialogues to belong to the early period: The Elenctic Dialogues: Apology, Charmides, Crito, Euthyphro, Gorgias, Hippias Minor, Ion, Laches, Protagoras, Republic I. Traditional Dialogues: Euthydemus, Hippias Major, Lysis, Menexenus, Meno. He considers the following to belong to the middle period: Cratylus, Phaedo, Symposium, Republic II-X, Phaedrus, Parmenides, Theaetetus. He considers the following to belong to the late period: Timaeus, Critias, Sophist, Politicus, Philebus, Laws.

22 Scolnicov (1988) makes the distinction even more elaborate, within the dialogues themselves, with the final myth of "Gorgia" and the second part of "Meno" as a rough watershed.

## 4.2 Dialogues as *elenchus*, *maieutike* and *aporia*

Plato considered Socrates' dialogic method of questioning, "*elenchus*"<sup>23</sup>, to be "maieutic"<sup>24</sup>, assisting in giving birth to the ideas of the person questioned. One of the effects of *elenchus* and *maieutike* is *aporia*<sup>25</sup>, Socratic perplexity (Matthews 1999). There is an immense quantity of literature, dealing with Socrates, Plato and Socratic dialogue, and many authors disagreeing with the brief summary provided here (cf. Kahn 1996). However, my focus here is solely on the features of the early Socratic dialogue as a pedagogic technique. Even this, however, is an intricate task. Kenneth Seeskin (1987) argues that Socrates never intended to construct a method. His concern was getting people to examine their lives in order to live better ones. This is also the opinion of Sophie Haroutunian-Gordon (1989). She comments that Richard Robinson (1953), one of the major Socrates analysts, makes the error of trying to define the Socratic *elenchus* as a method, with a predestined methodology appearing in the same order in all dialogues. My intention in this chapter is not to find a single method, but to look more closely at the pedagogical assumptions, prerequisites, and possible techniques used by Socrates, as these are of importance when interpreting the actual methods emanating from Socrates' ideas.

### 4.2.1 Socratic ignorance and knowledge

The Socratic ignorance is an important way to understand his view on knowledge (Popper 1992). To be ignorant the Socratic way is to understand that the ideas or the knowledge that one takes for true has to be critically examined and valued. To Socrates, teaching is impossible if we look upon it as imparting "true" propositions to another person and expecting that person to come away with knowledge. Socrates' object is not to teach anyone anything; in fact he denies being a teacher. In the dialogues, he was actually educating the citizens not in facts, as "ordinary" teachers do, but by showing them how to improve themselves as humans (Brickhouse, Smith 1990). To Socrates, there is no special branch or subject of learning devoted to moral education. All education imposes moral tests (Seeskin 1987). In this he does not refer either to the Greek mythology or to nature but to human self-awareness. In this, he is a forerunner to Immanuel Kant and contemporary moral philosophy (Lindström 1988). He does not say that non-moral goods such as money, reputation, and prestige have no value, but that their value is vastly inferior to perfection of the soul. One will have happiness if, and only if, one has virtue.

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23 "Elenchus", ελεγχος, to examine, refute, or put to shame.

24 "Maieutike", maieutic, midwifery.

25 *Aporia*, ἀπορία, puzzle, problem, difficulty, perplexity. The classic Greek world first meant "difficulty in passing" (Matthews 1999).

*Elenchus* is used to find out what a good life is (or God's will). Socrates considers God to be rational, moral, and practical, urging him to investigate by *elenchus*, and he refers to an inner voice, a *daimonion*, turning him away from things he should not do, a sort of divine prognosticator. This search is not only a personal concern for each individual but also has to do with the improvement of the community: "It seems to me that God has assigned me to the city, as if to a large thoroughbred horse which because of its great size is inclined to be lazy and needs stimulation of some stinging fly."<sup>26</sup> Investigation is not something done to teach mere debate or thinking techniques (like the sophists or the rhetoricians<sup>27</sup>). It is a way of living for the virtuous, pious citizen. Socrates aims to discover knowledge by investigation, not true belief. In fact, to Socrates virtue is knowledge (Scolnicov 1988). The ability to obtain knowledge as virtue is embedded in all human beings, and we all have an equal chance to reach it<sup>28</sup>.

#### 4.2.2 Events in Socrates' interlocutions

Generally in the dialogues, Socrates first asks his interlocutor to explain what is meant by a certain concept (like piety, righteousness, or knowledge). This is often done by the interlocutor exemplifying its use (*Filosofilexikonet*, 1983). Socrates then asks him to explain what the examples have in common, encouraging the interlocutor to present a general definition of the concept. Socrates now starts the inquiry, or *elenchus*. At this point, Socrates is doing most of the talking: questioning, analyzing, and presenting analogies. It is not just contradicting the propositions made by the interlocutor; *elenchus* is a search. The interlocutor's answers are short, often reduced to "yes" or "no". Suddenly, it is obvious that the interlocutor has contradicted himself on some vital point. The dialogue ends without result, collapses without any answer or any agreement. (Stone (1988) criticizes Socrates for carrying the search for definitions to the point of absurdity). Both Socrates and the interlocutor are perplexed.

#### 4.2.3 Teaching by *elenchus*

*Elenchus* is the most fundamental and distinctive feature of Socrates' method of investigation (Vlastos 1991). *Elenchus* might seem adversarial, negative in form, but it aims at a positive result: to discover and test moral principles. We are left with no methodological instructions on how it is done.

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26 Socrates in the Apology (Plato 1993, p. 54.).

27 Plato is in "Gorgias" and "The Sophist" concerned with differentiating the dialectician from the rhetorician and the sophist. All three employ very similar methods. The crucial difference to Plato is that the sophist or the rhetorician only aim to win the argument, whereas the dialectician is dedicated to find the truth (Adler 1986).

28 This idea is elaborated in "Meno", the last of the "early" dialogues (Vlastos 1991).

This has to be interpreted from Socrates' actions in the early dialogues. *Elenchus* requires that at least two voices are heard in dialogue, forcing the participants to deal with another person. No matter how strange or alien the other person's opinion seems to be, the Socratic dialogue cannot continue until something has been accepted by both parties. It presupposes that the participants know something of the matter discussed. *Elenchus* is not aimed at a general audience; its purpose is to enlighten the participants. In this way, it is a personal affair but in cooperation with the other participant. The idea of this refutation is similar to Karl Popper's (Popper 1992) idea of falsification.

By the middle and late dialogues (e.g. in *Phaedrus*) Plato was suspicious of writing philosophy because the written word only represents an image of what was said. One cannot go back to the written text and continue the *elenchus* by arguing against a statement or asking it to clarify itself. The written text "talks" to every reader the same way; it can not, like a good teacher, adapt its contents or how it is presented to the reader. Aristotle, on the contrary, thought that literature and especially tragedy can give us an insight into man's nature (Scolnicov 1988). Plato seems to argue that the dialogue form in writing is at least second best to participating in a live dialogue (Seeskin 1987). Plato continues to use this form (political writing at this time often used dialogue as a rhetorical form) (Vlastos 1991). The cognitive idea is that a relation between the interlocutors is essential for learning to take place (Scolnicov 1988).

#### 4.2.4 Dialogic "rules" of conduct

*Elenchus* requires honesty to say what one really thinks or believes (to exclude debate and unasserted premises), reasonableness to admit that one does not know, and the courage to continue investigation. Dialogue in this sense requires cooperation and, in turn, appropriate forms of behavior. The participant must be willing to speak frankly in criticizing other people's positions and respond gracefully when his/her own position is being attacked. The participant has the freedom to revise or reject a belief or statement, provided that he or she still remains consistent with his or her behavior. Seeskin (1987) defines three rules for participants' actions:

- The respondent cannot hide behind hypotheticals
- The questioner cannot force the respondent to accept something he does not believe. He cannot dogmatize, judge, or ask the respondent to take something on belief, or decide on what is self evident.
- The respondent has the freedom to make whatever modifications he wishes provided that he remains consistent with himself.

Scolnicov (1988) defines three main demands which Socrates makes of his interlocutors:

- The demand that answers be given out of personal conviction. Everyone is held personally responsible for his or her opinions; no opinion is maintained solely on trust of authority. Authority, common sense, tradition or democratic vote in itself is not enough. It has to be the belief of the interlocutor, at least for the time being. The opinion can be considered “mine” if it fulfills at least two conditions:
  - I am convinced of its truth; and
  - I can integrate it without contradiction to my other opinions.
- The demand for consistency. The interlocutor’s various opinions must be consistent and not contradictory. The opinions also must be consistent with his/her actions.
- The demand for definitions. This is a logical tool, guaranteeing the objective value of consistency.

Socrates’ starting-point is always the world of everyday experience (Scolnicov 1988). A fourth demand therefore could be added (Nelson 1965):

- The demand for taking examples from every day life.

#### 4.2.5 The role of Socrates’ questioner

Plato has Socrates compare himself to a midwife in “Thaetetus”. Socrates’ mother Phænarete is said to have been a midwife, a plausible explanation for the allegory of childbirth as a description of Socratic dialogue (Vlastos 1994). Sophie Haroutunian-Gordon (1989) describes what skills should characterize the questioner by analyzing how Socrates describes himself when referring to himself as a midwife:

- Knowledge and experience are required:
  - in language, to interpret messages to determine when two assertions are contradictory and to know that it is impossible to maintain two contradictory statements simultaneously
  - in questioning, to interpret what others are really believing
  - in knowing how to connect new ideas with those that have already been accepted, thereby evaluating truth and falsity.
- Ability to recognize when someone is “pregnant” with an idea and to separate these persons from those whose minds have “never conceived at all”.
- Ability to control the suffering of “giving birth” to ideas by asking more questions to clarify the interlocutor’s beliefs and by this either enlighten the idea further or help the interlocutor “miscarry” dysfunctional ideas .
- Ability to select partners who in dialogue will produce the “best offspring” in terms of the most fruitful ideas.

But this alone, according to Haroutunian-Gordon, will not explain how Socrates works as an educator, since he does not always practice the skills suggested by the midwife analogy. He is not providing us a method of teaching. He engages us in thinking by not telling us the answers, by questioning, by

contradicting himself, sometimes expressing our ideas and sometimes provoking them so that we discover new ideas and beliefs in ourselves. Socrates rejects retaliation and says that he cannot take “*common counsel*” with anyone that does not agree with him on this (Vlastos 1991). His stance is that it’s only in a spirit of benevolence and without envy that philosophical discovery can take place. On the other hand, he uses irony, mockery, paradox, myth, and satire as tools to puzzle his interlocutors in the dialogues. Vlastos (1991) distinguishes between three different uses of irony: 1. as humor 2. as mockery and 3. as handling the interlocutor a riddle to solve for himself, “complex irony”. Vlastos argues that Socrates uses irony in the third sense, getting the interlocutors to learn by reflecting and contradicting themselves. As history has shown, this is done at a great risk of misunderstanding.

#### 4.2.6 Socrates: the gadfly, the midwife and the stingray

Seeskin (1987) and Scolnicov (1988) both argue that the Socratic dialogue is indistinguishable from therapy in the sense that Socratic philosophy assumes that if the respondent is laboring under false beliefs, he cannot really be satisfied with his behavior. The questioner guides the respondent to better thinking, but it is the respondent who decides if the answers are successful (Socratic questioning is today used in cognitive therapy). But Vlastos (1991, p. 139) argues that neither therapy nor irony is the object of Socrates: “*Socrates is not playing games, ironic or therapeutic, but is engaged in the most serious business of his life, searching for the right way to live.*”

Gareth B Matthews (1999) suggests that to understand the Socratic idea of education you need to consider all three analogies in the dialogues simultaneously: the educator as a gadfly (the stinging fly), as a midwife, and finally as a stingray. Simply considering one or two of them will not give a complete picture. The end of the dialogue never gives the answer away, the puzzle still remains for the interlocutor (and for the readers) to continue solving. Seeskin (1987) argues that irony is used by Plato as a literary device to get the reader to continue Socrates’ work. In *Meno*, Socrates remarks that by making a person feel perplexed, numbing him, he is doing him a service because he has removed the false conceit of thinking he knows when he does not. Matthews (1999) argues that Socrates uses perplexity, *aporia*, to perplex both the interlocutor and himself. Like a self-stinging stingray, Socrates himself is baffled, even speechless because he had already thought about the problem on many early occasions. *Aporia* is used as a means to transform knowledge from latent to manifest knowledge, but not by merely transporting knowledge from the teacher to the student, but by puzzling both, inducing both to continue the search, portraying a thinking disposition rather than a methodology. Does the *elenchus* result in a better character? This is up to the respondent; the questioner merely provides the opportunity.

### 4.3 Socratic dialogue in Platonic pedagogy

As said earlier, Plato changed the way he described educational methods in his middle and later works. Scolnicov (1988) argues that Plato saw the limitations of Socratic *elenchus* and introduced a new method, the method of hypothesis. The main reason for this may have been that he saw that no city or state could be led by such premises as the ones suggested in the early dialogues. Platonic education is graded and selective; it is a gradual process of clarification, from inadequate to adequate cognition. The perplexity in platonic pedagogy becomes purely instrumental, stimulating the learner to think hard enough to arrive at the right answer.<sup>29</sup>

Monika Ringborg (2001) sees no distinction between the voice of Socrates and that of Plato. In her dissertation she analyzes the pedagogic notions in the totality of the dialogues and regards them as Plato's ideas. Ringborg states that to Plato education is the conversion from being motivated by "my" interest to being attracted by supra-personal aims. The aim is fostering intellectual autonomy and changing the individual's view of the world, fusing intellect with existential experience. Plato concludes that truth and knowledge are not embedded in all human beings, but that the individual's real desires and interests are transcendent to him. He also concludes that most people never will fully grow up morally, never attain full knowledge and will therefore never see their place in the world. Ringborg describes the Socratic dialogue as the first step in Plato's education. Plato used the Socratic dialogue to make the pupil conscious of his or her illusions, prejudices, and beliefs, so that he or she can pass on to learn facts from these assumptions. After these first steps of education begins the education of philosophers: to test the assumptions in relation to what is learned. Then a systematic and logical way to think is taught, resulting in theoretical knowledge. At the last stage, the wise philosopher will continue to learn dialectically by himself (Ringborg, 2001). The five different stages described are Plato's *Doxa* and surpassing *Doxa*, *Dinoia*, *Episteme* and *Noesis*.

### 4.4 Perplexity and virtues in Aristotelian pedagogy

As with Plato, digging too deep into Aristotelian philosophy will take us too far from our quest to catch the soul of the dialogue. I will here only make some comments on some of Aristotle's ideas of virtue that can shed light on what takes place in the Socratic seminars. As we will see later, some of the promoters of Socratic seminars - Mortimer J. Adler, Robert M. Hutchins, Hans Larsson, Lars Lindström, and Leonard Nelson - refer to both Socrates

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29 Mathews (1999) however suggests that the late works of Plato might be interpreted as if Plato returns to being perplexed himself in a kind of second-order perplexity, an impetus to further philosophical inquiry.

and Aristotle when describing Socratic seminars. To some extent, Aristotle returns to and elaborates Socratic ideas. Aristotle believes that the philosophizing process starts with wonder or puzzlement. However, he gives the puzzle, *aporia*, a different methodological role. To him it is rather the puzzles which might lead one to a state of perplexity, rather than being the state itself. He makes collecting perplexities an important step in organizing and directing an inquiry. He includes not only moral perplexity, but metaphysical and epistemological (Matthews 1999). Aristotle considers man socialized through the social context where he lives. Opposite to Plato's transcendent world, Aristotle's man becomes who he is (and what he thinks) in his own community (Gustavsson in Jonsson, Roth 2003).

#### 4.4.1 Aristotle's habits, virtues and practical wisdom

Aristotle agrees with Socrates that the philosopher must occupy himself with moral virtues, trying to find universal definitions for them, but criticizes Socrates for identifying virtue as knowledge and believing that all virtues are one (e.g. in *Magna Moralia* and *Methaphysics*) (Vlastos 1991). Aristotle states that there is a difference between enhancing one's moral knowledge and improving one's moral character. Knowledge precedes understanding which precedes wisdom (Adler 1996). Aristotle identifies a number of moral virtues such as courage, consciousness, and righteousness as well as a number of intellectual virtues, such as judgment, intellectual honesty, integrity, and practical talent (Aristotle 1998).

He is, however aware that these may very well collide in real life. The ability to distinguish moral aspects and to balance them shows the possession of a superior virtue, or "practical wisdom", "*Phronesis*", allowing us to find a way to act, even when confronted with a multiplicity of ideas and aspects. Attaining this virtue takes long experience, and using it is an intuitive process, where we use our knowledge of the other virtues to find the "wise" way to act. This might be compared to the hermeneutic concept of "pre-judgment" (Adler 1997, Möller 2003). The anticipatory fore-structures of understanding allow us to grasp what is to be interpreted or understood in a preliminary fashion (cf. Gadamer 1994). A way to learn virtue is through role models. We tend to imitate other people's actions, either in a morally good or bad way. This makes virtue an acquired disposition to act (Aristotle, 1998). It is acquired by forming a habit, and the habit is formed by repeated actions. When we have acquired the disposition to act, it will become a part of our character, anticipating resolutions, feeling and action. Virtues become active when our choices are involuntary or problematic in one way or another (Adler 1997, Silfverberg 1999).

One way to cope with difficulties is to choose the golden mean, to seek to avoid exaggeration, avoiding both too much and too little (Aristotle 1998). Silfverberg (1999) claims Aristotle saw dialogue as the most fundamental



and humane method for investigating ethics, a somewhat controversial statement. Aristotle's way of dealing with language could be seen as focused on expression rather than on interaction: the logical mind expresses its thought with help of grammar, logic, and rhetoric (Linell 1998). Silverberg's (1999) claim should be seen in the light of Aristotle's discussions on how to learn virtue via role models and that the ability to communicate distinguishes man from animal. In Silverberg's interpretation of Aristotle we are already making a statement on ethics by exercising ethics. Participating in a dialogue of this kind is not aiming at understanding the other person's situation, but at understanding the points of view he is stating. According to Silverberg (2002) this requires:

- An open mind to examine the own ideas and to be prepared to change and develop them
- Respect for differences and multiple points of view
- Listening attentively, not only to what the other person is saying, but to what is meant and to process this in a way that might give a better understanding of oneself.

# 5 Progressive Education and Dialogue as Education in Democracy

The hope of life must be the secretive Ariadne's thread which leads us on our fumbling journey from the one constant to the next on the way to our common goal: the development of the child into the person of tomorrow.

Celestin Freinet<sup>30</sup>

## 5.1 Progressive education

Progressive education theory and practice developed in the United States, the Soviet Union, and Europe from the 1880s (Arfweson 2000). Most of the progressive reform experiments culminated and disappeared during the 1930s, as the political climate changed. The ideas continued to influence educational practice in introducing health controls for all children, handicraft, art, and sports. The main object of the reforms was to create a better society through education. The changing society also needed a different approach to learning and progressive education met some of those needs (Bernstein, Lundgren 1983). The core theories depended on the specific historical and cultural traditions of the countries where they originated; however, the actual practices were relatively consistent from country to country (Arfweson 2000). In the United States, pragmatic philosophy was the theoretical base, with John Dewey as the main philosopher. One of the main ideas of pragmatism was that in the industrial and technological era living and working conditions were constantly changing; therefore the needs and values also had to change. German educational philosophy, on the other hand, stemmed from Kant's philosophy of building of a moral character, from Pestalozzi, and from the *Bildung* tradition. The American progressive theory was characterized by a short tradition and focused on the future and what was to be accomplished. The German progressive theory embraced today and tomorrow but included learning from great thinkers of the past.

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30 Freinet (1988), p 199 in "Pour l'école de peuple" 1969 (author's translation): "Detta hopp om livet skall vara den hemlighetsfulla ariadnetråd som leder oss på vår trevande vandring från den ena konstanten till den andra fram till vårt gemensamma mål: barnets utveckling till morgondagens människa."

Shared influences and exchange of ideas were common, giving the practice a more identical form than the theories<sup>31</sup>. The fundamental principles, independent of where the practice was carried out, were the principle of freedom of the child, the principle of manual work, and the principle of cooperation in the community. These practices had two objectives: to create a democratic society with reflective and responsible citizens and to develop the individual's potentials. One common method for achieving these goals was community meetings.

## 5.2 Freinet and dialogue in community meetings

The French pedagogue Celestin Freinet<sup>32</sup> is a representative of one of the influential teachers working practically with progressive education. Freinet offers no corresponding idea to the Socratic seminar, nor do any of the contemporary progressive pedagogues. However, they do present dialogue as a working tool. Freinet's practical solution to moral and democratic education is group growth through community meetings, focusing on current events in the class (Björklund, Lind 1977), Freinet 1988, first published in 1948). His methods show strong similarities to the early ideas of John Dewey (2004, Pihlgren 2006b), of the Polish-Jewish pedagogue Janusz Korczak (Korczak 1991, 1988, first published in 1929, 1993), and the Russian pedagogue A. S. Makarenko (Makarenko 1955, first published in 1933-35). All students participate; the chairman and the secretary are students. The teacher is situated in the back of the room as a participant. The secretary starts with reading the report of the last meeting. The meeting continues discussing mutual concerns: if the community is going to buy a rabbit, what cooperative work is to be done by whom, and how are problems that arise in the classroom to be solved. The wall newspaper is read where, during the week, the children have made notes of complaints and suggestions. These are all discussed. When there are disagreements, the parties are asked by the chairman to state their different views, starting with the complaint and continuing with the defense. The rest of the class is then asked to help to solve the problem. The same steps are followed if the critique concerns the teacher. The atmosphere should, according to Freinet, be one of constructive criticism, self-

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31 John Dewey visited the Soviet Union 1928 and met with Nadezjda Krupskaya, Commissar of Education, who was influenced by Dewey's ideas (Potapeno 2004). Celestin Freinet visited Krupskaya in 1925. Freinet was strongly influenced by the Belgium Ovide Decroly, who was influenced by Dewey. Freinet was influenced by and debated with the Italian pedagogue Maria Montessori, who had met was highly influenced by Dewey (Pihlgren 2004, 2006a).

32 Celestin Freinet (1896-1966) worked as a teacher from the 1920s till his death. He wrote a number of books, mainly focusing on practical methods. He mentions as inspirational sources Rabelais, Montaigne, Rousseau, Fichte, Ferrière, Ferrer, Piaget, Montessori, (Pihlgren 2004, 2006b). Freinet education is currently represented in schools in 53 countries throughout the world (see Web-sites Freinet).

examination and respect, totally free from gossip, slander, petty malice, or cliquism. The object is to foster responsibility and personality, enriching students' learning by handling conflicts in a rational way (Nordheden 1995, 2004).

### 5.3 John Dewey and dialogues as recitations

John Dewey was influenced from the beginning by Hegel, an influence that decreased over time<sup>33</sup>. He picked up influences from Darwin and Rousseau, but also ideas from the American Enlightenment, from Thomas Jefferson and Horace Mann (Hartman, Lundgren 1980). In a pragmatic way, he dealt with the practical issues of society, but through philosophical analysis. "Intelligent action" was the goal: democratic groups analyzing the context, trying possible solutions and transforming valid ideas into action (Honett 2003). Except for the progressive "Laboratory School" run by his wife Alice Chipman Dewey, his work is almost entirely theoretical (Ryan 1995). Although he is considered the father of progressive education, he frequently criticized the methods used by his followers, especially in his later works.

Dewey thinks of school as an almost revolutionary institution, where the society of tomorrow is created (Dewey 1966, first published in 1916). Communication is one of the most essential skills needed to build a democratic society. Individuals interact in a context. As the context constantly changes, the moral codes have to be reinterpreted and valued (Hartman, Roth et al. 2003), and then put into "intelligent action" to reform society in the best way. Genuine freedom is intellectual and rests in the power of thought, to be able to look at matters deliberatively. Since Dewey considers knowledge strictly relative, training of thought as habits of mind is needed to make good choices. To think well, students must change the habits of "ordinary affairs and conveniences" and form habits concerned with "precise notions" (Dewey 1997, first published in 1910). These habits include a lively, sincere, and open-minded preference for conclusions that are properly grounded and the ability to handle methods of inquiry and reasoning. This also means to avoid dependence on what others say, avoid prejudice, self-interest, and a narrow choice of topics or interests. Dewey suggests that teachers should stimulate and direct the students' reflection in "recitation" (Dewey 1997). He defines three steps in the process:

1. Preparation and presentation as getting the sense of a problem. This is a fairly short process, where the teacher presents something unexpected, puzzling, or peculiar to arouse the curiosity of the students.

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<sup>33</sup> John Dewey (1859-1952) professor in philosophy at the University of Michigan, the University of Chicago and at the Columbia University has had a strong influence on contemporary educational systems throughout the world. His wrote around forty books, and over seven hundred articles (Ryan, 1995, Westbrook, 1991, Pihlgren, 2004, 2006:1).

2. The distinctively rational phase of reflective inquiry, elaborating the idea or working hypothesis through comparison and contrast, the process ending in definition or formulation.
3. Generalization as application to the new. The student here should have the opportunity to test his/her ideas, to make the meanings clearer and to discover their validity, for instance by applying them to their everyday life.

### 5.3.1 Deliberative democracy

Since the 1990s, deliberative democracy<sup>34</sup>, with the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas as inspirational source, has been discussed as a complement or even an alternative to representative democracy. The discussion is carried out with a pragmatic approach by researchers, politicians, and recently, among educators. One area of development is to involve different groups in society to participate in political planning and decision making (Forester 1999). In education deliberation focuses on the process of dialogue itself (Roth 2001). A dialogue is deliberative when different views are being expressed, tolerance and respect for the other participants are expressed, efforts are made to come to an agreement, authorities/traditional opinions may be questioned, part of or the entire dialogue is carried out without the teacher (Englund in Jonsson, Roth 2003). The deliberative approach has been criticized for lack of practical method (Fritzell 2001).

The use of dialogue as an educational tool by Dewey, Freinet, and the deliberative tradition aims at teaching students intellectual understanding and how to negotiate an agreement. Dewey's recitation aims at generalization, Freinet's community meetings at decision-making, the deliberative dialogue at democratic consensus by looking for "the better argument". These classroom dialogues deal with problem solving or decision-making in the group and the practical application of moral ideas.

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34 Deliberative – relating to or involving consideration or discussion, from *L. deliberati'vus*, Deliberation – 1. Long and careful consideration or discussion 2. Slow and careful movement or thought from *L. deliberare*, 'consider carefully' (Oxford Dictionary. 1999).

## 6 Dialogue as Folkbildning-Swedish Popular Education

The question is not to be merely educated or merely artist nor politician, but human being.

Hans Larsson<sup>35</sup>

### 6.1 Bildning

The word *Bildung* in German and *bildning* in Swedish as a description of a cultural and political phenomenon became commonly used in German-speaking countries and in Scandinavia in the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Gougoulakis 2001, Gustavsson 1991). Some of the Socratic traditions in Sweden are parts of the *bildning* movement, and I will give a short encounter of the movement as a whole before referring to the more specific Socratic tradition. Bernt Gustavsson's (1996) thorough investigation of *bildning* from a variety of angles: its theoretical, historical, and linguistic backgrounds, concludes that *bildning* represents a relation between the known and the unknown. Through dialogue we meet with new and different interpretations of being human, leaving us with new perspectives of ourselves. It gives a sense of meaning, of being part of a bigger context. But to reach this understanding requires distance from our own understandings, Gustavsson adds.

The word *bildning* is equivalent to *Bildung* in German, *dannelse* in Danish, *obrazjenie* in Russian and to the Greek concept *paideia*<sup>36</sup>. There is no exact translation in English or French. English texts use either "general education", "liberal education" or just "culture" but none are quite equivalent to *Bildung* or *bildning*. The Swedish word *bildning* has (like the German word *Bildung*) two linguistic origins. The Swedish word "*bilda*", means to create, to form. The individual is formed through the *bildning*-process. The Swedish word "*bild*" means picture, or image. This origin stems from the tradition of

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35 Hans Larsson (1993) from the introduction to "Om bildning och självstudier" 1908 (author's translation): "Det gäller att vara inte blott lärd eller blott konstnär, eller politiker, utan människa".

36 In 4000 BC, the importance of *bildning* in Greece was so great, that the word *Paideia* was synonymous with the state (Garefalakis 2004).

Christian mysticism, *Imago Dei*. In the *bildning*-process the individual is looking for an ideal, a model, which is the object or purpose of *bildning*. The two different linguistic origins suggest the inner complexity of the concept of *bildning* (Gustavsson 1992).

Another contrast expressed in the concept of *bildning* is between elitism and equality. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century *bildning* was used by the bourgeoisie to distinguish themselves as the educated class as opposed to the uneducated “masses” or “mob”. In *Émile*, Jean Jaques Rousseau argued that *bildning* and political rights should be considered every man’s right, a view that was put into pedagogical practice by Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi. But even the concept of education for everyone can also express views of elitism. The early popular education had, according to Gustavsson (1992), a double task: to contribute to better living conditions among workers but also to educate the masses as a disciplinary action.

There is also a conflict in the discussion of *bildning* between integration and specialization. *Bildning* suggests an Enlightenment integration of knowledge as opposed to the specialization of scientific knowledge. This was manifested in “the Encyclopædist’s” ambition to collect and systemize knowledge, but also by Immanuel Kant and his followers, who put the human being in the middle of the process of knowledge. The human mind was regarded as a unity and its abilities – reason, will and feeling, were considered integrated parts of this unity.

These different concepts of *bildning* create different ideals. The concept of *bildning* developed during a period of self-education among members of the manual working class and in the Free Church movement in the early Swedish popular education programs around 1880-1930. Popular education is here used as equivalent to the Swedish word “*folkbildning*”. Gustavsson (1991) distinguishes between three important tendencies in popular education: the ideal of the education of the citizen, the neo-humanistic personality creating ideal and the ideal of self-education. The education of the citizen, i.e., civic education, stems from the Age of Enlightenment and “the Encyclopædist’s”. *Bildning* in this tradition was not only a way of creating economic and political development, but also a way to develop morality and intellect among the people. The neo-humanistic ideal of *bildning* deals with the forming of the personality with Humbolt and Hegel as its fathers. In this tradition, the ability to *bildning* is embedded in the human soul. The only way to become educated is by studying classic works, completely voluntarily. The ideal of self-education on the other hand, can be traced back to Rousseau and the Kantian theory of cognition, where understanding is regarded as a life-long activity possible for every human being. Here, the *bildning* processes might focus on classic work, not in uncritical studying but in reflectively relating its contents to one’s own experiences. Whether or not the actual outcome of the tendencies lived up to their high ideals is more difficult to

say. However, self-education as a practice includes the idea of the Socratic seminar and will be more closely examined here.

## 6.2 Swedish popular education

The industrialization of the Swedish society and the growth of the people's movements aroused a need for education for the broad masses. Popular education started in the Free Church movement and the working class movement as an opposition to the dominant culture (Arvidson 1985)<sup>37</sup>. The formal educational institutions were seen as part of a conservative system. But the members required increased knowledge in order to carry out the program of the movements. This dilemma was overcome by building educational systems within the movements and/or demanding reforms in the formal education system. The *Bildning* movement grew contemporary with reform pedagogy and ideas of progressive education. The two movements have some sources of inspiration in common: Plato, Rousseau, and Pestalozzi. Important implementers of Swedish popular education such as Oscar Olsson commented on how to apply the study circle methods in Swedish compulsory schools by referring to his visits to American schools and the methods of John Dewey (Olsson 1921, 1926)<sup>38</sup>. Olsson commented on individual coaching instead of lecturing, on personal development through individual planning, working in projects, learning with both intellectual and manual focus, working with arts, drama, and literature concluding that these ideas are a way to transform the study circle into formal educational institutions.

The most widely adopted strategy within popular education was the study circle. The idea of the circles came from bible study and the Chautauqua movements in the United States<sup>39</sup> and from bible circles in England, where Oscar Olsson<sup>40</sup>, "father of the Swedish study circle", was inspired. Oscar

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37 As the formal education system was reformed, popular education gradually became more independent towards the movements. The topics and the educational methods changed from fundamental questions to topics of leisure time occupations (Arvidson 1985, Hirdman 1945, Sundgren 2000).

38 Olsson referred to observations e.g. in Federic Burks schools in San Francisco, Helen Parkhurst and the Dalton Plan and experimental schools in Chicago, New York, Oakland (Olsson 1921, 1926).

39 The Circuit Chautauqua was founded 1874 by businessman Lewis Miller and the Methodist minister, later bishop, John Heyl Vincent in the New York State on Lake Chautauqua. The programming first focused on training Sunday school teachers but soon expanded to reach other groups. Summer camps offered three to seven days of lectures on a variety of subjects but also cultural events like theatre, opera and movies. Independent circuits established and at its peak in the mid-1920s, circuit Chautauqua performers and lecturers appeared in more than 10 000 communities in 45 states to audiences totalling 45 million people, (Web-site The Library of Congress American History 2006).

40 Oscar Olsson, called "Olsson with the beard" by his contemporaries (1877 - 1950). PhD in literature history in 1899. Entered the Swedish parliament 1949 (Lindström 1988).



Olsson carried out the first circle in Lund 1899-1902 and later, together with several other people, formed the ideological construction of self-education through study circles. The two most important movements, the Swedish Order of Good Templars and the working class circles used similar educational methods. This can be explained by Oscar Olsson's stimulating influence at this time (Arvidson 1985). There were also similarities to some of the seminars held at the universities in Sweden at the time (Lindström 1988). Socratic dialogue influenced Olsson, but as opposed to the "classicists", Olsson rejected the aristocratic part of the Greek heritage. In modern days, *bildning* is for all citizens, he stated. Self education, closely connected to libraries, was the most common form of study circle, sometimes in cooperation with the addition of experts who lectured. Ten to fifteen participants were to cooperatively search for knowledge through books and by discussion. The circle should assemble for a series of about ten meetings, using this time to adjust methods to the needs of the participants.

### 6.2.1 The ideas of Hans Larsson, Ellen Key, and Oscar Olsson

Olsson was inspired by Hans Larsson<sup>41</sup>, professor of philosophy in Lund. Larsson, who was inspired by Socrates, Kant, and Fichte, emphasized and developed the idea of knowledge as an activity through intellect (Larsson 1925). To Larsson, intellectual activity is an absolute condition if we are to develop consciousness. In daily life, the important things are hidden to us. When educating ourselves, we must try to integrate thought, will and feeling and by intuition reach beyond the conceptions of daily life. Man has a free choice, but every individual participates in the total development of mankind and the development is also integrated in the individual. *Bildning* is open to everyone and the best way to self-education is to concentrate on a problem in a discipline and by this problem reach the depth where all disciplines unite, in the human consciousness. *Bildning* to Larsson is a way of life rather than the attainment of a certain amount of knowledge. "Not all, but the whole – in the particular"<sup>42</sup> was his goal. Hans Larsson developed a new path in educational philosophy, necessary for the forthcoming development of self-education. He also popularized the idea of *bildning* and his books were read in wide circles both within and outside the popular education movements.

Oscar Olsson had influential contact with Ellen Key<sup>43</sup>, who had a central position within the early popular movements due to her strong engagement in education and women's liberation. Key stressed the importance of aesthet-

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41 Hans Larsson (1862-1944), also called "Wise Hans" ("Kloke Hans") by his contemporaries, professor of theoretical philosophy at the university of Lund 1901-1927, member of the Swedish Academy 1925-. One of his main contributions to philosophy is the understanding of intuition (Lindström 1988).

42 In Gustavsson (1991), p. 144: "Icke allt, men det hela – i delen".

43 Ellen Key (1849-1926).

ic *bildning* for personal development. She said that we have to rise above our every day life to see the greater picture (Key 1992, originally published in 1919). Only art can give this experience. Influenced by the theory of evolution, she considered the individual development a consequence of taking part of collective human experiences with dialogue as the important method of education. But the individual also contributes to humanity by making her own choices and by continuing to educate herself throughout life. *Bildning* is, according to Key, obtained by “*the passion through which thought, feeling and fantasy are melted together to a higher unit that is bildning*”<sup>44</sup>. This idea of culture as both spiritual growth and as development of a “technical civilization” was an important aspect of *bildning* (Gougoulakis 2006).

Oscar Olsson, although strongly influenced by Key and Larsson, constructed his own ideal of *bildning*, as a result of his theoretical and practical experiences (Olsson 1911). He stated that *bildning* should deal with making the participants “human beings”, persons with good judgment, realistic views, and the ability to experience art and beauty (Olsson 1914). Olsson’s mission of *bildning* is hence an individualistic project, but accomplished cooperatively and with the object of reforming society. His idea was that the circles would spread throughout the country, reforming the society. He saw the study circle and self-education as part of future formal school education.

The ideas of *bildning* and of self-education are in many aspects a utopian project and it is hard to say whether or not it was accomplished in the actual study circles. This is however not important to this study. The described ideas and methods are here used to shed light on the methods of and intentions in the Socratic seminars.

### 6.3 The methods of dialogue as study circle

Olsson’s study circle was based on organized self-activity, where topics and methodology reflected Olsson’s ideas of self-education and its goals. The library was the starting point of the circle, a place where the participants would search for knowledge. The second step was reflective reading, carried out either individually at home or by someone reading aloud to the group. One objective of the “reading circles” was to make it possible for poor readers or non-readers to participate. The reflective reading was a phase in the process, where the participants should meet with the ideas of the text, reflect, and deepen their understanding on a personal level, relating the reading to themselves and to everyday life, like “*a voice in one’s own heart*” (Gustavsson 1991). Olsson stressed the importance of preparing carefully by reading the text, commenting, and marking it. In the third phase, the group met in

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44 Key (1906), p. 8-9: ”den glöd, genom vilken tankens, känslans och inbillningens innehåll smälter samman till den högre enhet, som är bildning”.

dialogue to reflect on the text and to relate it to their shared experiences. This made it possible for the participants to distance themselves from their everyday experiences and ideas. He stressed the importance of thinking of the ideas presented not as one's own, but as the ideas of the group.

Participants listening to others, refraining from trying to "win" discussions or from mere talking, would make the circle a safe place for boldly trying different ideas and taking delight in thinking. Olsson claimed that all this would result in better self-reliance. In his experience, attending study circles systematically resulted in the participants' gradually growing interest in good literature and disinterest in mass culture. They also would gain coping skills through dealing with different views, examining views logically, and forming their own opinions, not just accepting that of authorities.

### 6.3.1 The circle leader

It was difficult to find trained leaders for the early study circles. Oscar Olsson defined two kinds of circles. The first one dealt with elementary subjects like reading, writing, and so on. Here, reasonably educated people were to be preferred as leaders, although they had to work cooperatively with the participants. In a reading circle, the leader could be one of the group. As for the circles dealing with self-education, Olsson was more vague. On the one hand, he considered the circles to be a cooperative venture among equals; on the other hand he promoted trained leaders. Petros Gougoulakis (2001) points out that the relationships of authority in the circle are not given but negotiable and are legitimized in the interplay among equals. The study circle leadership was and is, according to Gougoulakis, fundamentally an idealistic assignment.

### 6.3.2 The goals and functions of the circle

To Olsson, the book was the important key to *bildning*. The "best of mankind" are to be our teachers in the essentials of life. The book, placed in the middle of the circle, studied by the group and connected to their own experiences, will result in true *bildning*. "Since the best sense in life is gained in the best company, Socrates himself also must join..."<sup>45</sup> Olsson focused on texts discussing values, but combined the personal *bildning* with intellectual and scientific studies. The ultimate purpose was democratic: critical thinking skills, self responsibility, and self-reliance were seen as necessary qualities in a functioning democracy. To Olsson, self-education was both the means to improving the social conditions in society and a means in itself for every

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45 "Eftersom det bästa levnadsvettet fås i det bästa umgänget, måste emellertid Sokrates själv vara med..." Oscar Olsson (in Gustavsson 1991, p. 163) from a hand written manuscript, "Studiecirkelns ursprung och principer", Personarkivet, volym 2.

human being (Gustavsson 1991). The personal connection to the human heritage starts in every day experiences but rises above the routine and is established by taking distance analyzing the texts. Finally the new knowledge is integrated with the personal experience in dialogue, relating to the shared experience of the group. The cultural heritage is not objective, or detached, but related to the individual and at the same time relating the individual to the collective human experience.

## 6.4 The methods of dialogues as discussions

Alf Ahlberg<sup>46</sup>, another one of Hans Larsson's disciples from Lund, continued the work of Olsson and Larsson by bringing their ideas of the study circle into post world wars pedagogy. Ahlberg (1986, originally published in 1934) argued that free thinking is endangered by propaganda. In a complex society, it will be impossible for the masses to cope with all the information they need to be able to make decisions in a democratic way. We will have to rely on experts and let them rule, as Plato suggested. But when the experts disagree, there is a risk that propaganda effectively will turn the democracy into dictatorship. The solution, according to Ahlberg, is an enlightened democracy. But this will require an energetic struggle to free the "life of thought"<sup>47</sup>. Popular education is to be looked upon as salvation of the *life of thought*. By true *bildning*, helping us to understand the limits of our knowledge and to separate right from wrong, popular education can teach us to choose the right leaders and to see through propaganda.

Ahlberg believed that thinking can be taught; it is not a skill we are born with. Even the greatest souls are sometimes mistaken. Language helps us to think. But words can also conceal the real intention or, more often, conceal that there is nothing there. Expressions without real meaning or imprecise, wide meanings like *democracy*, *spirit*, *God*, *collectivism* need to be analyzed and discussed, not just taken for granted. Also included here are false analogies, associations, and generalizations. We must see through the "*distorted pictures of the cave*"<sup>48</sup>, the prejudices with which we interpret the world. To accomplish this, we have to hear both sides of a case, and meet others with an open mind and foster our emotional life through aesthetic experiences. Ahlberg argues that isolation is spiritual death. Only by participating in a

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46 Alf Ahlberg (1892-1997) PhD under guidance from Hans Larsson in Lund, 1962 appointed honorary doctor in theology and 1975 professor. He wrote more than 60 books, many of them concerning popular education, democracy, defence against propaganda and philosophy (Ahlberg 1986). Among other books, he also translated Bryan Magee's book about Karl Popper and his theories and some of John Dewey's work into Swedish.

47 Life of thought is here used as a translation of Ahlberg's concept "tankelivet".

48 Ahlberg (1986, p. 67) here refers to the philosopher Francis Bacon and his four distorted pictures, idola. The distorted picture of the cave goes back to the allegory of the cave in the Republic by Plato (Plato 1991).

larger, human venture can the personality become complete. Shared dialogues are not in themselves the answer. Groups also have prejudices. Too many discussions tend to be battlefields, where the most ruthless, skillful, or slyest debater will win. A real dialogue ought to be cooperative.

#### 6.4.1 “Rules” and steps of the discussion

In discussions that foster the *life of thought*, not all topics are appropriate. The topic of discussion must be “good enough” in a logical sense. It cannot consist of false contradictions (“Are you a socialist or are you from Lund”?) or a topic that require expert knowledge (“Can taught qualities be inherited”?) (Ahlberg 1986). The topic has to be precise and defined. Participants should not act as debaters. Ahlberg specifically makes the shared dialogue a prohibited area for:

- mere chatterboxes
- everyone that does **not** want the question examined
- storytellers
- fanatics and dogmatists
- everyone that gets insulted by hearing another opinion
- quibblers and sophists
- If they cannot be turned out, they are to be ignored.

The participants will have to:

- desire that the question be examined
- try to keep on track, stick to the subject
- try to exercise logic
- come well prepared to the discussion

The participants should consider themselves as a team, probing and blasting their way through a tunnel. The key is to be able to separate statements from the individual, who articulated them, reflect on the statements, and to start with a positive view.

A discussion, Ahlberg concludes, is a cooperative work, and as such demands a general plan. Two participants should be assigned to represent the opposite views (if there are opposite views in the topic discussed). One participant starts with a short, clear presentation of the first view, goes on to a systematic support of the view, continuing with reasons that do not support the second view. Then the next participant will perform the same arguing for the second view. The two presenters should discuss the plan before the seminar takes place, exchange ideas and help each other to make quality presentations. They should define the different concepts on which the debate will focus and clarify the limits of the topic. The questions raised in the presentation are thereafter discussed by the group, starting with the simpler and continuing to the more abstract, referring to the consequences in everyday experience throughout.

## 7 Dialogue as Das Sokratische Gespräch<sup>49</sup>

The Socratic method, then, is the art of teaching not philosophy but philosophizing, the art not of teaching about philosophers but of making philosophers of the students.

Leonard Nelson<sup>50</sup>

### 7.1 Leonard Nelson and das Sokratische Gespräch

In 1922, the German philosopher Leonard Nelson (1882-1927) introduced a modified version of the Socratic dialogue, holding student seminars at the university. He was inspired by Kantian philosophy, not what he considered the “idealistic” distortion by the school of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel but by a more critical philosophy inspired by the lesser known J. F. Fries. Like Socrates, Nelson was absorbed by the question “How do I gain knowledge about virtue?” As the title suggests, his major study “System of Ethics” (Nelson 1956, originally published in 1924) was concerned with ethical behavior. He practiced the Socratic method in seminars with students for 18 years (1909-1927) at the University of Göttingen, (Julius Kraft in the introduction to Nelson 1956). Nelson was strongly opposed to the dominant type of “school philosophy”, where philosophy was taught as a set of rules for argumentation or as facts about great philosophers<sup>51</sup>. He was convinced of the moral force of the dialogue used for critical examination. Only individuals can decide to live virtuously and thereby form a just society. To accomplish this, a man must have character to govern his actions. Pedagogy is the systematic guidance of the individual virtue; its aim is to make individuals capable of fulfilling their ethical tasks (Nelson 1956). These conditions can be met by attaining an ideal of *Bildung*. Every individual has an equal right to the means to attain enlightenment. To what extent he makes use of those means is up to the individual. However, the individual’s development also

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49 „Das Sokratische Gespräch“: the Socratic Interlocution.

50 In Nelson (1965), p. 1.

51 As said earlier, the German tradition of general and progressive education was closely connected to the concept of *Bildung*: in 1820 Adolf Diesterweg reformed the teacher’s education in Mörs, highly influenced by Socratic education (Lindström 1988).

has consequences for public life. The virtue of public life is defined by the readiness of individuals to form a community serving public ends. For Nelson, this is what constitutes the area of politics.

Nelson considers Socrates a teacher rather than a philosopher. Socrates' chief pedagogic ideas are getting the students to do their own thinking and to introduce the interchange of ideas as a safeguard against self-deception. The Socratic method remains the only method for teaching philosophy, according to Nelson (1965, originally published in 1929).

## 7.2 The methods of das Sokratische Gespräch

### 7.2.1 The role of the teacher

The teacher should not give any answers when questions are addressed to him, but instead set the interplay of questions and answers going among the students by asking open-ended questions to the group. He should ignore questions, answers, or statements that are uttered in too low a voice or phrased incoherently (this in order to teach the students a scientific speech). He should require that the participants keep to the subject and should remind participants of the demands made on them if necessary. The seminar most likely ends in perplexity and this is one of the points, Nelson argues. This will encourage the students to continue the search and to welcome the insight of ignorance to attain better wisdom.

### 7.2.2 Demands on the student

Nelson gives few methodological comments on how to perform seminars but specifies some demands that are to be made on the student (Nelson 1965):

- Communication of thought, not of acquired fragments of knowledge or knowledge of other peoples thoughts
- Clear, unambiguous language
- Distinctly audible and generally comprehensible speech, free from ambiguity.

Detlef Horster (1994) gives a more detailed description of seminars done in the "Nelsonian way". He adds a couple of demands of the participant<sup>52</sup>:

- Arrive on time for the seminar
- Participate every time

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<sup>52</sup> Horster (1994) cites Holger Frank and Gustav Heckman, who both tried to reconstruct the Nelsonian seminars they had been attending during their studies. The Socratic Dialogue is practiced in Nelsons way by for instance groups in Denmark, England, Belgium and Germany (Hansen 2002, van Rossem 2006). Also see (Web-siteFilosofisk Ressurs 2006).

- If possible, be short and distinct
- Take notes to exercise self control
- Take examples from everyday life and speak your own mind
- Use the dialogue as a thinking tool, trying to listen and understand what others are really saying
- Try to be consistent

Kristof van Rossem (2006) adds these three rules:

- Say what you want to say, also about the conversation as such, at any moment you think is suitable
- Be concrete
- Try to establish a common enterprise

According to van Rossem, the interventions of the facilitator can be legitimized by these rules; he or she must embody the rules.

### 7.2.3 The steps of das Sokratische Gespräch

The seminar starts in the everyday experience of one of the participants, continues with the hard work of defining the concept in question, and ends in a new experience or insight that can be tested. It is a process of gradual abstraction. The following steps are prescribed (van Rossem 2006):

1. The participants try to define and collect the properties of the concept by giving examples (e.g. what properties of an art product can we find?)
2. The properties are summarized and collected on the board
3. The group tries to find more examples followed by a new summary (is anything missing?)
4. The list is divided into necessary and possible properties (which of these properties solely belong to this concept and which can be used on other concepts as well?)
5. The last step is to find the essential criteria of the concept (e.g. how can we distinguish an art product from all other products?).

One last important step is promoted, the meta-dialogue, where the group considers the following:

- What disturbed the dialogue?
- Did we keep to the rules?

This is also an opportunity for the participants to ask the facilitator why he or she acted in a specific way, to discuss, criticize and learn to improve the dialogue in the next seminar. The dialogue can continue for days and is a lived experience (van Rossem 2006). Further subjects for Das Sokratische Gespräch arise through questions such as: Why is it so hard to conduct a dialogue? Can we still feel hope about...? What is the difference between art and kitsch? Is objectivity possible?



## 8 Dialogues as Great Conversation

In a conversation that has gone on for twenty-five centuries, all dogmas and points of view appear. Here are the great errors as well as the great truths. The reader has to determine which are the errors and which the truths. The task of interpretation and conclusion is his. This is the machinery and life of the Western tradition in the hands of free men.

Robert M Hutchins<sup>53</sup>

### 8.1 Mortimer J. Adler and Robert M. Hutchins

*"TO HORACE MANN, JOHN DEWEY AND ROBERT HUTCHINS who would have been our leaders, were they alive today."*

This is the dedication of "The Paideia<sup>54</sup> Proposal", where Mortimer J. Adler<sup>55</sup>, American philosopher, presents the ideas of the Paideia group. Like Dewey, Adler started his philosophical career in a dialectic tradition, influenced by ideas from the early American Enlightenment and pedagogic ideas from Thomas Jefferson<sup>56</sup> and Horace Mann<sup>57</sup>, particularly the ideas of education being vitally important to a democratic society. But contrary to Dewey, who gradually adopted a pragmatic view, Adler turned to Aristotle and Thomas of Aquinas for philosophical guidance, and was also influenced by the Socratic method. Adler's goal was a life-long education for all citizens in

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53 Hutchins (1952), p. XX.

54 "Paideia" is the Greek similarity to the Swedish *bildning*. In the Proposal translated to "the upbringing of a child", and compared to the Latin word *humanitas* (Adler 1982).

55 Mortimer Jerome Adler (1902-2001) was, when the book was written Director of the Institute for Philosophical Research in Chicago and author of a number of books and a large quantity of articles concerning philosophy, language, literature and politics. All together Adler wrote around 60 books, with titles like "Dialectic" (1927), "How to read a book" (1972), "How to think about War and Peace" (1944), and "Six Great Ideas" (1981). His career focused on pedagogic and philosophical issues at the Chicago University, the University of North Carolina, the Institute for Philosophical Research and the Aspen Institute. He was also editor of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (Pihlgren 2004, 2006b).

56 Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) president of the USA 1801-09.

57 Horace Mann (1796-1856) American educational philosopher and politician, who articulated the connection between effective "common" schools and democracy.

a democracy. Part of the idea of life long learning came from Adler's belief in the child not being experienced enough to be able to cope with more complex matters or even responsible enough to understand the consequences of learning. In school children must be given the skills of learning and a desire to learn, so that they will want to go on learning throughout adulthood (Adler 1990). The classics and the great, philosophical ideas – the Great Books and the Great Ideas - were the cornerstones of his concept of education. Together with Robert M. Hutchins<sup>58</sup>, president of the University of Chicago, Adler and a group of intellectuals in 1947 formed "The Great Books Foundation"<sup>59</sup>, with the objective of supporting life-long learning through book circles where citizens could study and discuss the classics from all disciplines. In 1982, Adler brought together a group of educators and intellectuals to form the Paideia group<sup>60</sup>, to formulate the principles for how education was to be reformed. In 1988 Adler founded the National Paideia Center<sup>61</sup> to put the Paideia Project into practice.

The chief ideas of the Paideia group were presented in "The Paideia Proposal". The first chapter in the book is titled "Democracy and Education," and here Adler naturally refers to John Dewey and his efforts to try to insure a democratic society by designing a democratic school, with the same quality of education for all children (the title refers to Dewey's (1966) major work on education, "Democracy and Education"). Adler argued that there was still a great need to reform the educational system of 1982 in the spirit of Dewey. Adler stated that we had failed to carry out the educational mission Dewey intended and that we could not keep failing without catastrophic consequences for the democratic society. It hardly seems controversial to refer to Dewey in an educational manifesto suggesting a democratization of schools. In the case of Adler, it was highly controversial.

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58 Robert Maynard Hutchins (1899-1977), president of the University of Chicago 1929-1951, later associate director of the Ford Foundation in 1951, president of the Fund for the Republic in 1954, founded the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions in 1959, chairman and director of Encyclopædia Britannica 1943-1974 (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2007).

59 The idea of Great Books was conceived and implemented by Professor John Erskine at Columbia University in 1920. From there it took three different directions: the University of Chicago under Robert Hutchins and Mortimer Adler; Amherst College in Massachusetts under President Alexander Micklejohn; and St. John's College in Annapolis (and later Santa Fe) under Stringfellow Barr and Scott Buchanan (Erskine 1948). The Great Books Foundation is a nonprofit, independent organization, with the main object being to publish inexpensive paperback editions and train discussion leaders. They support about 850 circles all over the US, and offer activities for schools (Web-siteGreat Books foundation 2008).

60 The members of the Paideia Group were Mortimer J Adler, Jacques Barzon, Otto Bird, Leon Botstein, Nicholas L Caputi, Douglass Cater, Donald Cowan, Alonzo A Crim, Clifton Fadiman, Dennis Gray, Richard Hunt, Ruth B Love, James Nelson, James O'Toole, Theodore T Puck, Adolph W Schmidt, Adele Simmons, Theodore R Sizer, Charles van Doren, Geraldine van Doren and John van Doren (Adler 1982, 1992).

61 Today, the National Paideia Center, affiliated to the University of North Carolina, educates teachers and leaders as how to realize the Paideia Principles in school practice and also supports the transformation of whole schools (Web-siteThe National Paideia Centre 2008).

When Robert M. Hutchins was appointed the president of the University of Chicago in 1929, he recruited Adler for his faculty. The differences of opinion between a younger faction of the university, led by Hutchins and Adler, and the established faculty, highly influenced by Dewey, were soon apparent. It led to a harsh battle carried out in articles, lectures, and debates chiefly by Adler and Dewey. Adler's and Hutchins' main attack on Dewey was that he supposedly believed that knowledge was strictly relative and attainable only by experimenting. Dewey criticized Adler and Hutchins for supposedly trying to re-introduce a traditional school, celebrating classic ideals (Adler 1997, Lucas 1984, Ryan 1995, Westbrook 1991)<sup>62</sup>. Garefalakis (2004) concludes that the same conflict was present when Socrates' idealistic ethics were confronted by the Sophists' relative ethics.

Gerd B. Arfwedson (1998) seeks for a way to classify educational theories based on their view of *bildning*. The classification distinguishes between formal and material theories of education. In the formal theories, education is focused on the student. The formal educational theories can be divided into theories of functional and methodological *bildning*, sometimes considered together and sometimes acting separately. The functional theory states that the student possesses *bildning* when he or she has activated his or her full potential. The methodological theory stresses the student's ability to use effective learning strategies. Material educational theory, on the other hand, focuses on the subject matter and the material. The student possesses *bildning* when he or she has been exposed to the most important works of our cultural heritage, what Arfwedson calls "encyclopaedic knowledge". Described in these terms, one of the biggest misunderstandings seems to have been that Dewey and his supporters interpreted Adler's and Hutchins' ideas as traditionally "material". Adler and Hutchins rather tried to join a "formal, methodological" approach, with the classics as an important "participant" in their philosophical seminars. Adler's criticism of Dewey was that Dewey pushed a "formal, functional" line.

In the light of history, the conflict mostly seems like a series of misunderstandings (or intentional misinterpretations) of the pedagogical assumptions made by each party. There is however a real difference of opinions between Dewey and Adler from a philosophical point of view. Dewey's pragmatic point of view was that in every new era the conditions changed in society; therefore the needs and values also had to change with new condi-

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<sup>62</sup> Adler dealt with this criticism in two articles from 1939 (Adler 1990). He strongly opposed the classicism which dominated education at the end of the previous century. He suggested that the pendulum now had reached another unfortunate extreme in progressive education, criticizing Dewey for having excluded permanent studies because they regarded man merely an animal whose biological destiny could only be enhanced by scientific research. Adler (referring to Hutchins), on the other hand, considered the human being a unique species, with a constant nature which is transmitted from generation to generation and so able to learn from earlier generations as well as from experience.

tions. Since values are relative, education had to emphasize the fostering of free individuals who could carry out inquiry and make good decisions in cooperative interlocation with others. Adler's and Hutchins' view started off in another belief, but ended in partly the same result as Dewey's. Adler considered that there are ideas which are recurrent and common to mankind but that these have to be examined by every new generation in shared inquiry. As with Dewey, Adler's idea of education emphasized the fostering of free, critically thinking and responsible individuals, but, in contrast to Dewey, Adler believed that these traits would come from engaging in the "Great Conversation" with authors of the classics<sup>63</sup>. The intellectual virtues are the proximate ends of liberal or intellectual education (Adler 1990). They can be fostered as a habit. The moral virtues cannot be taught since the mean between the extremes of excess and defect is a subjective mean (cf. Aristotle). It is relative to the individual and to the context of the specific situation.

Dewey seemed to evolve his view on experimentation as the main source of knowledge between his early works ("The school and the society") and later writings ("Progressive Education and the Science of Education"). In the later works he promoted the importance of a curriculum where the teacher, with his or her riper experience and greater insight suggests projects and activities, fruitful to further learning (Pihlgren 2004, 2006b). In his second autobiography, Adler (1992) described how his own philosophical and educational ideas developed over the years, but that he also discovered that the same was true for Dewey. The "late" Dewey and the "late" Adler both revised their ideas and have in many ways a more common view about the essentials as to why and how the educational system had to change. When Adler wrote *The Paideia Proposal*, he concluded that the ideas of Dewey in many ways had been the forerunner of the ideas of the Paideia group. Roberts and Billings (1999) note that Adler successfully merged Hutchins tradition of "liberal education" with Dewey's belief in active student leaning.

## 8.2 Dialogues as shared inquiry

One practical outcome of Robert Hutchins' and Mortimer Adler's educational ideas was the publication of "The Great Books of the Western World". The Great Books movement aimed at universalizing liberal education for adults. Hutchins pointed out that there had never been a time in history when everybody had a chance to get a liberal education. When reading the Great Books the greatest masters will be our teachers, but we will have to remember that they also can be wrong. One important point is that the Great Books contradict one another on many points. That is why they are successful in-

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63 "The tradition of the West is embodied in the Great Conversation that began in the dawn of history and that continues to the present day", Hutchins (1952) p. 1.

struments in the pursuit of truth (Adler 1990, Hutchins 1952). The basic idea is that Great Books investigate the essential human questions in an endless pursuit through the history of mankind and we can all take part in this “Great Conversation” by reading, inquiring critically, and discussing. In “The Syntopicon” published 1952 as an adjunct to the fifty-two volume “Great Books of the Western World”, Adler listed 102 great ideas, later amended to 103 (Adler 2000), in alphabetic order, starting with angel, animal, art and ending with will, wisdom, world. Hutchins’ “Great Conversation” is both an individual and a social venture and has an individual goal, liberal education, and a societal goal, true democracy (Hutchins 1952). The Great Books were presented as a collection of literature from different disciplines and times, addressing different ideas and topics. The collection was created by a large group of editors led by Hutchins and published by *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Critics attacked the Great Books for focusing heavily on male, Western authors and that the list did not hold any contemporary work. Later, Adler and Hutchins included contemporary works in the list and also tried to widen the cultural sphere from which the books were chosen. The Great Books Foundation now provides a rich material of books for all ages, with the Junior Great Books for students K-12.

### 8.2.1 The methodology of shared inquiry

The idea of shared inquiry is that many minds working together can interpret a rich text better than any individual can do on his or her own. The participants and the leader should read the text at least twice before seminar. The leader prepares by writing down comments and questions that occur when reading the text and from those notes deriving a number of open-ended, interpretive questions, questions that can be answered from the text. The seminar participants and the leader are preferably seated around a table, so that all are able to see and address one another. The leader is to be a partner in inquiry who, through questioning, helps the students work together to discover the meanings of the text. The seminar leader functions as an intellectual role model. It is the task of the leader to encourage each participant to speak freely and thoughtfully. This is accomplished by listening to the participants comments, leading slowly in order for everyone to have time to think, trying to link answers, and turning to the text frequently. The leader should note ideas from the participants openly, to encourage and to show that the leader takes their ideas seriously and respects them as thinkers. The leader is encouraged to ask questions he or she doesn’t know the answer to. Three types of questions are established (*Leader Aid*. 1984):

1. Questions of facts, the answer being “on the lines” of the text. These are only used to check that everyone has understood the facts.
2. Questions of interpretation, the answer being “between the lines” of the text. These are the core of the seminar.

3. Questions of evaluation, the answer being “beyond the lines”, relating the ideas of the text to participants own experiences and values.

### 8.2.2 “Rules” in shared inquiry

Mortimer Adler (2000) presented ten rules when proposing seminar discussions in a series of TV-lectures on the Great Ideas broadcasted in 1953-1954. Seven rules are “intellectual”, the first two “external” and the rest “internal”:

- Pick the right occasion (control the context).
- Pick the right people (open to explore the ideas).
- Be relevant.
- Don’t take things for granted.
- Avoid, if possible, arguing fallaciously.
- Don’t agree or disagree with the other person until you understand what that person has said.
- If you do disagree, state your disagreement and give reason why.

The rest of the rules he calls “emotional rules”:

- Keep your emotions in place.
- Catch yourself or the other person getting angry.
- If you can’t control your emotions, at least beware of the results.

Great Books present the same intentions in four rules of shared inquiry with children (*An Introduction to Shared Inquiry*. 1991):

- No one may take part in the discussion without first reading the text (otherwise it will only become a debate about opinions).
- Discuss only the text everyone has read (not other versions, texts).
- Do not introduce other people’s opinions unless you can back them up with evidence from the story.
- Leaders may only ask questions. They may not answer them (the leader’s job is to help everyone including themselves to understand).

The participants should be able to revise and improve upon their initial answers and synthesize and build upon the ideas of others. They should be able to maintain a purposeful, considerate discussion but still be able to agree and disagree with other participants’ ideas. Great stress is put on reading ability and comprehension and are practically the same as what was suggested to adult readers in “How to Read a Book” (Adler, van Doren 1972, originally published in 1940): reading the book several times, marking, posing questions, looking up words in dictionaries; determining the author’s message by finding key sentences and arguments; and by criticizing and agreeing/disagreeing with the author by detecting discrepancies.

### 8.2.3 The steps of shared inquiry

The following schedule is suggested (*Junior Great Books*. 1992). The fourth session is the actual dialogue or shared inquiry:

Session 1:

- Text opener, short question to think of or discuss 10-20 minutes before text is read, to prepare students to connect their experiences with the story and to help them to overcome obstacles to understanding.
- First reading, giving the students an opportunity to take in the text on an imaginative and emotional level.
- Sharing questions, to clear up misunderstandings or factual errors and foster the idea to listen to different opinions.

Session 2:

- Second reading with directed notes, enabling the students to concentrate on thoughtful reading, identify and discuss important passages.

Session 3:

- Interpreting words, enabling the students to see how specific words can contribute to understanding the broader interpretive issue of the story and helping them to a basic strategy for thinking about definitions and approaching unfamiliar words.

Session 4:

- Shared Inquiry Discussion (including textual analysis). The discussion focuses on one substantial problem of meaning in the story. The students are asked to write down the initial question and their answer.

Session 5:

- Writing after discussion, to assist the thinking and to help assimilating new ideas, and to relate personal experience to the discussed.

A group of 10-15 students is suggested. Junior Great Books also suggest optional activities to support the thinking: further textual analysis, recording favorite books, art, and dramatization.

### 8.3 Dialogues as Paideia seminars

Other practical outcomes of Adler's educational ideas were the ones presented in "The Paideia Proposal" and later promoted by The National Paideia Center. Three equally important goals of education are presented. The Paideia schools should prepare the students to earn a living successfully, to participate actively in democratic self-governance and to live a life of learning (Adler 1982, Roberts, Billings 1999). To achieve these goals, Adler and the Paideia group stated that basic schooling must offer all students the same high quality education and that education from K-12 must be nonspecialized and nonvocational. The ideas can be traced back to Hutchins' (and Mann's) belief that the best education for the best was the best education for all. Adler defines two objects for education: the individual object, which is moral and is to be found in the analysis of virtues, and the state, a political area. Children will not become active citizens if they are not also made free individuals (Adler 1990). Training in the liberal arts is necessary when making

free men out of children, Adler states: reading, writing, speaking, listening, reckoning, measuring, manipulating matter, quantity, and motion in order to predict, produce, and exchange.

The Paideia idea includes a program where teachers, administrators, and other adults such as parents and community members engage in Paideia seminars. This way, children will see adults modeling lifelong learning (Roberts 1998). Paideia stresses a rigorous academic program for all children and postulates a systematic, whole-school reform. The Paideia classroom model features three complementary teaching techniques or “columns” that together deliver the curriculum (table 6). All three columns should be represented in all learning activities. The Paideia curriculum advocates integration of all subjects in coached projects, with authentic themes which interest the child. The three columns suggest three different approaches for the teacher. In the first column, the teacher introduces the students to a body of factual knowledge (didactic), in the second the teacher coaches them in the intellectual skills necessary to manipulate and apply knowledge (coaching). In the third column, where the Paideia seminar has the central role, the teacher becomes a “mid-wife”, facilitating the discussion by asking evocative questions (Roberts, Billings 1999): “*The teacher is first among equals*” (Adler 1982, p. 54).

Table 6. *The Three Paideia Columns* (Adler 1982, Roberts, Billings 1999).

<p><b><i>Acquisition of organized knowledge</i></b>          by means of didactic instructions (using textbooks and other aids in the areas of: language, literature, the fine arts, natural science, mathematics, history, geography and social studies)</p>	<p><b><i>Development of intellectual skills – skills of learning</i></b><sup>64</sup>          by means of coaching (using exercises and supervised practice in the areas of: reading, writing, calculating, problem-solving, measuring, speaking, listening, observing and exercising critical judgment)</p>	<p><b><i>Enlarged understanding of ideas and values</i></b>          by means of Socratic questioning (using active participation in discussion of: primary source materials: documents, literature but not textbooks, works of art). Involvement in artistic activities, music, drama and visual arts.</p>
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### 8.3.1 The goals and methodology of the Paideia seminar

To Adler, the seminars are an opportunity for the students to partake in “the Great Conversation”, but they also provide a base for the ethical and moral upbringing of good citizens and of free men. Adler (1984) refers to the seminars being Socratic in that Socrates is not acting didactically and that he is seeking to clarify ideas by posing questions. However, Adler specifically points out that Socrates in Plato’s dialogues is not a Paideia seminar leader, nor is he conducting a seminar. The Paideia seminar is, for one, a joint ven-

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64 Adler (1990) considers skills to be habits, not memories. Habits are more durable and habits depend upon being exercised continuously.



ture in a group and is focused on a “text”. “Socratic” refers to the seminar culture. One educational aim of the seminars is the understanding of ideas; another is promoting skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening and in critical, reflective, and independent thinking.

### 8.3.2 The steps of the Paideia seminar

Paideia seminars can be conducted at any level, kindergarten to adult, and at any level of complexity and sophistication. The basic procedure is to put questions to a group about a particular “text”, which deals at some level with the human experience. Adler comments (1983) that it is possible to conduct seminars without a “text” as base, referring to a procedure similar to the one Leonard Nelson introduced. The Paideia seminar is however usually conducted in the following steps (Roberts, Billings 1999):

1. Pre-seminar activities:
  1. Content – facilitator present background information.
  2. Process – review seminar objectives and guidelines, set goals for seminar conduct (personal and group), focusing the participants on the communicative ritual and over time reverse or/and balance less effective individual and group patterns like talking too much or too little.
2. Seminar process, facilitated with the following types of questions:
  1. Opening question, usually the most open-ended type, designed to elicit the ideas embedded in the text that are most evocative.
  2. Core questions, the least open-ended type, asking participants to examine specific ideas in the text.
  3. Closing question, asking participants to focus on how the ideas in the text relates to their own lives or on how their thinking evolved during the course of the seminar.
3. Post seminar activities:
  1. While still in seminar circle: focus on process – assess personal and group goal, assess participation and facilitation and refer to recent and future seminar discussions.
  2. After seminar: focus on content - maximizing the learning by some seminar related task, like developing the ideas further in writing or capturing the ideas in an art task.

The seminars profit from being integrated into a project, and the project curriculum becomes more accessible as a result of the seminar. One of the functions of the seminar is to show how a teacher and students together can “read” a difficult and unfamiliar text more successfully than any individual working in isolation. The “text” should be “*sufficiently over the heads of the students*”, so that they have to reach up to understand what is meant (Adler 1990). It should address a number of essential human concerns in a complex way, be thought provoking, and integrate coherently into the curriculum (Roberts, Billings 1999, Hale, City 2006). The Paideia Center promotes a variety of other “text” sources: artwork, music, photographs, video, maps, graphs, experiment descriptions, and math problems (Roberts 1998).

### 8.3.3 “Rules” of the Paideia seminar

These seminar groundrules are typical of those suggested (*The Paideia Seminar: Active Thinking through Dialogue, In the Secondary Grades. 2002*)<sup>65</sup>:

- Listen by looking at the speaker, perhaps taking notes, and not talking while another person is talking.
- Speak loudly enough for everyone to hear, asking questions as well as making statements, while looking at others.
- Think deeply, about the ideas and values expressed in the dialogue, examining the various perspectives with an open mind.
- Refer to the text by citing specific page and line numbers and quoting actual passages to support a point of view.
- Address others respectfully by using others’ names agreeing/disagreeing constructively, making connections to others’ comments.

### 8.3.4 The role of the facilitator in the Paideia seminar

Adler (1990) described two dimensions of the seminar: the vertical (the process from beginning to end) and the horizontal (concerning the ideas and thoughts raised). The facilitator directs and controls the vertical dimension by posing questions, defining and giving the discussion direction and by examining the answers and asking questions to follow up and extend the ideas proposed. The facilitator engage the students in higher order thinking by encouraging them to summarize, analyze, synthesize, compare, logically defend, and challenge their own ideas and those of others (Roberts 1998). The horizontal dimension on the other hand should be open to all possible thoughts the participants can express. The role of the facilitator in this dimension is rather to engage the participants in addressing each other. If both dimensions are open or if both are controlled, it is not truly a seminar (cf. Hale, City 2006).

Roberts and Billings (1999, p. 42) describe the task of facilitating the discussion by asking evocative questions and “*otherwise staying out of the way*”. Adler (1982) describes it pretty much in the same way in *The Paideia Proposal*. In his later works, Adler stresses the importance of a potent seminar leader, who can engage in coaching part of the more complex reading of the text by correcting errors in thinking. The facilitator is of great importance for the success of the seminar (Roberts 1997). The role of the facilitator differs from the ordinary role of a teacher (Johnson 1996, Roberts, Billings 1999, Bender 1994). Teachers will become effective facilitators only in the course of time (Hart 1997, Adler 1990).

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65 A less elaborate set of rules are suggested for the elementary grades (*The Paideia Seminar: Active Thinking through Dialogue, In the Elementary Grades. 2001*).

### 8.3.5 Assessing the outcomes of the Paideia seminar

One tool used to assess participants' performance in seminars is the seminar "*rubric*"<sup>66</sup>. *Rubrics* are used to define the criteria by which participation should be judged and what the range in quality of performance from "novice" to "master" looks like. A number of *rubrics* for Paideia seminars have been developed, and a compilation of these are presented in appendix E<sup>67</sup>. The *rubrics* identify preparation for seminar, conduct during seminar, taking active responsibility for group discussion, logic reasoning, and listening as important criteria. The literature identifies four (partly overlapping) abilities considered the outcome of participating in recurrent Paideia seminars:

- Critical thinking skills: problem solving ability; ability to support and explain own statements; ability (and willingness) to recognize, understand and address different abstract ideas and values; ability to assess and adapt required knowledge or understanding to other and to new situations; ability to organize material, and readings (Hart 1997, Johnson 1996, Roberts, Billings 1999). It is difficult to see whether critical thinking skills are considered something needed for the process of understanding the ideas or if it is considered a product of participating in the seminar. It is often treated as both.
- Language skills: reading, sophisticated text comprehension; ability to express own ideas in speech; ability to listen and understand others points of views (and sometimes writing) (Hart 1997, Johnson 1996, Roberts, Billings 1999).
- Social development: ability to work cooperatively in a group setting; ability to question and use the statements from other participants to enrich one's own thinking (Johnson 1996, Roberts, Billings 1999).
- Character development: ability (and courage) to express and motivate ones point of view; ability to make mature decisions; ability to resolve conflicts between people and ideas, self-knowledge; ability to value classical works of art, the social sciences, and literature as springboards to learning (Johnson 1996, Roberts 1997, Roberts, Billings 1999). The students should be placed in a position of having to think critically and expressing these thoughts without fear of reprisal (Roberts, Billings 1999).

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66 The word "rubric" derives from the Latin word for red, "rubber" and was in the medieval times a set of instructions or comments attached to a law or liturgical service. Using "rubrics" to score performance, complex and illusive skills or habits of mind can be assessed by describing performance or conduct and analyze what is required (Arter, McTighe 2001, Lindström, Ulriksson et al. 1999, Wiggins 1998) .

67 (Assessment for Teaching and Learning, A Manual. 2002, Johnson 1996, Roberts, Billings 1999, Resnick, Williams Hall 1998, Roberts 1998, Wiggins 1998).

## 9 Dialogue as Sokratiska samtal<sup>68</sup>

Who is it that has disguised [philosophy] thus, with this false, pale, and ghostly countenance? There is nothing more airy, more gay, more frolic, and I had like to have said, more wanton.

Michel de Montaigne<sup>69</sup>

### 9.1 Lars Lindström and Sokratiska samtal

Professor Lars Lindström introduced, or rather re-introduced, Socratic seminars in Sweden while working with teachers in training at the University College of Arts Crafts and Design and later at the Stockholm Institute of Education in the middle of the 1980s. Inspired by Socrates, Hans Larsson, and Mortimer J. Adler he has written articles, lectured, and conducted seminars for more than two decades. Lars Lindström was educated by the National Paideia Center and Great Books program in 1991. The experiences from this projects informed how the teachers participating in the present research project were trained.

#### 9.1.1 The role of the facilitator in Sokratiska samtal

According to Lindström, Socratic seminars, as well as Socrates' own interlocutions, are characterized by a shared inquiry among equals (Lindström 2005). Socrates' guidance in this democratic interlocution was marked by his clear persistence in keeping the goal of the inquiry in focus. With his penetrating questions, he sought clarification of the topic discussed, which is what the facilitator of a Socratic seminar should do, according to Lindström. Also the facilitator should, like Socrates, be open-minded in examining conventional conceptions. Typical for Socratic interlocution is that no statement is taken for granted as true, false, or foolish without examination. The seminar is not a place for teaching students new knowledge. It is a place where students interact and learn to think critically and independently. The main

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<sup>68</sup> "*Sokratiska samtal*" in Swedish: Socratic interlocutions (or Socratic dialogues).

<sup>69</sup> Michel de Montaigne "On the Education of Children", first printed 1580, translated by Charles Cotton, (Web-siteMotaigne 2008).

tools in the seminar are interpretive and evaluating questions. The purpose of seminars is not to give the student an opportunity of free and uncontrolled chatting but to teach the students how to philosophize, to develop and enrich their thinking. The facilitator must therefore correct misunderstandings, clarify ambiguities and pinpoint incorrect assumptions, if the participants don't. The facilitator has three important tasks:

1. To pose questions that will lead the interlocution and keep it on track.
2. To examine the answers by encouraging the participants to support their views by referring to the text or by testing implications.
3. To engage the participants in shared inquiry, when the views they have presented seem differing or contradictory.

## 9.2 Identificatory reading

Lindström stresses reading as an important method of self-development (Lindström 2005). He suggests that critical reading may help an individual to find his or her way in difficult situations in life. Readers can use the fictive characters to identify with, to learn from, and even as a “partner” in an internal dialogue. Stories will give the individual a rich variation of “cases” and “paradigms” that provide options for seeing the world. Literature gives many opportunities for “moral imagination”, opportunities to empathize with different actions and different motives. The effect of this kind of reading is noticed by others. When the reader is focused on memorizing, he or she acts differently than when reading to understand (Coles 1989, Dahlin 2004, Marton, Säljö 1997, Nussbaum 1997, Lindström 2000). To Paul Ricoeur (1993), this is part of the text's function – to offer an opportunity for the reader to “decontextualize” and “recontextualize”. The reader takes on the role of an interlocutor with the text as that of a “speaker”, but it's not a mere extension of a dialogue since the text can't question the reader. It is not the author speaking; he or she has left the text. It is the text itself speaking, interpreted through the inner dialogue of the reader. The text will help the reader to assume a distance in a way that dialogue does not. “*When I read, I 'unrealize' myself*” (Ricoeur 1993, p. 155). This engaged reading is spontaneously practiced to a higher extent among upward mobile people and/or among adults coping with difficult childhood experiences (Emery, Csikszentmihalyi 1981, Furman 1998, Lindström 2000, Trondman 1994). Literature seems to help readers come to a better self-understanding and a better understanding of the complexity of the world.

Not all texts, however, can function this way. Appropriate texts are “open”, allowing a variety of ideas and voices to speak, with different possibilities for interpretation and discussion. A good “text” (which can include a wide variety of human products in addition to literature) should be rich in ideas, complex or even ambiguous, and not moralizing or edifying

(Lindström 2000). Mikhail M. Bakhtin (1996) contrasts the novel, the purpose of which is to predict and to influence the future and which is signified by perpetual reinterpretation; to the epos, in which the world is described as complete, united, and not negotiable and where the heroes are deprived of their ability to speak to us. Reflection and justification can be inspired by analyzing a novel. As Jaques Derrida explains, such a text will always have hidden dimensions, many “ages”, and these are impossible to expose in one single act of reading (Olsson 1987). We will never be able to interpret the text objectively; we will always contribute with our own act of reading. To Lindström, it is the interlocution with the text that determines whether the text is appropriate or not. Lindström (Lindström 2006, Lindström 2000) used the ”The Ugly Duckling” by H C Andersen to exemplify these ideas. Bruno Bettelheim (1989) criticized the text as too “closed”; the duckling is predestined to be a swan and nothing can be done about that. In “Junior Great Books” (*Junior Great Books*. 1992) the same story is used for an open discussion about not knowing one’s identity and seeking that identity. An “open” interlocution where ideas are analyzed and discussed will help to promote the identificatory reading. According to Lindström the Socratic seminar is a way to accomplish this. The term ”identificatory reading” (*identifikatorisk läsning*) is used by Mats Trondman (Trondman 1994) for this phenomenon. Similar effects are represented by a “critical-analytical” search reading for underlying assumptions (Wade, Thompson et al. 1994) or by an “efferent” text focus (Rosenblatt 1995). The term “identificatory reading”, however, aims at explaining more than just a personal, affective way of coping with the material and more than a critical analysis of the material.

Among other subjects, Lindström’s contributions to the literature on Socratic seminars concern how to use artwork as “texts” in the seminar. The seminar will help the students to discard a stereotypical and/or prejudiced way of looking at art (Parsons 1987, Lindström 1994). Given time for inquiry and reflection, students will be able to see more than the surface of the piece. Lindström (Lindström 1994) refers to the philosopher Karl Popper and his theories on the scientific method in order to argue that schools should cultivate the same approach in students. By posing questions and problems, and by trying to sort out the less effective or wrong assumptions, we will get closer to the better solution. Lindström concludes that this critical problem posing strategy is creative and is used by artists as well as by scientists.

### 9.3 The context of Sokratiska samtal

The seminar facilitator will prepare questions to promote this type of inquiry and foster critical thinking. The opening question is of great importance, according to Lindström. It should spring from the facilitator’s own genuine

curiosity, a question that he or she is interested in finding the answer to. The opening question should lead the way into the “text” and facilitate an interaction which explores the ideas. It will only be answerable by referring to the “text”. This textual analysis is important if we are to foster individuals who think critically. Mature criticism presupposes that one approaches unfamiliar or differing points of views with sympathy and a desire to understand (Lindström 2006, Lindström 2000). A balance between questions of textual interpretation and questions of evaluation of ideas and values is necessary to achieve a reflective inquiry. A seminar, where ideas and values are discussed without textual analysis easily turns into a free discussion without real focus. On the other hand, if the seminar is exclusively devoted to textual analysis, there is a risk that the participants will look upon the text and the ideas as something outside of themselves, without using it in their own inner dialogue. Adler (Adler, van Doren 1972) distinguishes between reading scientifically, where the purpose is to understand what the author meant, and reading philosophically, where the purpose is to discover what the text has to say about us and our world.

### 9.3.1 “Rules” and dialogical virtues

Lindström’s thesis is that dialogue is not primarily a method but a disposition, a habit of mind to be attained and a relation to be established. When establishing dialogue, perhaps the hardest and most demanding task is to reach an open and inquiring disposition, embracing all participants. The participants have to nurture a culture, where some shared principles and values regulate the intercourse. Lindström presents a number of dialogical virtues, signifying a prosperous dialogic culture (2006, Lindström 2000). The dialogical virtues are inspired by Aristotle’s intellectual virtues and Nicolas C Burbules’ (1993) communicative virtues:<sup>70</sup>

- *Docility*: One is prepared to listen to and be affected by what other people have to say.
- *Orderliness*: One submits oneself to some simple rules of conduct, like “build upon the comments of other participants”.
- *Justification*: Participants are trying to support their points (interpretations, arguments) by referring to evidence from the text or their own experience.
- *Concentration*: Participants help keep a focus by identifying and sustaining a genuine issue.
- *Sincereness*: One says what one believes is true without hiding behind authorities or withholding relevant ideas.

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<sup>70</sup> Lindström uses the term “communicative virtues”, like Burbules. I will use the term “dialogical virtues” when I refer to Lindström’s set of virtues, to distinguish them from Burbules’ virtues.

- *Courage*: One is ready to formulate “brave guesses” or interpretative possibilities that bring new perspectives into the discussion.
- *Concern*: Each participant is regarded as sufficiently interesting to be questioned and listened to.
- *Generosity*: Everyone will be allowed time and space to formulate and reformulate an idea without being interrupted.
- *Courtesy*: One is prepared to temporarily withhold one’s point of view in order to help someone else to articulate his or her idea.
- *Humility*: One is prepared to withhold one’s own point altogether because the other person or the mainstream of the argument is more important.

The following seminar rules are used (Pihlgren 2005, 2006b):

- Shared inquiry through thoughtful dialogue. Dialogue is taught as opposed to debate; the purpose of which is to expose different points of views in order to have one participant or one idea considered the “winner”, rather than explore ideas. Dialogue is presented as a “groupthinking”, where every individual helps everyone in the group to come to some understanding: everyone “wins” together.
- Listen attentively to what others say.
- Many possible answers. More or less logical or supported ideas might be found, analyzing the text or the ideas. A productive seminar will leave participants with more questions than they had when they started and will probably not end in consensus but in a variety of ideas.
- Be open to reconsider and maybe change your opinion.

The outcome of Socratic seminars will be knowledge-in-action, an ability to cope with moral and ethical dilemmas by being able to present a set of collected ideal examples and apply these to new situations. Lindström (1996) differentiates between a rational view of moral knowledge as expressed in Lawrence Kohlberg’s (1984) moral theory, which bases moral actions on a universal ethical principle; and a “knowledge-in-action” view, expressed by Gareth B Matthews (1996). The first view helps the individual to understand and predict certain phenomena; the second makes it easier for the individual to interpret and find meaning. Lindström concludes that the second view has to be strengthened and legitimized in higher education.



# 10 Dialogue with Children

For one thing, our attitude toward children and toward the value system that systematically devalues their thought, their sensibility, their experience, and the works of their creation will also change. With such change will come changes in the roles we allow to children in our society. I hope I have said enough to suggest that these developments could constitute, not only a step towards children's liberation but a significant step towards adult liberation as well.

Gareth B Matthews<sup>71</sup>

## 10.1 Should children be exposed to Socratic dialogue?

One of the common questions about Socratic dialogues is whether or not it is possible or even appropriate to conduct them with children. Plato, in his later dialogues, warned us not to use the *elenchus* with children: they should instead engage in sports and training of natural gifts. This doesn't seem to bother Socrates in "Meno". He is willing to engage in the slave boy (Plato 1981). Even today, in my lectures on Socratic seminars, teachers express a fear of children being too young to cope with ethical or scientific questions. The concerns are mainly of two categories. One is concerned with whether young children are at all able to cope with difficult and distressing questions. If they are incapable of this, it might be dangerous for their further development to be exposed to perplexing and contradictory values. This point can either be made from an epistemological idea that children develop at best in a completely harmonious environment (cf. the ideas of Fröbel, Gesell, and Montessori); or it can be made from a theoretical (biological) point of view, where thinking and moral development are seen as a series of developmental steps from concrete to abstract (cf. the theories of Piaget and Kohlberg).

### 10.1.1 Are children too immature to philosophize?

Gareth B Matthews takes a completely different stand from both these ideas. His thesis is that very young children spontaneously contemplate difficult

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71 Matthews (1996), p 123-124.

philosophical questions, in fact the same questions that occupy professional philosophers (Matthews 1980, 1996). There is no well-marked progress in the handling of genuinely philosophical questions, Matthews argues. He criticizes Piaget and other child psychologists for confusing development in (philosophical) thinking with developmental levels of learning to abstract in a (natural) science mode. Piaget's theories of cognitive development are built on a similar series of steps as in biological growth, and have later been tested, criticized and revised (Donaldsson 1979). For similar reasons Matthews criticizes Kohlberg's theory of moral development. Lawrence Kohlberg's theories of moral development, with six phases, related to the cognitive developmental stages of Piaget. Matthews argues that Kohlberg himself only defines the last two of his six stages as signs of morality. This would leave out the vast majority of children as well as grown ups. Matthews introduces, as opposed to Kohlberg, at least five different dimensions across which moral development takes place:

1. Paradigm (why something is uttered here in this context),
2. Relative success in offering defining characters (- explain "to lie"),
3. Range of cases that we assess morally (is writing a bad check lying?)
4. Adjudication of conflicting moral claims (when is telling a lie not naughty?)
5. Moral imagination (empathy).

Considering these dimensions, a child can show even more moral stamina than a grown up, Matthews (1996) argues<sup>72</sup>. Matthews criticizes Aristotle for much the same reason, since Aristotle looked at children as potential adults. Matthews also criticized Bruno Bettelheim for reducing children to emotions (Matthews 1980). According to Matthews, "developmentalists" fail to hear when young children are presenting difficult philosophical puzzles, since they are too occupied with the development of capacities which are praised in our society. Comparing psychological to biological development will result in assuming that mental capacities also have developmental stages, as the biological have (Matthews 1992). The socialization of children, Matthews argues, unfortunately often takes them out of doing philosophy naturally at the age of 8-12 (Matthews 1996). The same criticism towards Piaget is offered by Schjelderup, Olsholt & Børresen (2000). They conclude that other thinkers on child psychology and philosophy like Sigmund Freud and Søren Kierkegaard accept philosophizing with children.

Creative writers of books for children on the other hand seem to have realized that children are philosophers to a high degree according to Matthews. They regard children as being capable of handling quite complicated philo-

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<sup>72</sup> Sigurdson (2002) in his review of the dominant traditions of moral philosophy sees Kohlberg as the main figure of the liberalistic moral philosophy, where ethics is regarded as universal and a cognitive development. Communitaristic ethics, with its roots in Aristotle and Hegel, is seen as contextually developed, whereas the post-modernists like Michel Foucault, see ethics as a result of "concealed disciplining".

sophical issues. The two Norwegian philosophers Jørgen Gaare and Øistein Sjaastad (2002) agree on this. By analyzing the characters in children's books by Astrid Lindgren, they conclude that a variety of classic philosophical problems are presented in these books directed to young children. The authors find examples of philosophical problems elaborated on by Aristotle, Dante, Hamsun, Hume, Locke, Plato, Nietzsche, and of Socrates.

### 10.1.2 Is the Socratic method dangerous to society?

Another common criticism to seminars with children is made more from a political rather than from a developmental standpoint. Dialogues with children are here seen as a way of corrupting society, breaking down the moral core. Children should first be taught the right moral values, cherished by society; they should not create their own individual value system by questioning the established moral system. An elaborate example of this criticism from the 1980s, is Lois Goldman's article "Warning: The Socratic Method Can Be Dangerous" (Goldman 1984, also cf. Kilpatrick 1992, Wynne, Ryan 1993). This criticism is also applied to higher education.

A contemporary advocate for liberal education in higher education today, Martha C. Nussbaum (1997), answers this critique by stating that Socratic education is adapted to the students' circumstances and context, is pluralistic, and ensures that books do not become authorities. This will make the students approach philosophical questions with an appropriate humility, but with good intellectual equipment for the pursuit of understanding - qualities essential to the democratic process and in today's interdependent world. These traits are unlikely to come to students by mere rote learning.

## 10.2 Gareth B Matthews philosophizing with children

Philosophizing with children, according to Matthews (1992), does not require any skills in philosophy. It does require that one rids oneself of defensiveness and openly tries to find satisfactory answers together with the child. The adult can contribute a better command of the language than the child. The child, on the other hand, has a spontaneity and fresh eyes and ears for perplexity and incongruity. The philosophical conversations will foster a cultivated innocence, where we are able to ask naive questions to force us to re-examine what we are taking for granted. Matthews starts his seminars with children by reading a story, telling an anecdote or giving them a puzzle<sup>73</sup>. He then poses an open question to the group to discuss in dialogue together, a question that the story suggests (What is bravery? What is re-

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73 In "Dialogues with Children" (1992) Matthews describes a project with a group of children in St Mary's Music School in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1982.

quired for someone to be brave?). The dialogue might raise other questions and will give the facilitator ideas of subjects to discuss next time.

### 10.3 P4C and PWC<sup>74</sup>

One of the most prominent promoters of philosophy for (P4C) and with (PWC) children and youngsters in school is Matthew Lipman<sup>75</sup>. His thesis is that children begin to reason philosophically when they start to ask why and then gradually develop (Lipman, Sharp et al. 1980). The elementary school child might have problems with inference of different kinds, personal and interpersonal growth, development of ethical understanding, and of the ability to find meaning in experience, of discovering alternatives and impartiality. Lipman seems to imply levels of development in thinking. Philosophy in the classroom is constructed as a program to make children gradually improve their thinking skills. Referring to Socrates, Lipman et al, (1980, p. XV) urge educators to *“take the following lessons to heart:*

- *All major concepts should be operationalized, and these operations should be properly sequential.*
- *Intellectual inquiry should begin with the interest of the student.*
- *One of the best ways of stimulating people to think is to engage them in dialogue.*
- *Excellent thinking is logical and founded upon experience. (It is also, as we know from Plato, imaginative.) Thinking skills programs should, therefore, stress both formal and creative thinking.”*

Meaning cannot be given out to children; it must be acquired by discovery. Thought is natural but there are more efficient and less efficient ways of thinking and the criteria to distinguish between them are the principals of logic. Lipman promotes formal logic as means for grasping and examining one's thoughts in a structured, clear-headed way. This includes syllogistic logic, consistency, logical consequence, coherence, and giving reasons. The pedagogic task is to transform the already thinking child into a child that thinks well. Reflective children are apt to display good judgment, and are therefore likely to perform appropriately and with consideration for others. Children will become reflective if we encourage them to be rigorously critical and to speculate imaginatively. Philosophy is a way of connecting children with the formal structure of human knowledge. All sorts of philosophical dimensions are treated in Lipman's classroom: logic, ethics, metaphysics, and aesthetics. A moral education without exposing the child to branches of

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74 “Philosophy for children” (P4C) is a trademark, a specific program. Traditions close are referred to as philosophy with children (PWC).

75 Matthew Lipman has at the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC) developed methods for working with philosophy with children, included writing children stories (Web-site P4C 2006).

philosophy other than moral philosophy is dubious to Lipman. The key concepts of ethics cannot be grasped by the child without the assistance of philosophical tools. The method stresses the importance of preserving the integrity of philosophy as a discipline (Nielsen, Vestergaard 2003). Philosophy taught as a separate and distinct discipline will inevitably spill over to other disciplines, in terms of reasoning, creativity, and reading proficiency (Lipman, Sharp et al. 1980). In his later works, Lipman (2003) broadens the intentions. Critical thinking is not enough. Students' must develop creative and caring thinking as well, through emotional and aesthetic experiences.

An alternative way to work with philosophy for children is presented by Sanne Nielsen and Ebbe Vestergaard (2003). Here, the philosophical dialogue is integrated into the thematic studies on different subjects as one part of investigating the chosen theme. The dialogue focuses on ethical questions raised by the theme.

### 10.3.1 The methods of P4C and PWC

An important condition is that the classroom is converted into a community of inquiry: committed to the procedures of inquiry, to responsible search techniques which presuppose openness both to evidence and to reason. The dialogue with others in this community of inquiry is important, since the assumption is that the mutual dialogue, when internalized, will shape the reflective habits of the individual. This requires a readiness to reason, mutual respect in the group, and absence of indoctrination. The teacher has the responsibility to possess authority when it comes to assuring that proper procedures are followed and to seeing to that the discussion honors intellectual variety. The teacher must abstain from curtailing the children's thinking or manipulating their thinking, and he or she should try to evoke trust. The teacher will function as an intellectual model, questioning (but not giving the answers and not necessarily knowing the answers), listening carefully, and also taking into account the non-verbal languages of the children. The teacher's role is not to supply values or answers but to facilitate and clarify the valuing process. The inquiry is a search for truth but will not always end in a final answer. The resolutions children arrive at should be respected even if the teacher finds them incomplete.

### 10.3.2 The steps of P4C and PWC

Lipman's program has been elaborated on by educators and philosophers all over the world<sup>76</sup>. The seminar is often (but not always) constructed as fol-

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<sup>76</sup> The program has inspired a number of educators, philosophers (and researchers) in Austria, England, France, Germany, Holland, Scandinavia, Spain, parts of Africa and Latin America, Eastern Europe, the USA etc. Also cf.: (Brüning 1990, Børresen, Malmhester 2004, Børresen, Malmhester 2006, Fisher 2004, Haglund 2001, Haglund, Persson 2004, Haynes,

lows (Børresen, Malmhøster 2004, Haglund, Persson 2004, Haynes, Murriss 2000)<sup>77</sup>:

1. Starting with a case, a dilemma, a story, a problem, a game.
2. Thinking time 1, individually, everyone writing thoughts down in log
3. Collecting questions on the board (maybe by discussing in pairs to find a question or by round robin).
4. Thinking time 2, individually, everyone writing down what questions they would wish to discuss and why in a log.
5. Question chosen by the group for discussion (by voting or by looking for thematic clusters or by finding arguments for the choice or by simply discussing one question at a time).
6. Dialogue.
7. Closure, by individual thinking time 3, everyone thinking about what happened in dialogue.
8. Evaluation, meta-dialogue.

## 10.4 Philosophizing with children in the earlier presented traditions

Some of the traditions presented earlier have programs directed at children: Great Books, Paideia, Sokratiska samtal, and the followers of Nelson's Das Sokratische Gespräch. These traditions consider it possible for seminars to be conducted at any level, kindergarten (day-care) to adult, and at any level of complexity and sophistication, embracing the same viewpoint as Gareth B. Matthews. The Swedish popular educators seem to be of the same opinion. Even though there are no practical suggestions or attempts to work with children and seminars, Oscar Olsson suggests the study-circle as a way to reform compulsory education. Mortimer J. Adler offered contradictory statements on whether seminars should be attempted with younger children (Hart 1997), but the Paideia Center today promotes seminar discussions from kindergarten: young children might lack the vocabulary to express their ideas but they can think intellectually (Roberts, Billings 1999). Many children are delighted with this sort of activity, since there is an absence of direction towards specific results, and at the same time it stipulates, like in a game, keeping to the rules and methods of examination, Lars Lindström (2005) concludes. So, in spite of Plato's warnings, the Socratic followers presented in the present study promote performing dialogues with children.

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Murriss 2000, Malmhøster, Ohlsson et al. 1991, Murriss 1992, Ohlsson 1996, Brennefier 2002, Brennefier 2004, Schelderup, Olsholt et al. 2000, Malmhøster, Ohlsson 1999, Svare, Bostad 2003) .

<sup>77</sup> Brennefier (2002, 2004) presents a more elaborate set of methodical steps, with great focus on the philosophical tools.

# 11 Results of the Literature Review

The main thing would not be to win, not even to be right; the main thing would be to reach clarity as far as possible. This was what we should help each other with, and we would of course be sure to reach this goal closer by listening to each other rather than through endlessly listening to ourselves.

Oscar Olsson<sup>78</sup>

Plato's three analogies for the Socratic educator - gadfly, midwife, and stingray - are essential to understanding the Socratic idea of education. The gadfly analogy gives the educator (and education) a societal mission, to improve the community by educating all in how to discover knowledge by investigation. The midwife analogy tells us that there is no use in trying to teach "true" propositions to another person. The aim of the educator (and of education) is to promote learning by *elenctic* questioning, and interactive cooperation; and to teach students how to improve as human beings. The self-stinging stingray tells the educator (and education) that learning is a life-long quest of curiosity, both for the student and the teacher. Perplexity, teaches a thinking disposition, a "virtue", rather than a methodology.

## 11.1 The major goals of the presented traditions

Considering all the traditions here presented, there seem to be an agreement on that one of the major goals of staging Socratic (and similar) dialogues is to secure and enhance democracy. Not primarily to secure the parliamentary system, but as a way of preparing all citizens to participate in political planning and decision making in collaborative dialogues with other citizens. Most of the Socratic traditions presented here also stress the importance of the dialogues resulting in positive individual effects. One aspect of this is the individual attaining *bildning*, in itself regarded as something making life worth while. *Bildning* among the citizens is also regarded as a way to main-

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78 Olsson, Oscar (1921), p.181 (author's translation): "Huvudsaken vore inte att få rätt, inte ens att ha rätt, utan huvudsaken vore att komma till klarhet så långt som möjligt. Det var det vi skulle hjälpa varandra med, och vi komme naturligtvis säkrare till målet genom att höra på varandra än genom att ideligen bara höra på oss själva."

taining a democratic society. Fostering individuals with intellectual and moral character is intended as a guarantee for a prosperous society and as means to attain personal goods: living a good life and earning a good living. The presented traditions often have different philosophical or even political origins. It is hard to tell whether the different promoters of dialogue in Socratic or similar fashions actually intend the same when using concepts like *democracy* and *bildning*, or if this was ever the outcome of their practices. However, this is not the chief interest of this study, since I am here looking for the intended methodology of the dialogues.

### 11.1.1 Sorting out the “Socratic” traditions

All these traditions seem to agree that values and ideas have to be negotiated and tested against life experience and that ethics must be interpreted. This is also the view of the pragmatic tradition influenced by John Dewey and the deliberative tradition. But one of the major differences between the pragmatic viewpoint and the “Socratic” seems to be a consequence of a difference in philosophical standpoint: Is there one set of lasting, classical ideas OR do ideas always have to change with new conditions? The difference in viewpoint cuts through progressive educational tradition, and the same conflict seem to have been present when Socrates’ idealistic ethics were confronted with the Athenian democrats’ and the Sophists’ relativistic ethics. One of the recurring misinterpretations of the “Socratic” tradition is that it advocates that values are constant and universal. Rather, it is that some ideas are considered recurrent in human history. These ideas might be right or wrong and have to be critically examined in every new context. To some extent this misinterpretation is due to the explanations used within the tradition. To Socrates, only God would know what was right, humans could only know that they did not know. This has been interpreted as if there is a set of divine (eternal) values, even though Socrates treats them as negotiable for humans.

The later works of Plato, probably displaying Plato’s own ideas, consider all learning innate; recovering what is in the soul. Following this idea, the classicistic (neo-humanistic) tradition considered values as something embedded in the human soul and upheld that an uncritical study of the classics was essential to becoming educated and “virtuous”. Kant, like Plato, reasoned that some truths must be independent of experience – clear and certain in and of themselves. He meant that our ability to analyze the world was an innate skill. In the “Socratic” tradition presented here the viewpoint is different from the classicistic. An important difference lies in what is considered recurrent (or constant) in human past and present – values or ideas. In this “Socratic” tradition, values are defined as beliefs such as *telling the truth*, *every human’s right to education*, and *love thy neighbor*; whereas some examples of ideas are *war and peace*, *wealth*, and *love and hate*. The multiplicity and complexity of different and contradicting values in real life will in-



evitably be too complex to cope with as a set of given principals. Values are relative to the individual in the specific situation.

The “Socratic” traditions are not concerned with reaching a final answer or agreement in dialogue; in fact, they seem to almost discourage it. Adler’s or Larsson’s socialization takes place in the group but does not include primarily the group’s daily events as with for instance Dewey and Freinet. It is rather a socialization to become a part of the continuous human history, to have a chance to participate in “the Great Conversation”. In this conversation, the topics are given; they are the ideas, problems and mysteries that have puzzled and occupied human beings since the beginning of human time. These ideas are recurrent, but the mission is not to “teach” the right set of ideas but to foster the ability to access “practical wisdom”: finding ways to act, when confronted with a multiplicity of ideas and incongruent values. These traditions all refer to the dialogues as being “Socratic”. The “Socratic” tradition is here represented by Socrates, Aristotle, Nelson and Das Sokratische Gespräch tradition; by Larsson, Olsson, Key, Ahlberg and their version of Swedish folkbildning; by Hutchins, Adler and the Great Books and Paideia traditions; and by Lindström and Sokratiska samtal. It is a matter of discussion to what extent Aristotle should be a part of this “Socratic” tradition. Aristotle is often referred to when bringing light to the Socratic seminar tradition of teaching virtues, as Adler, Hutchins, Larsson, Lindström, and Nelson refer to his ideas in that sense. I have chosen not to refer to Plato in this set of traditions. The views on education differ in Plato’s later works from his earlier ones (where I use Socrates as a reference). The dialogues of Dewey, Freinet, and the progressive tradition, the deliberative tradition and to some extent the Lipman tradition aim at negotiating, not only meaning and interpretations, but also agreement. Dewey’s recitation aims at generalization, Freinet’s community meetings at decision-making, the deliberative dialogue at democratic consensus by looking for “the better argument”. I have chosen not to entirely include Lipman’s philosophy for children as it seems to differ on some points from the rest of the “Socratic” tradition. Its aim is to seek a logical truth by collective agreement. Texts are used, but merely as a starting point, not to analyze or to distance the participants from their own pre-judgment. Principles and tools of logic as well as philosophy as a discipline are stressed more than in the rest of the “Socratic” traditions.

There is some disagreement about just how different the traditions are and whether it is possible to combine the different traditions in the school curriculum (cf. Englund 1986) Mats Trondman (2003) has combined the different traditions by comparing the traditions of Knud E. Løgstrup, Alasdair MacIntyre and universal ethics; Thomas of Aquinas, Martha C. Nussbaum and narrative ethics; and Aristotle. He found that their different perceptions of “wisdom” converged when it came to considering search and renegotiation as the most important feature. Wisdom was by all agreed upon as being the ability to make good judgments in practical situations; wisdom is always in

progress. The difference lies in whether or not there is a universal “wisdom”. The difference in viewpoint on the constancy of human ideas seems to have educational implications. It results in two methods: The first tradition, the “Socratic”, uses methodological steps stressing both interpersonal and intrapersonal learning in dialogue; the second, the “pragmatic”, concentrates on interpersonal methods in dialogue. This does not mean that an intrapersonal learning is not intended. By orienting the mind towards awareness, questioning, reconstructing and legitimizing the deliberative tradition intends the citizen (and the child) to become autonomous. The first tradition uses “texts” as an active part of the seminar and focuses on a variety of ideas, moral as well as scientific. The second tradition deals with problem solving or decision-making in the group and focuses on moral ideas. Both traditions seem to appreciate similar behavior or similar dispositions among participants in dialogue.

The “Socratic” tradition is fairly compatible with depicting a Socratic dialogue in seminar form. This excludes Socrates and Aristotle because neither of them described dialogues as seminars. Socrates (or at least Plato) is skeptical about the discussion of books, since the ideas presented in them cannot be exposed to *elenchus*. Aristotle, on the contrary, thought that literature can give us an insight into man’s nature. Their ideas can all the same be traced in seminar practice. As we have seen earlier, the seminar traditions presented either will work with children or consider it possible to do so.

## 11.2 Abilities trained in the Socratic seminar

To all traditions, learning is interactive, achieved through communication and learning from role models. Through continuous practice, habits of mind such as thinking and intellectual/dialogical virtues are formed and internalized. The habits of mind are steps towards attaining virtue. The outcome of habits of mind and virtue is intellectual and moral character/practical wisdom. (However, there seems to be a sliding scale, the concepts sometimes coinciding). Learning is considered contextual, a continuous flow of experience exchanged between individual and context. The group actions will gradually be internalized by the individual. This “apprenticeship” seems to suggest the group as a “master”. On the other hand, there is an ongoing internal cognitive process, where the individual investigates and tests the findings made interactively. The interactive process is triggered by subjective, personal experience (with the personal pre-judgment as an interpretive background), and then tested and elaborated in cooperative interaction. Inquiry and learning are seen as a natural, ongoing process, a way of life, both cooperatively and individually. There does not seem to be any predestined (or biological) levels implied in the development of thinking.

### 11.2.1 Intellectual character

To foster intellectual character two areas are targeted. One is the understanding of ideas from different areas of human knowledge: history, physics, mathematics, and art. The other is the ability to analyze the underlying values of these ideas or critical thinking skills: problem solving, supporting and explaining one's own statements, recognizing, understanding and addressing different abstract ideas and values (and the willingness to do so), assessing and adapting required knowledge or understanding to other and to new situations, organizing material, and readings. In some ways, intellectual virtues overlap critical thinking skills, but virtues go beyond the skills. Learning critical thinking skills is learning to use instruments or techniques, but virtue is attained as a habit of mind, a way of living "intellectually". The habits are suggested to be similar to Karl Popper's problem solving strategy. By posing questions and problems, trying to solve these, and sorting out the less effective or wrong assumptions or pre-judgments, one will get closer to the better solution. It is, however, not an entirely logical and "objective" process. There is an irrational and emotional element in the process where creative intuition plays an active part. Since all problems are relative to the individual and to the specific context there has to be an innovative moment when searching for solutions.

### 11.2.2 Moral character

Moral character cannot be taught, because of its contextual complexity. It's not possible to teach someone how to act in all situations when choices are confused by a multiplicity of ideas and incongruent values. Particular habits of mind are required, such as seminar rules. The dialogical virtues presented by Lindström (2000) together with Socrates four demands according to Scolnicov (1988), and Nelson (1965) on interlocutors are good representations of what is required. Ahlberg's (1986) list of people prohibited from dialogue is a good representation of what is considered "un-virtuous". The ground-rules are addressed to the individual participant, but concern the cooperative interaction. There is hence a "process" dimension stressing how dialogue is carried out, a set of "dialogical" virtues which can be taught as opposed to moral virtues. The "product" dimension, concerned with how to choose wisely, is considered impossible to teach. Seminar teaching is focused on promoting what is considered productive conduct in seminar by stressing the "rules" or dialogical virtues, and by controlling the process from beginning to end, using the steps in the seminar plan. The teacher is urged not to control the "product" dimension, to refrain from stating own opinions, favoring ideas, or manipulating the ideas raised in seminar. The habits of mind and virtues are both considered means to personal ethics and character and should be the result of participating in seminars. An important goal of the seminars is personal social development, cooperating effectively

in a group setting. This is accomplished by training the habits of mind. Improved language skills are a desired result: in listening, speaking, reading, and sophisticated text comprehension.

### 11.3 The context of the seminar

There are some common, practical factors suggested to achieve positive effects from seminars. The seminars preferably should be held on a regular basis. The participants should be seated so that all can see each other. The group should not be too big (10-15 participants), and everyone should have an opportunity to speak. Everyone should have a copy of the “text”, and all participants should have read the “text” (except in *Das Sokratische Gespräch*, where “texts” are normally not used). Written texts are favored, but other “texts” (art work, music, graphs, and so on) are also considered and seem to work the same way. Choosing an open “text”, which allows a variety of ideas and perspectives is very important. A “text” should be rich in ideas, complex but not moral or edifying and not too easy for the participants to grasp. An important effect of the “text” is introducing the author, artist, scientist, or the characters in the “text” as a participant in the seminar. The “text” should help the participant to establish a distance, but should also allow “identificatory reading”, reading to understand oneself and using the reading as a personal experience.

#### 11.3.1 The methodology of the seminar

The intellectual process seems to presuppose two ways of coping with interpretation in seminar: interpreting cumulatively (cf. Gadamer 1994, cf. Piaget 1971) and interpreting as adjusting new ideas, insights, or understandings (cf. Piaget 1971, cf. Vygotsky 1978). Both ways start in a pre-judgment, a fore-structure of understanding allowing what is to be interpreted or understood to be grasped in a preliminary fashion. The seminar should make it possible for participants to adjust their ideas in favor of the “better argument” (and not to hold on to and defend ones own, less functional ideas). The cumulative refuting interpretation is a systematic and critical analysis of the ideas, sorting out those which do not pass the test. The adjusting part of refuting interpretation is a result of a creative, intuitive process, where “bold” new ideas are found and tested. This is meant to apply both to the individual (intrapersonally) and to the group (interpersonally). The methodology in the seminar plan is constructed to promote the desired learning process and to activate different psychological and intellectual processes (Pihlgren 2007):

1. Before entering seminar: Individual reading/interpreting:  
*Function:* Activate the individual's thinking and refuting.  
*Psychological process:* Taking a distance from self.  
*Intellectual process:* Intrapersonal-creative adjustment.
2. & 4. Pre- and post-seminar: Personal and group goals set and evaluated:  
*Function:* Focus on the "rules" of the seminar, the dialogical virtues.  
*Psychological process:* Evaluating and improving personal and group behavior.  
*Intellectual process:* Intrapersonal and interpersonal-cumulative.
3. The Socratic seminar:
  - 3a. First seminar step: Opening question.  
*Function:* Relate ideas to participant's present pre-judgment, elicit ideas in the "text".  
*Psychological process:* The participant is here accountable to the pre-judgment with what he/she starts before entering into cooperative group thinking.  
*Intellectual process:* Intrapersonal-cumulative.
  - 3b. Second seminar step: Textual analysis.  
*Function:* Make it possible to distance from everyday experience by cooperating in group using critical *elenchus*/ Popper's critical problem posing strategy examining the text.  
*Psychological process:* Be free to think differently, not personally held accountable.  
*Intellectual process:* Interpersonal-creative adjustment
  - 3c. Third seminar step: Relating ideas to self.  
*Function:* To relate the new ideas to participants' everyday life.  
*Psychological process:* Personally integrating new knowledge and insight.  
*Intellectual process:* Interpersonal-cumulative.

The suggested seminar plans differ somewhat. The plans of the Paideia seminar and of Sokratiska samtal are almost identical and use all the related steps. The *folkbildning* study circle used at least step 1 and 3a-c. Ahlberg started seminar by letting two of the participants represent opposite views, anticipating the same function as in 3a, and then went on to 3b-c. The Great Books seminar uses step 1 and 3b. 3a and 3b are carried out as pre-seminar activities and 3c as a post seminar activity. Das Sokratische Gespräch uses a plan, starting with collecting the participants' experience of properties of the concept investigated, anticipating the same function as 3a, continuing with defining the concept in an analytical and logical way, anticipating the same function as in 3b, and ending with 4. Lipman, Matthews, Dewey, Freinet and the deliberative dialogues start with a problem or a puzzle and use analysis, as in 3b, as part of their dialogues, but the distancing function of the text is not stressed. Lipman stresses the importance of using evaluation of the

process as in 4. Dewey also seems to suggest the use of 3c in his recitations (and his start suggests a problem causing perplexity to prepare for learning).

There is a paired relation between the functions of the steps, see figure 1. The first step in a pair starts a process; this is developed by the functions from other pairs and is finally consolidated by the last step in the pair. The individual interpreting (1) is related to textual analysis (3b), both promoting critical *elenchus*, taking a distance to self, by interlocution with “text”. The opening question (3a) starts a process of realizing, challenging and maybe changing points of view that is consolidated when relating the new ideas to self (3c). The goals set (2) will be consolidated when evaluated (4) and this will lead to new goals set in the next seminar.

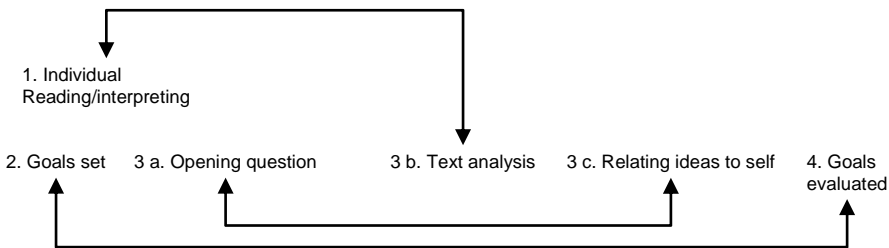


Figure 1. Pair-relations in functions

The goals are set and evaluated outside the seminar circle. The seminar circle is an arena where intellectual and dialogical virtues are trained in action. The process is closely assessed and the outcome is discussed before and after the seminar but not within. Mediation is thereby intended to take place between the steps outside and within the seminar circle. Learning is intended to have impact both on the practice of the following seminars and on general socio-cultural practices over time: the individual’s critical thinking, and self-reliance, and on citizenship skills.

### 11.3.2 The role of the facilitator

The role of the facilitator differs on some points from that of the participant. The facilitator is thought of as being “the first among equals”, one of the participants, only more prepared. Although the participant is encouraged to partake in all the activities of the dialogic and the intellectual interaction described above, the facilitator is urged not to control the “product” dimension at all, except when it is necessary for the extension of ideas in the seminar, and then only by posing questions. The facilitator has to guard the intellectual process by keeping track of a number of different treads, remain con-

scious of the “text” as the anchor of discussion and watch out for obviously erroneous information. The facilitator should not dominate speech but on the other hand should not let the seminar be a mindless chit-chat. The facilitator should promote what is considered productive conduct in seminar by stressing the “rules”; he or she also should promote virtuous conduct by being a curious and even act as a playful role model; and he or she should promote productive conduct by controlling and preparing the process from beginning to end, using the steps in the seminar plan but allowing an openness when the seminar does not necessarily proceed the way the facilitator had planned, because the participants’ responses might lead the seminar in an unexpected direction. The facilitator has to focus on and support the mutual construction of the group and see to it that this is productive. To some extent the “text” (its author, artist, and fictive characters) is considered a facilitator in the seminar, contributing ideas. The facilitator’s role seems to balance on the following fulcrums:

- Have a twofold process focus on the mutual construction and on the individual’s inner process.
- Be the first among equals and at the same time a role model and assert authority to guard the culture and the process.
- Not impose values or manipulate the discussion toward certain ideas, promoting an open mind, and new ideas but still safeguard the development of the intellectual process.

The role of the facilitator does not differ within the “Socratic tradition”. The facilitator in the Lipman tradition is the same except that he or she does not control the opening question (3a); this is negotiated by the group. In the deliberative tradition, the role of the facilitator is even less specific. Freinet and the early Dewey consider the teacher a more knowledgeable fellow being.

## 11.4 Critical events and possible breakdowns

There are some intricate parts of the seminar culture that have to be interpreted. How can the supportive culture of the dialogue continue when individuals are encouraged to contradict, disagree, and criticize ideas in order to learn intellectual thinking habits of mind? There are two keys to this: criticisms must never be made *ad hominem*, or personal; and the group should regard statements made in dialogue as ideas of the group and not of individuals. All should strive to examine the specific statements, not use them to evaluate other participants. The “communicative genre” of the Socratic seminar seems to encourage the whole group to work as a cooperative team. This, on the other hand, might seem contradictory to the idea of the individual’s “congruence”, acting congruently with one’s own ideals. The key to this is more intricate and complex and lies in the Socratic sting-ray analogy and its implications. The sting-ray analogy seems to suggest that as long as

we all act without falsehood we are all humans with the potential for virtue. The virtues make us one in improving humanity, hence – I am responsible for the statements made either by you or by me in Socratic cooperation. Socratic irony and self-irony make sense in the context of the sting-ray analogy. Irony also stings back like a self-stinging sting-ray. If you make a pompous statement, that statement can be criticized for not being true in the Socratic sense; therefore, it could be an object of irony. This does not mean that it will fall back on the speaker personally but as humans we are all responsible according to Socrates. The key factor seems to be to get the group to work, as Olsson says, like the ideas presented in dialogue are the ideas of the group and not of individuals. This also makes it fruitful to have “conversations” with historical or fictional characters through literature and art, as long as they are occupied with the same human question. The ideas behind the ideal dialogical relations are complex:

- The contextual construction presupposes a group process and an individual process going on at the same time and these are interdependent.
- There is a twofold cognitive focus, one on promoting dialogical habits of mind and one on promoting intellectual habits of mind, also interdependent.
- There is a “process” dimension of the seminar stressing how dialogue is carried out and a “product” dimension, stressing choices and these dimensions are also interdependent.
- To acquire knowledge the rational critical problem solving strategy and the intuitive element of creativity are equally important and also interdependent.

There are some areas which are referred to in the literature as critical to the dialogue continuing in a productive way. One of the most vital areas seems to be that participants practice the dialogical virtues or rules. When this is not done, the dialogue may break down. To clearly define and coach seminar behavior is one of the important roles of the facilitator. This should not be done during seminar as an overt evaluation of seminar behavior; less effective individual and group behavior should instead be reversed or balanced by the personal and the group goals or by taking a time out to discuss the seminar process. If the “text” is too easy or uninteresting for the participants, the seminar will not have the desired effects. Too much control of the different steps in the seminar will not give an effective seminar. A seminar where ideas and values are discussed without textual analysis might turn into a free discussion without real focus or reference. On the other hand, if the seminar is exclusively devoted to text analysis, there is a risk that the participants will look upon the text and the ideas as irrelevant, without using it in their own inner dialogue. Mere focus on logic will not be sufficient (even if it is a necessary part of the analysis). There also must be an atmosphere allowing creative fantasy in order to allow new ideas into the discussion.



## SECTION II

### The Seminar Study



## 12 Catching the Learning in Seminar

We know well that sight, through rapid observation, discovers in one glance an infinity of forms; nonetheless, it can only take in one thing at a time.

Leonardo da Vinci<sup>79</sup>

### 12.1 Presentation of the seminar study

This section presents an analysis of videotaped Socratic seminars conducted with children and youngsters five to sixteen years old, from Kindergarten to ninth grade. The seminars were filmed for a period of three years to investigate how the culture is taught and understood, what factors give what effects and if the methodology has any impact on seminar culture. The intention was to study the seminars at their best, in order to give the seminars studied good prerequisites. The order of the sections is presented in table 7.

The presentation starts with a review of research on Socratic seminars and closely related activities and a distinction of the Socratic dialogue and of Karl Popper's idea of problem solving as theoretical tools for analysis.

The 16 filmed seminars are presented in chapters organized in the seven groups of children they were held with, starting with the youngest, five-year-olds, and ending with the oldest, ninth graders. The seminars are described in the order they were filmed with the group, and at least two videotaped seminars from every group are compared for progress. Sequences of the seminars are analyzed, showing actions after a new idea, which has not yet been heard in the seminar dialogue, is presented or actions when the rules are broken. The sequences often reveal other events than those originally motivating the choice of the sequence. Finally, six themes which emerged from the analysis of the seminars are presented.

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<sup>79</sup> Leonardo da Vinci in Paulos (2000) p. 433.

Table 7. *Chapter relations in seminar study section*

<b>SECTION II</b>						
The seminar study						
<b>Catching the Learning in Seminar</b> -presenting the seminar study						
<b>Previous Research and Theoretical Tools for Analysis</b>						
<b>Group A</b> – Five-year-olds	<b>Group B</b> – grade K-1	<b>Group C</b> – grade 2-4	<b>Group D</b> – grade 4-5	<b>Group E</b> – grade 5-6	<b>Group F</b> – grade 5-7	<b>Group G</b> – grade 8-9
<b>Seminar Study Interpretations and Conclusions</b> -presenting interpretations and conclusions in six themes: Learning the game, teaching the game, rule breaking, playing the game, intellectual habits, and distribution of power						

## 12.2 Guidance for the reader of Section II

Chapter 14 includes the close-up analysis of all the seminars and provides the reader with thorough knowledge of what are the results, which are presented as themes in chapter 15. Reading chapter 15 before reading the analysis in chapter 14 facilitates the formation of a holistic view of the results.

In chapter 14, every seminar presentation starts with a short account of the setting: the seating (also see Appendix C), the location, the participants and their age and experience, the facilitator and her experience, and the textual material (also see Appendix D). This is followed by a short account of the seminar, presenting the main events, questions discussed by the group, and at what point in the seminar the sequences were chosen.

This is followed by a thorough description of each sequence. “Manuscripts” are included to make it possible for the reader to get a notion of the

verbal interaction. All “silent” interaction was not possible to account for in the “manuscripts”. It is described in the text and can be confirmed in the original transcripts (Appendix A).

## 12.3 The data-presentation

The original transcripts are not presented in the text. A more reader-friendly and less space-consuming way to present excerpts from the transcriptions has been used. The verbal actions in the sequences are presented as a “manuscript”, with some comments on gestures and glances. All glances and all movements have not been presented in the “manuscript”: this would have made the text unreadable. The “manuscript” presented as excerpts in the sequence analyses was consequently not the transcript used when making the analysis. The different steps, types of dialogues and distribution of verbal conversation are accounted for in the original transcript (see Appendix A).

The complete verbal communication in the sequences (with some comments on gestures and glances) has been translated into English after the analysis for the benefit of the reader (see Appendix B). The translation affects the information when it comes to meaning. The analysis was however made on the original Swedish transcript. The translation has been reviewed and adjusted by two Swedish- English speakers.

In the text here, excerpts from the translated manuscript are presented to make it easier to the reader to follow the verbal actions. I have regarded each talk-turn as a unit and consequently chosen to number the talk-turns, not each line in the excerpt. The same numbers of the talk-turns are to be found in the complete sequence manuscripts in Appendix B.

### 12.3.1 Filmed seminars

The groups were filmed on at least three occasions during 2002-2005. At least two videotaped seminars from each group were chosen. From these a number of sequences were chosen for a more thorough transcription (in all 54 sequences). Gestures and glances were possible to transcribe in most of them (40 sequences). These are marked with an “M” (“Multimodal”) in column 6, table 8. The length of the sequences differed due to the subject (column 7), and so did the total length of the seminars (column 8). Some of the tapes not selected either have a bad quality, lacking sound or were too dark.

Table 8. *List of transcribed seminars*

1. <i>Group</i>	2. <i>Age grad- e</i>	3. <i>No. of partic- ipants</i>	4. <i>Topic</i> <sup>80</sup>	5. <i>Type of "text"</i>	6. <i>No. of tho- rough tran- scripts</i>	7. <i>Time of tran- scripts</i>	8. <i>Total time of semi- nar</i>
A	5 year olds	7	Pippi Longstocking	Literature	4M	43s, 35s, 2m 4s, 1m 18s	19 m
		7	There goes Alfie the thief	Literature	3M	2m 9s, 48s, 39s, 4m 48s	16 m
		7	All together	Literature	4M	1m 36s, 3m 6s, 44 s	18 m
B	K	12	The dandelion and the apple twig	Literature	2	2m 42s, 1m 18s, 1m 6s	12 m
	1 <sup>st</sup>	12	Ronny and Julia	Literature	3M <sup>81</sup>	2m 5s, 1m 12s	30 m
C	2 <sup>nd</sup>	13	Jack and the beans- talk	Literature	4	2m 16s, 1m, 1m, 1m 54s	14 m
	4 <sup>th</sup>	13	Rode and Rode	Literature	3M	1m 19s, 1m 1s, 1 m 18s	36 m
D	4 <sup>th</sup>	12	The hunchback of Notre Dame	Literature	3	2m 52s, 1m 1s, 1m 18s	45 m
	5 <sup>th</sup>	14	Who will comfort Toffle?	Literature	3M	56s, 56s, 48s	26 m
E	5 <sup>th</sup>	15	Diabolo baby	Art work	3M	1m 16s, 1m 58s, 1m	42 m
	6 <sup>th</sup>	20	Portrait	Art work	3M	3m 35s, 1m 7s, 1m 43s	62 m
F	5 <sup>th</sup>	15	Let the ice bears dance	Literature	5	1m 58s, 1m, 3m 22s, 2m 44s, 2m 40s	40 m
	7 <sup>th</sup>	11	Dress codes	Newspaper article	4M	3m 47s, 1m 26s, 1m 23s, 1m 2s	49 m 59 m
	7 <sup>th</sup>	13	Dress codes	Newspaper article	4M	1m 25s, 1m 59s, 4m 13s, 1m 30s	
G	8 <sup>th</sup>	12	Jack and the beans- talk	Literature	3M	54s, 59s, 50s	34 m
	9 <sup>th</sup>	11	Sandor/Ida	Literature	3M	37s, 1m 20s, 2m	26 m

### 12.3.2 Conventions used in the presented "manuscript"

Some signs and conventions have been used. These are crude and could not be used to make a linguistic analysis, but a full linguistic analysis is not the

<sup>80</sup> The original titles and topics are shortly described in Appendix F.

<sup>81</sup> One film dark.

objective. They are merely used to help the reader follow the events in speech and gestures referred to in the presentation and analysis:

(.)	short pause
(2)	pause two seconds long
(?)	verbal communication not possible to interpret
no:	sound right before is pronounced stretched out, prolonged
no:::	sound right before is pronounced very stretched out, very prolonged
<u>nothing</u>	emphasized syllable or word
<u>NOTHING</u>	syllable or word shouted out
(↑)	ascending stress in sentence right before
(↓)	descending stress in sentence right before
?	questioning tone in sentence
((giggle))	other comments on verbal expression or sounds
<b>Tom:</b> But I	sentence starts with capital letter – start of talk turn
<b>Tom:</b> not	speech starts in mid-sentence – continuing talk turn
<i>/waves/</i>	comments on gestures and glances
4 <b>Tom:</b> But	talk-turn number four: Tom starts by saying “But”

# 13 Previous Research and Theoretical Tools for Analysis

Thus it is characteristic of every true conversation that each opens himself to the other person, truly accepts his point of view as worthy of consideration and gets inside the other.

Hans-Georg Gadamer<sup>82</sup>

## 13.1 Research on Socratic seminars and closely related activities

### 13.1.1 Effects of seminars

Previous research shows that it might be possible to teach seminar culture to some extent, but that there are critical areas when introducing the seminar in an educational context. The seminars aim at involving the participants interactively. There seems to be a strong correlation between success in school and feeling involved and interested (Dysthe 1996, Nystrand, Gamoran 1991, Haroutunian-Gordon 1991). Interactive teaching methods (like posing authentic questions) seem to create such a context (Wolf, Crosson et al. 2006).

Adult teams which repeatedly participated in Paideia seminars developed a more “polyphonic” interaction, a better social climate, and a more professional culture (Mangrum 2004). Children and youngsters participating in recurrent seminars seem to develop their critical thinking skills, self-esteem, and a higher awareness of self (Bird 1984, Cashman 1977, Feiertag, Chernoff 1987, Graup 1985, Lindström 2000, Robinsson 2006, Tarkington 1989). A number of evaluations on the effects of Paideia education made by school boards and superintendents confirm these results (Cline, Wendt 2002, Kimbrough 1990, Polite, Adams 1997, 1996). Effects on critical thinking skills; ability to give and listen to arguments; and change views when presented better arguments were also shown in reports on children having worked with “Philosophy for/with children” (Lipman, Sharp et al. 1980). The children

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82 Hans-Georg Gadamer (1994).



however tended to stay “relativistic”, accepting all views without any refuting (Malmhøst, Ohlsson 1999). Working with Great Books’ or Paideia seminars, the participants also improved their writing skills and reading abilities (Bird 1984, Feiertag, Chernoff 1987, Heintz 1988, Robinson 2006). Important factors in making a seminar successful were an atmosphere of controversy and thought-provoking texts (Robinson 2006).

Interaction in seminars can play a central role, both positive and negative, in the construction of students’ identities, at least when it comes to high school students (Haroutunian-Gordon 1991, Wortham 2003). Sophie Haroutunian-Gordon (1991) observed high school students in two classes, one from a private, racially integrated urban school, where the students were used to discussing books, and one from a mostly black urban school with less advantaged students. Both groups benefited from the seminars.

The facilitator has an important but difficult role (Bender 1994, Billings, Fitzgerald 2002). To succeed, supporting, scaffolding, and showing high expectations for the students are very important (Hillocks Jr. 1989, Robinson 2006). Robinson (2006) found that attaching a grade to the seminar, the grounds for assessment explained to older students on beforehand, made the seminars more successful. But the facilitator had to refrain from controlling and manipulating if he or she was to succeed (Haroutunian-Gordon 1991). During a year of seminars in a ninth-grade, some of the students developed identities in part because discussions of certain curricular themes (Wortham 2003). In cases where the facilitator used or allowed use of personal references to the character of individuals in the group, participating in seminars had negative effects on the groups’ conception of some individuals’ identities. This is an ongoing process in classrooms, Stanton Wortham (2003) argues, but closer attention must be paid to the interdependence of academic learning and social identity development. Theodorsson (in Premfors, Roth 2004) showed that adults participating in deliberative dialogues reacted more negative to personal abuses than to general abuses or disagreements.

### 13.1.2 Exposed interaction

When introducing seminars in school, there still seems to be a tendency of the teacher and students to lapse into traditional teaching (Billings 1999, Liljeström 2002). Billings and Fitzgerald (2002) showed that high school students talk about half of the time and the teacher half in the Paideia seminars studied, that the function of the talk still was to teach students about the topics and ideas that the teacher found significant, and that the speech pattern mainly was teacher initiating, student answering, teacher evaluating or I-R-E. The teacher’s main role was that of “knowledgeable coach”. Two sets of student roles emerged: one helping the teacher and the other carefully and gently opposing the teacher. If the facilitator had conflicting ideas about how to treat the participants, this could cause breakdowns in seminar or under-

mine the facilitator's authority (Haroutunian-Gordon, Jackson 1986, Liljestrand 2002). Mediating factors such as preparation and organization, seating, and group size also were important if the seminar was to be successful (Haroutunian-Gordon 1991, Robinsson 2006). Leaving out any part of the intended seminar steps could cause the dialogic discussion to slip into a common IRE sequence (Robinsson 2006).

### 13.1.3 Development over time

The facilitating teacher seemed to go through a transition from traditional teacher to facilitator, moving towards more dialogic discussion (Billings 1999, Billings, Fitzgerald 2002). Groups participating in seminars over time seemed to pass through different phases (Haroutunian-Gordon 1991). Children 10-12 years old participating in "Philosophy in the Classroom" went from a more monological exchange to a more dialogical, and from a non-critical dialogue to a more critical one (Daniels, Splitter et al. 2002).

### 13.1.4 Motives for this study

Previous research confirms that working with Socratic seminars or closely related activities achieve part of the intended positive effects. How the effects are achieved has not, except for the importance of some organizational factors like seating, preparation, and group size, been investigated or systematically analyzed. Most of the research has been conducted during a short time (i.e. a year) in groups of beginners and has concentrated on the teacher's role and interaction with individual students, and focused on verbal communication. This study focuses on the areas not yet studied: if and how group interaction is generated, and how the culture is taught and understood when groups participate in seminars regularly for more than a year.

## 13.2 Tools for analyzing the seminars

To give some tools when analyzing the seminars a theoretical distinction of the Socratic dialogue and of Karl Popper's idea of scientific problem solving is here presented.

### 13.2.1 The pedagogical dialogue

All forms of communication are not dialogues and all dialogues could not be characterized as Socratic (cf. Section I). Pedagogy includes a normative function, an ideal of how interaction is supposed to be performed to achieve the highest degree of learning. The Socratic seminar is a pedagogical practice. But it's not intended to be a common lesson in school, where a right

answer is given beforehand and where the interaction is dominated and controlled by the teacher and little space is given for the ideas and thoughts of the students. The ideal pedagogic dialogue could be described as an activity directed towards discovery, new understanding, teaching, and learning in a decentred and nonauthoritarian way (Burbules 1993), even though this ideal might be hard to reach (Burbules 2000). The dialogue must offer a tension between spontaneity and rules, just like in a game. The rules are possible to break or else they would not be necessary. When a dialogical relation has been established, the rules are rarely discussed. Attempts to manipulate, misinterpret intentions, force opinions or views, or oppose the communicative goals or contradictions between divergent aims can cause “breakdowns” in the dialogue<sup>83</sup>. A main reason is that the participants do not practice (or choose not to practice) communicative virtues (Burbules 1993, cf. Lindström 2000, “dialogical virtues”). The special relationship in dialogue is its ability to grasp all differences (Dysthe 1996, Holquist 2004). In dialogue our different voices should be heard, it should be polyphony but still cooperation.

### 13.2.2 Types of dialogues

Burbules (1993) identifies four distinct types of pedagogical dialogue: conversation, inquiry, debate, and instruction. Burbules’ model is based on two kinds of distinctions. One concerns the relation to knowledge. The dialogue is either convergent, looking for a final answer or conclusion, or it is divergent, where no final answer is sought but rather a plurality of points of views. The second distinction regards the dialogical relation. This can either be inclusive (playing “the believing game”) or critical (playing “the doubting game”) (Elbow 1986).

Table 9. *Types of dialogues in teaching*

		<i>RELATION TO</i>	<i>KNOWLEDGE</i>
		<i>Divergent</i>	<i>Convergent</i>
DIALOGICAL RELATION	Inclusive	Dialogue as conversation	Dialogue as inquiry
	Critical	Dialogue as debate	Dialogue as instruction

The inclusive-divergent dialogue (conversation) is, according to Burbules, directed towards cooperation and mutual understanding, what Gadamer speaks of as “merge of horizons”, intersubjective understanding. Even if understanding fails, this type of dialogue can promote tolerance and respect across differences. It can even sustain differences within a broader compact of tolerance and respect. The risk in this type of dialogue can be relativism,

83 Burbules (2000) warns against believing too much in the egalitarian force of dialogue – there is always a risk that some group or context dominates the outcome of the dialogue.

“anything goes”. The inclusive-convergent dialogue (inquiry) aims at answering a specific question, solving a specific problem or a specific dispute. One phase may be divergent, “brainstorming” different possible solutions in order to choose from them. This may not result in one sole answer, but the dialogue is still convergent since it addresses the same question or problem. The risk here is trying to “settle the issue” too hastily, focusing on one single answer. This dialogue might aim at solving a problem or finding an answer, achieve political consensus, or decide what to do. The critical-divergent dialogue (debate) does not have a necessary aim towards agreement and practices a sharp skeptical questioning. The risk in debate is that if it is held in an argumentative and aggressive style, it might actually impede discovery and development of new insights. In the critical-convergent dialogue (instruction), the same type of sharp skeptical questioning is used but with the aim of finding a definite conclusion. The risk in this type of dialogue is that it can become manipulative, one-sided and restrict open investigation. These types of dialogues are identified similarly by a number of researchers even if the terms and number of categories differ, (Mercer, Wegerif 1999, Walton 1992, Billings, Fitzgerald 2002, Keefer, Zeitz et al. 2000). The different aims of the dialogues lead to different rules and to different types of questioning (Bridges 1988, Burbules 1993, Sanders 1966). The different types of dialogue may be held by the same person during the same interlocution and shifts might occur quickly or gradually, open or concealed (Burbules 1993, Keefer, Zeitz et al. 2000). The productive discussion is marked by participants recognizing when a shift in the dialogic context will further the goals of the original dialogue. The genius of Socrates was, Burbules concludes, that he did not rely on a single “Socratic method”, a technique to be used in all contexts.

### 13.2.3 Karl Popper’s critical problem solving strategy

Lindström (1994) and Walton (1992) compare critical discussion to Popper’s model for testing scientific hypotheses. Fallacies or weaknesses in the proponent’s arguments are probed by questioning. By strengthening some and dropping the refuted ones, one will come to a deeper (self-) understanding.

Karl Popper applied a scientific approach to knowledge and to the importance of knowledge to the democratic society. New knowledge is formed in open and free discussions, where alternatives are tested and rejected and where established truths and solutions are challenged (Popper 1971). Knowledge, according to Popper (2007), can never be entirely inductive, “objectively” accumulating facts before sorting and combining the new theories. Every time we define a new idea, we have to introduce new terms or concepts and these will have to be defined. Knowledge presupposes a creative process, where it is not possible to decide everything in advance.

For Popper, philosophy is not a way to understand abstractions but a way to understand the world. The work of the scientist is to strive towards truth (even though it will never be reachable) and in this process to test his own assumptions, hypothesis, and solutions. The result, science and knowledge, will belong in the public sphere, because its value is not decided by private, subjective desires or experiences of the soul (Magee 1997). Even so, theories, hypotheses, and expectations always prejudice our observations and it is when our theories and experiences are proven wrong by observations and critical tests that we might learn and become wiser (Magee 1997, Popper 2007). Mats Trondman (2003) states that observations are always theory-dependent, but this does not mean they are theory-bound. It is the dialectic of double surprises: the theory is needed to surprise the observations and the observations are needed to surprise the theory. A fruitful scientific attitude presupposes a critical habit of mind with a readiness to challenge one's own theories, hypothesis, and pre-judgments. The idea of falsification can be compared to Socratic refutation by *elenchus* and Kant's ideas of the difference between "understanding" and "reason". By posing questions and problems, and by trying to sort out the less effective or wrong assumptions, we will get closer to the better solution. However, we will never be able to reach a point where we can say that we have attained the truth (Magee 1997, Popper 2007). Lindström (1994) illustrates the processes as in figure 2:

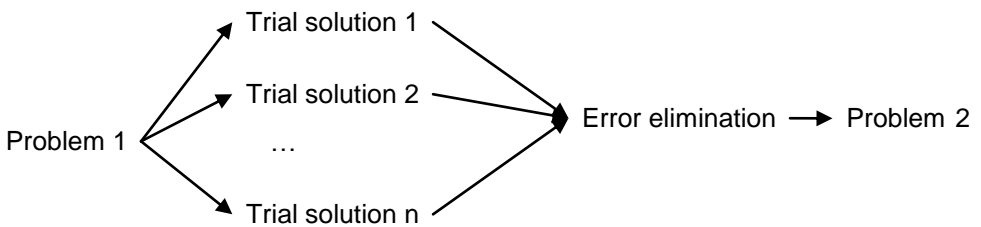


Figure 2. Karl Popper's idea of scientific problem solving<sup>84</sup>

How theories, hypotheses, and pre-judgments are formed is a question for psychology, not philosophy, according to Popper (Magee 1997). There is an irrational and emotional element in the process: creative intuition is an active part of discovering solutions. This is a continuous process in science, Popper states. Popper (2007) as well as Lindström (Lindström in press) concludes that this critical problem solving strategy is creative and is used by artists as well as by scientists. This comparison between the creativity of art and science is also made by Leonard Shlain (1991).

<sup>84</sup> The explanations in this figure are somewhat more elaborated than the original to facilitate interpretation.

# 14 Seminar Analyzes

Oscar bends down over the table while quietly saying:

- I hate my dad...
- NO! Cordelia exclaims in distress, I don't hate my parents!
- Is that the same as if you would hate a friend, Oscar? the facilitator asks.
- What do you mean - the same? Oscar looks up at her.
- Love can be different. Are hates different too? Is it the same?
- No, not really, because parents have responsibilities that another person doesn't have, Oscar answers after a while.

Seminar on Portrait of Alexander Cassatt and his son Robert Kelso, sequence 3

## 14.1 Five-year-olds (group A)

### 14.1.1 Five-year-olds discussing "Pippi Longstocking"

#### 14.1.1.1 The setting of the "Pippi Longstocking" seminar

Most of the group of seven children, five years old, has participated in seminars for three months, with a few of them for a year and three months. Martin is participating in a seminar for the first time. The facilitator has conducted seminars for one and a half year. The seminar takes place in a smaller room at the day-care centre. The door is closed. They are seated around a square table. The literature being discussed is the first chapter of "Pippi Longstocking". The seminar lasts for 19 minutes.

Participants: Saari (f), Idun (f), Tom (m), Martin (m), Johanna (f), and Anita (f). Facilitator: Anna.

#### 14.1.1.2 Main outline of the "Pippi Longstocking" seminar

Facilitator starts by reminding the participants that they are to have a Socratic seminar and asks them if they would like to have Pippi as a friend. After a short pause for reflection the participants answer in turn when the facilitator calls their names. Pippi is very strong, you have to watch out. She is great fun, she is a bit crazy. She looks crazy. Martin points out that the facilitator has forgotten a D in her notes (sequence 1, after two minutes). The boys state that they wouldn't play with Pippi because she's a girl (sequence 2, after four and a half minutes). Does it really make any difference how people

look (sequence 3, after 5 minutes)? But why is Pippi lying? She might want to impress. Could Pippi be like Tommy and Annika are described: a well-mannered, law-abiding, and nice child? The discussion now turns into an “I-dare-you-contest” when the participants relate how they too have done mischief. How does Pippi feel when she is all alone in her house in the evening? She longs for her mother who is dead. What would you have done in the same situation? Pippi could have gone to her father, but was he drowned (sequence 4, after 15 minutes)? Martin asks how long the seminar will be going on, and the facilitator tells him not to touch the microphone. Do you like Pippi? They shout out YES and NO and the seminar ends in a short evaluation of how they felt talking about Pippi. They say it has been easy and fun. Facilitator returns a couple of times to the importance of listening to each other.

#### 14.1.1.3 Sequence 1: Martin correcting the facilitator

The sequence seems to consist of two parts divided between talk turn 5 and 6, both uttered by the facilitator. In the first part, Martin is breaking the seminar rules by not keeping to the subject, he is correcting the facilitator’s writing. This happens after a pause of six seconds where the facilitator writes on her note pad and the group is concentrated on her writing, looking:

4 **Martin:** You forgot the D in the beginning

5 **Facilitator:** m (.) d’ya know (.) I’m just sitting here an’ making kinda jotnotes I’m not writing wholly fully just small (.) scribble (.)

6 **Facilitator:** Martin then why (.)do you think would you like her as a friend? Or wouldn’t you

Almost all glances are focused on the facilitator or her note pad during this part, with only two quick glances from Anita and Saari at Martin. The facilitator looks at Martin, the note pad and at Johanna alternately. She seems to be confused and not sure how to handle the situation; the speech is inconsistent, accompanied by a lot of gestures. Martin also seems to find the situation embarrassing or hard to cope with: he hides his face in his hands. Martin breaks the standard classroom power balance; he corrects the teacher instead of the opposite. In a way this could be seen as in accordance with seminar rules. It is at least not a break.

In the second part, the facilitator puts the seminar back on track by asking Martin if he would have wanted Pippi as a friend (6), probably trying to show that any answer will be accepted by both nodding and shaking her head. Martin seems a bit uneasy even though his answer is a prompt no. He puts his hands to his face. When he answers that he will not, because Pippi is a girl, he turns to Tom for support. This seems to make Tom uneasy; he looks back and forth at the facilitator and Martin. Tom seems to go for supporting Martin. He answers “no” to the facilitator’s question and Martin and Tom support each other by alternately answer no. Looking at the participants’ glances during this part, the note pad is still in focus and so is the

facilitator.<sup>85</sup> During the first part when Martin is breaking a seminar “rule”, the group does not look at him. But in this second part, all participants look at Martin from time to time. Is this why the more experienced Tom decides to support Martin?

The participants move a lot during the whole sequence, some more than others. Martin, who is active verbally, moves almost all the time and so does Anita. It is, however, hard to distinguish any collective patterns in most of the movements. The individuals seem to move their hands, arms, and bodies without much connection to what is happening verbally in the seminar. Idun is an exception. In the second part she starts making movements that finally become “writing” on the table, mimicking the facilitators writing. She ends this by drawing back her hand quickly when the facilitator repeats Martins answer:

9 **Martin:** Never  
10 **Facilitator:** Never (.) why never  
11 **Martin:** Becau:::se (.) she’s a girl (↑)

After a while she starts moving her hands over the table, “skipping”.

#### 14.1.1.4 Sequence 2: The facilitator challenging and supporting Tom

Tom here alters his idea of why he does not want to be Pippi’s friend from saying that it is because she is a girl to saying that it doesn’t matter if she’s a boy or a girl when facilitator points out that he himself plays with girls:

4 **Tom:** She:’sa girl (↓)  
5 **Facilitator:** No but (.) you have friends that are girls  
6 **Tom:** Mm sometimes yah (.) bu’ not Pippi

Tom shakes his head to stress the meaning of what he’s saying. The facilitator does not seem to hear the change or does not take any notice: she goes on arguing that Tom has female friends. Her verbal communication is very direct; she is contradicting Tom. But her gestures are supportive: she is nodding, smiling, and raising her eyebrows. She is even mimicking Tom’s gesture of putting the hand to the neck. Next she confuses Tom with Martin (9), who earlier has argued that he does not want Pippi as a friend because she is a girl.

9 **Facilitator:** But but is it really so Mart (.) eh Tom that you think so  
10 **Tom:** Yes  
11 **Facilitator:** You who usually play a lot with the girls  
12 **Tom:** Mm atleast instead smaller boys it doesn’t matta if it’s a girl or a boy  
13 **Facilitator:** So it doesn’t matter

Tom here appears a bit confused both in speech and in gestures. He is not clearly stating why he doesn’t want Pippi as a friend. Martin seems to want

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85 Tom’s glances were during parts of the sequence not possible to transcribe due to dark film.



to point out that it has got something to do with her looks, amplifying his speech with gestures, the facilitator questions him to make his point clearer.

16 **Martin:** Pippi (.) one orange 'air and (?) /He signs braids by his ears/

17 **Johanna:** Tom

18 **Facilitator:** Yes

19 **Martin:** and braids standing right out

The facilitator goes on making her point that Tom plays with girls even though he has changed his mind. Why? She might have missed his message earlier. She might have another purpose. This is Martin's first seminar. Tom has been participating in seminars for more than a year. Is the facilitator trying to make a point addressed to Martin rather than to Tom? She mistakes their names. Martin is the first to express the idea that he does not want Pippi as a friend because she is a girl. He reacts to the facilitator saying that Tom plays with girls. If the facilitator is trying to get Martin to think further, he seems to get the point. He supports Tom by presenting a new idea - that it is because of her looks that he doesn't want to be her friend. In the end Johanna shouts Tom's name twice, causing him and some of the others to look at her. Until Martin speaks, the participants are almost solely looking either at Tom or at the facilitator. The facilitator looks at Tom or the paper.

The participants move a lot during this sequence too, some more than others. Idun moves with wider gestures than the rest. Tom, who is speaking a lot of the time moves almost all the time. Anita moves very little. In this sequence, as in the first, it is hard to distinguish any patterns in most of the movements. Saari's movements are an example of this: she presses her hands against her cheeks, looks up at the roof, leans back, presses her cheeks once more, takes the hands from the cheeks, puts the right hand under the table and up again, puts her chin in her hand. Most of the time her attention is with Tom: she keeps looking at him. Most of the gestures do not seem to relate to what is communicated in the group interaction.

#### 14.1.1.5 Sequence 3: The facilitator breaking the rules

In this sequence, the facilitator seems to imply that there is a "right" answer in the way she puts the initial question:

1 **Facilitator:** Butaa (.) doesit really matter how one looks

The question instantly leads to a debate between the girls and the boys, shouting yes and no. The boys state that they see themselves as a unit:

19 **Tom:** But we think so

20 **Martin:** We think so

The facilitator questions the girls why they think that looks don't matter and they answer by saying they like Pippi. The facilitator's answers imply that she agrees with them:

25 **Facilitator:** Okay (.) why don'tyou think it matters (.) or you I  
can say why don't you think it matters Anita

26 **Anita:** Because (.) I think she's nice /*Idun "writes" on the table/*  
 27 **Facilitator:** She is ni:ce an' an' that has got nothing to do with how she looks (↑) you like her anyway  
 (.) Tom what about you (.) you don't think so or  
 28 **Tom:** No  
 29 **Facilitator:** No (.) What about you Saari do you think it matters (.) that she looks the way she does or  
 30 **Saari:** No I like her anyway  
 31 **Facilitator:** You like her anyway /*She nods/*

Saari gets into a short debate with Anita about whether people dressing up as Pippi is the same thing as Pippi being for real. Tom suddenly shouts out "What about Ricki MARTIN" (37), confusing the facilitator; her utterances become incomplete.

33 **Johanna:** I think she's ni:ce  
 34 **Facilitator:** you think so yeah /*she smiles/*  
 35 **Tom:** Bu'  
 36 **Anita:** There are persons dressing up as her  
 37 **Tom:** What about Ricki MARTIN

She then turns to Tom, questioning him on the meaning. His point seems to be that it does matter how you look, someone as handsome and talented as Ricky Martin has a better chance than someone looking like Pippi:

43 **Facilitator:** a real such (.) but I was thinking now you said Ricki ma:rti do you think he looks like her  
 44 **Tom:** He's good looking  
 45 **Facilitator:** He's g  
 46 **Martin:** He sings we::ll  
 47 **Facilitator:** He's good looking buh  
 48 **Tom:** He sings good if itsounds  
 49 **Facilitator:** Sings good areya areya (.) are you good then that is  
 50 **Tom:** Yah you're popular  
 51 **Martin:** M mhe's my star

Martin agrees. When asked what he would do if Ricky Martin looked like Pippi, he seems to consider it unlikely but he would still like his singing. Tom's shouting "What about Ricki MARTIN" happens after the facilitator implies a right answer by her response. He is not able to express his idea, but with help from the facilitator he is able to clarify it. The facilitator here changes to a more exploring type of questioning. With the girls she has settled on agreeing without questioning their statements. From seeming to prefer one kind of ("right") answer, she now seems to cope with and encourage more divergent ideas. At this point the girls who have been active in the first part stop talking except for asking what the facilitator is writing.

For most of the time, the participants seem to look at the speaker or speakers. The facilitator looks half of the time in her note pad and the rest at the speaker/speakers. However, there seem to be three interactions going on at the same time during this sequence. The most obvious one is the official seminar interaction described above. There is also an interaction going on

concerning the cameras and the microphones, carried out only with gestures and glances. This starts when the facilitator amplifies Anita's view that Pippi is nice (34) and goes on until Tom has shouted "What about Ricki MARTIN" (37). Johanna plays with the microphone, Idun is looking at the cameras, Martin is looking at the microphone. Later Anita and the facilitator participate: the facilitator puts her hand to Anita's arm to stop her from playing with the microphone cord. Anita has actually been trying to stop Johanna from playing with it. Later on Saari takes up the interest for the camera and the microphone. The facilitator then puts her hand on Saari's arm to stop her. The interest in the cameras and microphones appears here for the first time in the seminar. It seems to coincide with the facilitator's breaking a seminar rule. The girls act as teacher support, they all display views that are supposed to be correct in school curriculum – everyone is valuable and looks don't matter. Are they performing for the cameras and microphones? If this is the case, it explains why they are confused when the facilitator suddenly supports Tom's questioning the "right" answer.

The third interaction concerns what the facilitator is writing. Anita, Idun, and Johanna repeatedly ask what the notes say. The facilitator puts her hand on Idun's arm to stop her from asking and repeats this with Anita. Saari and Idun look a lot at the note pad up to "What about Ricki MARTIN", when they focus on the speaker (and Saari after a while on the cameras and microphone). Anita starts focusing on the note pad after "What about Ricki MARTIN"; she has focused on the speaker up till then. Idun "writes" as in sequence 1. The writing later turns into conducting, when she seems to be illustrating Martin's utterance that Ricky Martin sings well (46). Why the focus on the facilitator's notes? Maybe they are trying to grasp what the facilitator values as important in seminar, especially if they have been confused by the facilitator's response to Tom's views. Idun might have realized this, she is making notes when someone is presenting a new idea. She is also illustrating that Ricky Martin sings well. This is later Martin's main point.

#### **14.1.1.6 Sequence 4: Saari quarreling and the facilitator negotiating**

Saari, who has been pretty quiet during the seminar and only spoken very quietly, in this sequence speaks out loudly when she wants to press her point that Pippi's father did not drown. She is contradicting Anita who claims that he has drowned and, later on, Idun who claims that he drowns after floating on the fat. The facilitator speaks for quite a long time (24 seconds), the speech is somewhat incomplete or faltering, with many gestures, turning alternately towards Saari and Anita. She might be confused or unsure on how to handle the strong feelings from Saari, who together with Anita has turned the seminar into a debate. This has happened before, in sequence 3.

19 **Facilitator:** Well it is like this Saari that you think ((inhales)) you have watched further on in the story nownow (.) and Anita is just talking about this chapter that we read yesterday. What you're

talking probably about are different things (.) I think (.) because as it said yesterday the little we read then she didn't know (.)but you've seen the rest (.) Saari m (.) itwasit probably so (1) I would actually like to know

She is showing respect to both Saari and Anita by pointing out that they both have points, depending on how much of the story you consider. She points at the book to stress this and Anita later repeats this gesture. The facilitator does not comment on Idun's statement, which is false if one has read the first chapter or the whole book. She has earlier shown support by repeating the wording of Johanna and Saari:

- 3 **Johanna:** No he hasn't drowned  
4 **Martin:** An' check on  
5 **Facilitator:** He hasn't drowned  
6 **Saari:** No he didn't drown he flu (.) he floats on the fat  
7 **Facilitator:** He floats on the fat

The facilitator touches Saari's arm twice, once with the pen and once with the hand, a gesture that has earlier (and in sequence 3) been used as a silent correction. Here it might be a gesture of sympathy but is this the way Saari interprets it? Saari starts talking directly, now even quieter than before, and it is impossible both for the facilitator and the microphones to pick up what she is saying. She is repeating her former statements but seems uneasy. Maybe she does not understand why something seems to have gone wrong.

- 20 **Saari:** (?) (?) /Anita touches the book/  
21 **Facilitator:** What?  
22 **Saari:** (?) h became king /Anita leans forward over the table/  
23 **Facilitator:** W Whatdidyou say? /She leans towards Saari/

Anita seems to concentrate on understanding the seminar "code" by watching the facilitator both in this and in earlier sequences. She here confirms that she knows that the story later will show that the dad did survive but that this is not known at this point of the story. The facilitator makes one more move to point out that they are talking about the text that everybody has read, i.e. the first chapter of the book. When Tom comments "Well, he is that" (28) in present tense she repeats him but in future tense (29):

- 28 **Tom:** Well, he is that  
29 **Facilitator:** He becomes that yes you get to know that later on  
30 **Anita:** Weh he has been king (?)  
31 **Facilitator:** But this thiswas this we did not read yesterday  
32 **Anita:** No

Most of the time, the participants and the facilitator look at the person or persons talking<sup>86</sup>. A lot of the attention is focused on Saari, some on Anita, and some on the facilitator. There is however a silent interaction going on at

86 Due to dark film, it is not possible to see what Tom is looking at in turn 1-10, Martin in 10-half 19 and Anita in 19-23.

the end of the sequence. Martin starts playing with the microphone when Saari starts whispering, and the facilitator is asking what she is saying. When he stops playing, Johanna instantly continues (26). The facilitator holds her hand out to stop Johanna, still looking at and continuing verbal dialogue with Anita. Looking closer, this interaction seems conveyed mainly by looks and glances. Tom, Martin, and Johanna, who are sitting close, all look at the microphone when Martin plays with it. Anita glances towards the microphone when Johanna starts playing with it. The facilitator seems to notice what is going on by watching Saari who looks at Martin. Saari has earlier looked at the camera. This might be an interest in the camera or the microphones that is not at all connected to what is happening in the rest of the seminar. However, looking at this interaction as part of what is going on, putting the microphone in focus might be a comment to Saari, speaking too quietly. Saari in this sequence seems to get insecure after listening to the facilitator's long speech and seem to react especially to when the facilitator says "then she didn't know" (19); this is when Saari looks into the camera.

Idun, who has been moving a lot before, is in this sequence moving less than everyone else. Judging by where she looks, she is concentrating on what is going on between Saari and the facilitator.

## 14.1.2 Analyzing the "Pippi Longstocking" seminar

### 14.1.2.1 Seminar steps and intellectual process

The facilitator introduces the different steps in the intended seminar plan in the order that is suggested in the Socratic seminar: opening question, textual analysis and relating ideas to self. The text seems to work well and has been read aloud before the seminar as intended. No personal or group goals are set and the evaluation rather relates to whether the participants appreciated the seminar and what the facilitator considered important (i.e. listening to each other). The pause for reflection after the opening question is short. The facilitator dominates verbal communication, chiefly consisting of questions posed to different participants.

The intellectual process is continued through the seminar; ideas are tested and refuted; and new solutions are found, supported by the facilitator and the participants carrying out the steps intended in seminar. For example, Tom and Martin elaborate their ideas on why they would not want Pippi as a friend, from saying that it is because she is a girl to saying it is because of her looks and later that the main thing is what a person accomplishes (Tom would like to listen to Ricky Martin even if he looks like Pippi). This is a result of the facilitator challenging them by questioning their statements. Anita and Saari also are challenged by the facilitator and also by each other. Anita is able to change and develop her ideas at least when challenged by the facilitator. She states that she likes Pippi because she is nice, but is later able

to discuss how Pippi would have to change to become nice. After having had the debate with Saari on whether Pippi's father has drowned or not, she is (at least with help from the facilitator) able to see that there are two different versions. Saari does not seem to develop her views in the same way; she seems confused when contradicted by the facilitator and upset when contradicted by Anita. Participants refer to their own experience both when encouraged by the facilitator and spontaneously, but after sequence 3, the telling about their own experiences turns into a contest. They still need a lot of guidance from the facilitator to be able to stick to the "intellectual virtues".

#### **14.1.2.2 Dialogic process**

The participants and the facilitator do not consistently act in accordance with the seminar "rules". The participants seem to break the "rules" when they have different views and are talking directly to each other (Saari and Anita arguing). When the facilitator acts as a mediator there is no risk of debate. The long pause in sequence 1 seems to cause Martin to break the "rules" by correcting the facilitator's writing. There is some confusion from time to time among the participants when the "rules" are exhibited. Martin gets confused after telling the facilitator that she has forgotten a D in her notes. The girls get confused when the facilitator encourages Tom in challenging their view that Pippi is nice. Tom chooses to support Martin, acting as a team for the rest of the seminar. Johanna is trying to team up with Saari without success. This is not according to seminar "rules". The whole group is supposed to work as a team together. Tom's and Martin's move also results in a boy-girl fight during the seminar. Tom is not entirely easy with teaming up; he might be doing it to help the less experienced Martin. The "rules" are not yet transparent to the participants, although they have been having seminars for 3 months. Maybe they would have been more so, if personal and group goals had been set. They seem to be focused on what the facilitator is writing, probably as a way of decoding what is important (e.g. the girls asking what the facilitator is writing right after Tom has challenged their view of Pippi being nice). Goal setting at start might have been a more productive way of coping with teaching the "rules" than the facilitator telling the participants at the end of seminar that it is important that they listen to each other. On the other hand, the five year olds get tired quickly, and goal-setting would have made the seminar longer. They need the facilitator as a role-model and this probably accounts for her dominating the verbal communication.

The facilitator is breaking the "rules" at some points. She corrects misbehavior in the ongoing seminar (e.g. telling Martin not to touch the microphones). She also seems to have trouble sticking to the "rules" when values she considers important are challenged (e.g. everyone is valuable and listening to each other). She is breaking the "rules" when stating that Tom plays with girls, but this seems to be done for another purpose. She seems to be pointing out an important "rule" in the seminar culture (the demand for con-

sistency) to Martin by working through Tom, probably because Tom is more experienced than Martin. However, in this seminar there is no total breakdown of seminar culture. The reason is that either the facilitator or a participant puts the seminar back on track by acting in accordance to seminar rules.

#### **14.1.2.3 “Silent” interaction**

The most important action the participants take to show what is accepted in the seminar culture in this seminar seems to be to look at the person or persons talking. Not looking at someone is used as a mean to communicate that some action is not acceptable (e.g. the group not looking at Martin in sequence 1) and the group behavior seems to amplify the meaning.

Most of the gestures and movements seem to lack connection to the group interaction. An important explanation is probably the youth of the participants; they can not yet coordinate their bodily movements, and they need to move when sitting for such a long time. There are some patterns: the speaker moves more when speaking. Higher interest in what is happening in group interaction seems to lessen the gestures and movements. Sometimes the gestures are used as an amplifier of what is said (e.g. Martin and Tom showing Pippi’s braids when they can’t express the idea verbally satisfactorily). Idun exposes another way of using gestures. By some of her gestures she illustrates what is important in the seminar, either by “writing” things down or by showing what is talked of (e.g. conducting in sequence 3). Are there more of this type of gestures that I have not been able to interpret but that the children participating might be able to catch?

The facilitator uses gestures and facial expressions to show her support (e.g. contradicting Tom but nodding, smiling and mimicking Tom’s gestures). But she also uses gestures to silently correct behavior that is not acceptable (e.g. by repeatedly putting her hand on someone’s arm). This is mimicked by Anita in sequence 3. The facilitator also uses verbal actions to show what is acceptable or not. After Martin has broken the “rules” in sequence 1, she turns to him with a seminar question. If she had wanted to discipline him she might have put the question to someone else. Instead she is putting him as well as the seminar on the right track. When Martin and Tom are trying to express the new idea concerning Pippi’s looks she uses questioning, helping them to clarify it verbally. She corrects Tom using present tense to point out that they are talking about this section of the text.

Some messages are conveyed through artifacts (e.g. facilitator and Anita using the book in sequence 4). The cameras and microphones are also in focus from time to time. When looking at where these incidents occur in group interaction, a possible interpretation is that the technical equipment serves as an artifact conveying a more or less conscious message, (the girls performing in accordance with ordinary school values in sequence 3 and the participants commenting on Saari whispering in sequence 4).

### 14.1.3 Five-year-olds discussing “There goes Alfie the thief”

#### 14.1.3.1 The setting of the “There goes Alfie the thief” seminar

The group of six children, five years old, has participated in seminars for three months, a few of them for a year and three months. Martin is participating in a seminar for the second time. The facilitator has conducted seminars for one and a half year. The seminar takes place in a smaller room at the day-care centre. The door is closed. The participants are seated around a square table. The literature discussed is “Here Goes Alfie the Thief”. The seminar lasts for 16 minutes.

Participants: Idun (f), Therese (f), Ester (f), Martin (m), Anita (f), Johanna (f). Facilitator: Anna.

#### 14.1.3.2 Main outline of the “There goes Alfie the thief” seminar

The facilitator starts by reminding the participants that they are to have a Socratic seminar and asking them how they think Alfie feels when he is being accused of having taken the key to the hut. Several children immediately answer “sad”, unhappy and later angry. Anita says it’s the magpie that has taken it. Alfie has no friends after being accused. Idun comments that his friend Milla is really angry and Anita says that she has tears coming out. She is so angry that she cries? the facilitator asks and reads a passage from the book to confirm this. Has Milla put the key in the magpie-nest? Probably. The facilitator asks with a surprised voice if everyone thinks so and then says that she doesn’t (sequence 1, after 5 minutes). What should Alfie have done when he was accused? Martin seems bored and hits his head on the table. The facilitator persists in asking if there is something else he could do, and Anita answers that he could tell his dad (sequence 2, after 9 minutes). Idun suddenly comments that Martin and Torbjörn look alike (sequence 3, after 11 minutes). Alfie in the story says he doesn’t care what the rest thinks, and the participants agree that they should have reacted the same way. The facilitator asks if they shall end the seminar, they answer yes and that it has been fun and easy to talk about Alfie.

#### 14.1.3.3 Sequence 1: The facilitator challenging by changing her mind

From first stating that Milla in the story has put the key in the nest, all participants change to agreeing with the facilitator when she disagrees, challenging them. The facilitator points out that they are stating two different things. Martin has reintroduced Anita’s earlier idea of the thief being the magpie and everyone now changes to that view:

5 **Facilitator:** No I don’t think so

6 **Anita:** I don’t think so either

7 **Facilitator:** ((giggles)) Don’t you think so either

8 **Martin:** I think it’s the magpie



9 **Anita:** Me too

10 **Idun:** That I think it's the magpie too

The facilitator now changes her arguments and tries to prove it is Milla. Anita finally settles the question by asking why Milla is crying if she had taken the key herself (33, 35). The facilitator responds positively to this (34), but Martin seems to think the discussion is unnecessary, since it obviously was the magpie (37). This is his second seminar, and he seems to have some difficulty in understanding the seminar code:

33 **Anita:** Why should she cry (.) it's

34 **Facilitator:** Why would she cry

35 **Anita:** If she has put it there

36 **Facilitator:** Yes that was certainly a good question why would she cry then

37 **Martin:** It was the magpie (↓) /*He wrings his hands*/

While Anita continues to state her point, Idun picks up one of Anita's arguments that Milla ought to have said that it was she, that's what one ought to do. The facilitator chooses to leave this fairly unnoticed. The facilitator tries one last argument for Milla being the thief, but she doesn't seem to take it seriously herself, and Idun dismisses it. Anita however seems ready to try it but changes her mind when the facilitator answers no:

48 **Facilitator:** Do you think so (.) that Alfie thinks it's her yes maybe ((soft)) yes you can't know but what if she has found it somewhere else then (.) does is there anyone who believes that then that she has found the key somewhere else

49 **Idun:** Noho: (?)

50 **Anita:** And taken it /*Facilitator nods, writes*/

51 **Facilitator:** No: (.) it's not like that

52 **Idun:** No

53 **Anita:** She has uh she has had it

By her movements and glances Anita is very attentive to what the facilitator is writing down, especially when she herself is talking, but she seems confused when not finding the answers she thinks the facilitator is looking for. Participants in all look a lot at the facilitator and at her notes, and also at the speaker. They move during the sequence seemingly without much connection to what is happening verbally in the seminar. Ester and Therese play silently with each other during parts of the seminar.

#### 14.1.3.4 Sequence 2: Idun questioning grown-ups

In this sequence, the facilitator starts by challenging the participants to find yet another solution; Anita does so and gets credit for it:

4 **Anita:** That he (.) could tell his dad

5 **Facilitator:** Precisely Anita there you have another solution listen to what she says

6 **Idun:** Mm (?)

7 **Facilitator:** maybe tell dad that i it's also possible to

8 **Idun:** It will be like this (.) that it wasn't m 'though ifah he also believes that then (.) then (.) then (.)

then one shouldn't tell dad

Idun tries to refute this idea by questioning what would happen if your dad wouldn't believe you (8). This seems to interest the rest of the group. All except Therese turn to Idun. Therese, sitting right beside Idun, imitates her elbow circling over the table. The facilitator, however, cuts this line of reasoning off (9). The facilitator signals distress or confusion by inconsistent speech and in gestures. Is she unsure of how to handle Idun's statement, to go along or to let it go? Idun immediately changes her statement to the facilitator's line by saying that one always should talk to one of the teachers:

9 **Facilitator:** No but like it could be a solution then ah to go to (.) to a grown-up or a dad then

10 **Anita:** (?)

11 **Idun:** Yes one always tells the Mi:::ss th

Most of the participants (and the facilitator) look at verbally active participants (Anita, facilitator, Idun), except for Martin who (except for a short glance at Idun) looks out of the window or at or under the table. Anita and Johanna are still interested in the facilitator's notes. As in all sequences, there are movements among the participants that don't seem to make any group-interactional sense. There are two non-verbal interactions that don't seem to connect to the verbal ones. Something is happening in the beginning outside the window, catching the eye of some. Johanna taking off and putting on her glasses is mimicked by Therese to Ester.

#### 14.1.3.5 Sequence 3: Idun breaking the rules to invite Martin

For some reason, Idun interrupts the ongoing seminar by commenting on Martin looking like his big brother:

2 **Anita:** That that (.) she should say sorry to Alfie (.) an' all the rest of them.

3 **Idun:** I think Martin and (.) Torbjörn almost look alike

4 **Facilitator:** Martin and Torbjörn?

5 **Idun:** Yes

6 **Facilitator:** Eh thatis now you mean Martin's big brother

7 **Idun:** Yea

She has been thinking about this for some seconds, looking at Martin, and circling her hands over the table, something she continues doing during the sequence and in small movements after the facilitator has changed the subject. Idun's utterance attracts a lot of attention to Martin (and to herself), which might be what she was anticipating. Martin is involved with Therese and Ester in some distracting activity right before; she might be trying to correct him. On the other hand, she is signaling goodwill towards him, looking at him and smiling. Martin hasn't taken part in the verbal interaction; in the earlier sequences he even seemed disinterested. Is Idun trying to point this out, to get him back into the seminar? If this is the case, the facilitator

does not react to it; she goes on talking to Anita who already is very active in the seminar. Martin looks at Idun for a long time<sup>87</sup>.

#### 14.1.4 Analyzing the “There goes Alfie the thief” seminar

##### 14.1.4.1 Seminar steps and intellectual process

To some extent, the facilitator introduces the different steps in the seminar sequence. The questions she asks throughout the seminar, however, are more like opening questions, asking the participants of their opinions about what the persons in the story do or should have done. There could be some risk that the seminar will get stuck in their pre-judgments. The participants, however, tend to answer by referring to text and a lot of time is spent on checking the book for the passage where Milla cries. The text is well chosen and has been read aloud before the seminar as intended. No personal or group goals are set, and the evaluation relates to whether the participants appreciated the seminar. There is no pause for reflection after the opening question. There is a slight domination by the facilitator in verbal communication, chiefly consisting of questions posed to the participants. Anita and, to some extent, Idun dominate the student speech.

The intellectual process evolves to some extent during the seminar, for instance the examining of Milla’s actions and why she is crying. From time to time the group (and the facilitator) gets stuck in “right” answers and a tendency to consensus, for example when they all agree that they would have acted differently if they had been Milla. They also have a hard time finding alternative ways for Alfie to act, but on the other hand, they are not helped by being able to refer to the book.

##### 14.1.4.2 Dialogic process

Most of the time, the participants and the facilitator act in accordance with the seminar “rules”. Idun seems to try to promote Martin’s participation by breaking the “rule” of keeping to the subject. There is also some, less noticeable, rule-breaking, when groups of participants team up in silent interaction (Martin, Therese and Ester in sequence 3). As in the “Pippi” seminar the “rules” are not completely transparent to the participants. The facilitator is sticking to the “rules” but with a tendency to promote some answers and a consensus. She is challenging the participants in the first sequence, making at least Anita confused. As the seminar proceeds, her comments get less challenging and in sequence 2 she is deliberately cutting off Idun’s challenging question about what to do if your parent doesn’t believe you. She might consider questioning grown-ups’ reliability too challenging for young children. Or she might try to compensate for making Anita confused earlier by

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87 Martin’s glances were not reliably transcribed in turn 12 due to dark film.

making her statement important. Anita and to some extent Johanna seem to be focused on what the facilitator is writing. Anita seems throughout the seminar to be trying to find answers that please the facilitator and seems to be succeeding; she later dominates the seminar.

#### **14.1.4.3 “Silent” interaction**

As in the previous seminar about “Pippi Longstocking”, showing what is acceptable in the seminar culture is done by looking at the person or persons talking. Not looking at the speakers is used as a means to communicate that the seminar is not interesting (cf. Martin). The entire group sometimes acts in the same way (sequence 2, 3), probably amplifying the effect. There is verbal interaction with “silent” side interactions, carried out by gestures and movements. Many of the gestures and movements seem to lack connection to the group interaction, probably due to the youth of the participants. To some extent, the gestures here also seem to show distress or confusion (cf. Idun in 3). Gestures are also used to show sympathy, agreement, or attention. The facilitator is able to control the verbal part of the seminar by deciding what is important (cf. Anita’s statement in 2) and what is not to be discussed (cf. Idun’s statement in 2), but she cannot control the non-verbal interaction, except for silently correcting Anita’s and Johanna’s interest in the notes and supporting actions with her own body language. She also uses verbal actions to show what is acceptable. After Idun has broken the “rules” in sequence 3, the facilitator turns back to the seminar by returning to Anita (but not to Idun, contrary to her actions in the “Pippi Longstocking” seminar, when Martin breaks the rules). The seminar, after sequence 1, is less successful in involving all participants than the “Pippi” seminar, perhaps because of the facilitator’s focus on Anita and her ideas and of Anita trying to please the facilitator.

### **14.1.5 Five-year-olds discussing “All together”**

#### **14.1.5.1 The setting of the “All together” seminar**

Most of the group of six children, five years old, has participated in seminars for eight months, with a few of them for a year and eight months. The facilitator has conducted seminars for two years. The seminar takes place in a small room at the day-care centre. The door is closed. The participants are seated around a square table. The literature discussed is “All Together”. The seminar lasts for 18 minutes.

Participants: Saari (f), Therese (f), Idun (f), Johanna (f), Ester (f), Anita (f).  
Facilitator: Anna.

### 14.1.5.2 Main outline of the “All together” seminar

The facilitator starts by turning on the film cameras, while the participants giggle and joke by saying “cheese”. The facilitator then introduces the book and the author and asks why Frida in the book always wants to decide over Anna and Johanna (sequence 1, after half a minute). Saari bends over the table and whispers into the microphone close to her. The facilitator asks if they recognize the situation from their own experience. Is it possible for all to decide? Frida might not have been able to decide things when she was a baby. Everyone doesn’t have to do the same thing; one can play different games. Anita asks if they shall only talk about Frida and Saari whispers into the microphone (sequence 2, after eight minutes). They discuss if Frida thinks that a boss should be this way, and the facilitator tells them about her own boss (sequence 3, after nine and a half minutes). The facilitator asks what to do if someone decides all the time, and the participants answer that one should talk to a grown-up. Is deciding the same thing as bullying? Saari now asks if they are not to think (sequence 4, after 15 minutes). Idun ends the seminar by shouting it was great fun. Someone else thinks it was hard work, and they discuss the activity they interrupted to go to seminar – packing their boxes for summer holiday and moving from day-care centre to grade K.

### 14.1.5.3 Sequence 1: Cheerful rule breaking

1 **Facilitator:** An’ now I’m about to start with this question why does Frida want to decide all the time what Anna and Johanna (.) are to play why is it her that wants to decide

They try some different answers to why Frida always wants to decide over Anna and Johanna. Saari introduces the idea that she likes to decide, and Ester elaborates on this. The facilitator asks if she only does this when playing with Anna and Johanna or with others too, and the participants immediately shout no. Saari says that she thinks she does and some of the others change their mind. They interrupt each other in attempts to find a supporting argument, and the facilitator reminds them to listen to each other:

43 **Facilitator:** Now you have to listen to each other listen to each other

44 **Idun:** Yea then (?) think so

45 **Anita:** I think so

46 **Saari:** Just then I think an’ mm

47 **Idun:** Then I think she decides over the whole

48 **Facilitator:** But now you’re talking several Idun what are you saying (2) an’ what’s Sari saying you have to listen to each other

49 **Idun:** Yeabut sothat sha has other friends an’ (.) so she likes to decide an’

Idun tries once more to pick up the thread but without much success, and a moment of confusion seems to follow interrupted by Anita pointing at the wall saying that someone has drawn there (55). The facilitator comments

that it is one of the younger children who has done it (56) and then turns back to Idun who now has changed back to her first point of view (59):

55 **Anita:** There's drawing on the wall /*She points at the wall/*

56 **Facilitator:** M oops yea yea someone has done it's one of the small ones

57 **Johanna:** Hmm (giggles)

58 **Facilitator:** But Idun you had some idea too about some something do you think she's like this together with others or is it only when she's with Anna an' Johanna

59 **Idun:** M nn only with Anna an' Johanna

The change is not investigated further; it is interrupted by Saari commenting that Anna and Johanna almost have the same name. She says the names a couple of times, even when the facilitator turns the question to Ester. Ester presents a new idea: Frida wants to decide over the teachers too and the group goes on discussing what will happen if she tries to decide over grown-ups. They agree after some time that everyone should be allowed to decide what to play, and Idun shouts into the microphone (107). The group starts laughing since she probably meant to tell Frida off, the character in the book:

107 **Idun:** Yes that's RIGHT right Hanna

108 **Johanna:** ((laughs))

109 **Idun:** No what am I saying her is name (?) ((laughs))

110 **Facilitator:** Frida is her name (?) ((laughs))

The participants move a lot during all sequences, seemingly without much connection to what is happening verbally in the seminar, more than in the earlier seminars. It seems as if Anita and Johanna react to Saari's somewhat scattered speech by making sounds. Saari presents both productive and non-productive ideas. She is very concentrated on the facilitator and her notes, sitting next to the facilitator. Anita, also next to the facilitator, looks at them from time to time. The rest looks at the speakers or things on the table.

#### 14.1.5.4 Sequence 2: Saari talking through the microphone

Anita asks if they shall only talk about Frida (2), and some start pointing at the book until the facilitator puts it under the notebook. Saari (ironically) comments that the facilitator's answer means they can't talk about Anna and Johanna (4), which they obviously are:

2 **Anita:** Can we only talk with her

3 **Facilitator:** Only about Frida Fredriksson (.) yea

4 **Saari:** Not about Anna an' Johanna then /*She points at the book/*

5 **Johanna:** I think that the whole frig I think that Frida she decides over the entire Kindergarten

6 **Facilitator:** You think that Frida decides over everyone (3)

Is this a response to when the facilitator corrects Saari just before the sequence? Johanna seems to try to end what seems like an unspoken conflict by saying that she thinks Frida decides over the Kindergarten (5). The facilitator shows her appreciation by repeating and stressing the important words and by nodding (6). Saari now turns to the microphone and copies Idun's

idea from the last sequence, whispering messages to book-character Frida, correcting her. Contrary to Idun, she is not trying to be funny; she's doing it as silently as possible:

7 **Saari** ((whispering into the microphone)): An' here now stop deciding things (?)

8 **Facilitator**: Do you think that's how it is (3)

9 **Saari** ((whispering into the microphone)): an' deciding

10 **Facilitator**: Saari /*Saari sits up, looks at facilitator*/

11 **Saari**: Yes

12 **Facilitator**: Did you hear what Johanna said

13 **Saari**: Nope

The facilitator corrects Saari by asking if she heard what Johanna said (12). She hesitates, probably considering what to do: the pauses in her speech are long. Saari starts answering, but then Idun comments, something seemingly out of the blue (!). The facilitator turns to her to ask if it's possible that Frida isn't allowed to decide anything. This also seems to be done to correct her:

21 **Idun**: Completely blue (?)

22 **Facilitator**: D d Idun

23 **Anita**: Since she' lea:::rning

24 **Facilitator**: exactly Idun Johanna said like this I think Frida decides over the entire Kindergarten if I say like thisnow (.) it might be because she cannot decide anything that's why she decides (.) over her smaller siblings

Johanna is looking closely at Saari and later at Idun, when her utterance is used to correct them, and she also glances at the camera<sup>88</sup>. The participants agree with the facilitator and Johanna comments that you never get to know that in the book. The facilitator agrees and comments that that's why they can talk about it, calling Therese's name (36):

35 **Anita**: You never get to know that in the boo:k

36 **Facilitator**: You never get to know that no an' that's precisely why we can talk about it Therese 'cause we don't know (.) it only says eh (.) about this game (.) situation at home

37 **Anita**: Yeah

38 **Facilitator**: Could it be like that

39 **Idun**: Mm

40 **Johanna, Ester**: Yeah

41 **Facilitator**: I don't know /*She shakes her head*/

The statement might be done to make it clear that there can be many ways of looking at an idea. She is probably also trying to show this after she has contradicted Johanna's idea earlier by saying she's not sure (41). Calling Therese's name seem to be a concealed way of taking command over what seems to be getting out of the facilitator's control. Therese has been making grimaces, focused on Ester, who however ignores her, looking at the speak-

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88 Idun's glances were not possible to transcribe in turns 1-4, 24-end.

er. The movement in the whole group increases after the first time the facilitator corrects Saari by calling her name.

#### 14.1.5.5 Sequence 3: The facilitator joking to restore order

When the facilitator asks if Frida thinks that a boss should decide, they immediately shout “no!” However, Anita changes her mind and comments that Frida sounds like a boss, and they all seem to agree that bosses sound angry. Saari disagrees by saying there could be nice bosses and Johanna uses her mother’s boss as an example. Saari uses a “bad” boss from a TV-program as an example. The facilitator now takes her own boss as an example:

44 **Facilitator:** Aha and is a bluff d’yaknow what I have a really n nice boss too  
45 **Saari** ((exhaling)): Do you  
46 **Facilitator:** Mm /*She nods and smiles*/  
47 **Anita:** And who’s that  
48 **Facilitator:** It’s Sophie who’s my boss  
49 **Ester:** Mhm ((laughs))  
50 **Anita:** She who was here  
51 **Facilitator:** Yes  
52 **Saari:** Sophie (↑)  
53 **Facilitator:** That’s my boss ((giggles))  
54 **Saari, Johanna:** Oops

The participants show surprise and laugh, turning back and forth to each other, and the discussion gets a bit disrupted, even though Anita seems to try to restore order by telling about her father’s boss:

71 **Anita:** my father’s boss is called my fathers boss is called Lasse  
72 **Facilitator:** Lasse and he’s how is he then Anita  
73 **Saari** ((whispering into the microphone)): Johanna (.) one (.) two (.)  
74 **Anita:** He’s ni:ce

Johanna now goes back to the group’s earlier idea that Frida wants no one to make decisions for her since she never could decide anything before, and Idun immediately refutes this:

90 **Idun:** She could have  
91 **Johanna:** An’  
92 **Idun:** she could be deciding (.) the whole time because (.) she decides (.) all the time in Kindergarten

There are two obvious silent interactions going on. Saari is back to talking to Frida through the microphone but gets a silent reprimand from the facilitator.

75 **Saari** ((whispering into the microphone)): one (.)  
76 **Anita:** Hes kin  
77 **Saari:** ((whispering into the microphone)): two  
78 **Facilitator:** It yes  
79 **Anita:** I’ve never seen ‘im  
80 **Saari:** ((whispering into the microphone)): yea ye come not (?) /*Facilitator pushes up Saari’s head*/



She then focuses her interest on the camera and the microphone cord and gets silently told off once more. Idun slaps her own mouth with her hands some of the time and is mimicked by Johanna after Idun has said it feels good doing it. Johanna and Therese try to correct them silently by shaking their heads and touching their arms. When Anita looks down, Idun stops for a while. Idun and Johanna take up the idea by banging at their chests, and this time facilitator quietly corrects by shaking her head, frowning. Idun continues until the next silent correction from the facilitator. She then turns on Johanna's and the facilitator's idea and refutes it (90).

The sequence seems to consist of two different parts. One starts when the facilitator says she has a nice boss (44) and the other when Anita puts the seminar back on track by telling about her father's boss (71). The first is a disruption, a joke or a surprise. Why does the facilitator take her own boss as an example? It might be a joke directed towards the researcher; she is obviously amused over the participants' views of bosses. On the other hand, the participants give her a hard time, deliberately disturbing the seminar process with different silent interactions and jokes. Right before she takes the example Anita, who has been cooperating with the facilitator the entire seminar and even correcting her fellow participants, seems to change sides by making a joke (43):

40 **Saari:** yeah 'cause then Peo it's a program that he has a boss that's really bad like a blubb

41 **Facilitator:** Yes he has a boss that's really bad

42 **Saari:** Yeah

43 **Anita:** And is a bluff ((in an affected voice)): I USUALLY watch THAT too actually

The facilitator's interruption seems to function as a way to stun the participants and for all to join in the laughs. It doesn't work in the long run though. The silent disturbances are even more frequent afterwards.

Most participants (and the facilitator) look at verbally active people. Idun is more interested in the facilitator's notes and later in the microphone and cameras. Johanna is also looking at the microphone a lot of the time.

#### 14.1.5.6 Sequence 4: Finishing seminar to get to work

6 **Saari:** Are we not supposed to THI::NK /She turns to facilitator/

7 **Johanna:** No

8 **Facilitator:** Yes we didn't have time for that becauseya' it (.) you had so answer so quickly today

Saari here points out that they have forgotten to take a pause for thinking, normally done at the opening question, and the facilitator comments that they answered so quickly. Participants then assure the facilitator and others that they were thinking all the same, and Saari also comments that she has been thinking the whole time. It seems as if the facilitator is beginning to close the seminar; she looks through her papers and Idun reminds the others of that they are to pack their things for summer when they finish the seminar:

18 **Saari:** Metoo (.) I was thinking the whole ti::me

19 **Idun:** I thought li then I'm gonna clean my box

20 **Facilitator:** Mm ((inhales))

21 **Anita:** I'm also gonna do that

22 **Saari:** Me too

The microphone is the focus at the beginning, but most of the time participants and the facilitator look at the speaker<sup>89</sup>.

## 14.1.6 Analyzing the “All together” seminar

### 14.1.6.1 Seminar steps and intellectual process

As in the seminar on “Alfie”, the facilitator’s questions throughout the seminar are like opening questions, asking the participants of their opinions, risking that the seminar circles round their pre-judgment. The participants to some extent answer by referring to the text. The text has been read aloud before the seminar as intended but seems to lack in the diversity of ideas needed to be a good seminar text. No personal or group goals are set, and the evaluation relates to whether the participants appreciated the seminar. There is no pause for reflection after the opening question, commented on at the end by Saari. The facilitator and the participants share verbal communication time.

The intellectual process evolves to some extent through the seminar, for instance the examining of Frida’s motives in wanting to decide. From time to time the group gets stuck in consensus, for example, when shouting “no!” directly after the facilitator’s question a couple of times, but individual participants often find ways out of it. They often seem to answer from their own view even when the facilitator is asking for Frida’s, and she has to repeat the question to get them to see another point of view. Whether they are considering Frida’s view or just giving the facilitator an answer they think she would like better is hard to tell. The facilitator seems anxious to show them that different views are accepted both verbally and by gestures. She often nods when saying something negative and vice versa, or she both nods and shakes her head. The slight lack of intellectual challenge in the seminar is probably due to the lack of differing ideas in the book and, to some extent, to the facilitator not asking them to analyze the book. On the other hand, there are passages where participants try and refute their own ideas, for example when talking about bullying and bosses. They tend to try refuting ideas by themselves a lot more often than in the earlier seminars.

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89 Johanna’s gestures and glances could not be transcribed in turn 6-11.

#### **14.1.6.2 Dialogic process**

Participants break or act outside the seminar “rules” a lot of the time, even if they or the facilitator get the seminar back on track. On the other hand, it seems clear that they do understand the “rules” and the steps of the seminar. It seems as if they are at a point where they deliberately break the “rules” and make other interruptions to test the “rules” or the facilitator’s ability to handle them. They also might be protesting, having the seminar in the middle of something they considered important work (packing their things). Idun seems to be the master of these types of disturbances, but she does it jokingly, not in a hostile way. She is also reminding the others at the end about the packing of things. The facilitator seems to slip into using teacher skills to get them to participate the way she wants: asking participants if they have heard what others say and telling them that they can talk about the question because the answer is not in the book.

As noted earlier, throughout the seminar, Idun is actively testing the rules and the facilitator’s ability to control the seminar. Anita is most of the time actively helping the facilitator. Saari is disturbing in a lot of ways, but it doesn’t seem deliberate. She still seems to try to get hold of the seminar rules by repeating them and asking about them. Although she makes comments which contribute to the seminar, the others openly show disinterest from time to time. She makes comments which are non-productive and plays games with no connections to the others (talking to Frida through the microphone).

#### **14.1.6.3 “Silent” interaction**

As in the previous seminars of this group, looking at the person or persons talking signals interest. Many of the gestures and movements seem to lack connection to the seminar interaction. Gestures and glances are also used as ways to communicate outside the official seminar or to disturb it. The facilitator is able to control the verbal part of the seminar, but she cannot control the non-verbal interaction, except for silently correcting. In this seminar she also uses traditional teacher’s means to control it. As in the earlier seminars, the facilitator’s notes are a focus, but not as much as before. Saari takes a keener interest than the rest; she is still trying to understand what is important in the seminar. The microphones and cameras are a focus some of the time, used by Saari to play and by Idun. It doesn’t seem to have much connection to the rest of the interaction, and there is no obvious interest for microphones and cameras when the principal is talked of in sequence 3.

While transcribing, I noted that in parts of the seminar, the participants seem to know who is going to speak before anyone has said anything. They turn their head to the next speaker before he or she has made a noise or a move. How is this done? It’s hard to see or hear on the film. Maybe there are

small movements or sounds or maybe they have learned what to expect after a certain utterance?

### 14.1.7 Comparing the seminars of group A

These group A seminars take place during half a year. There is development over time both in intellectual process and acting in accordance with seminar rules. Little time is spent communicating the rules during the last seminar. The facilitator's role also changed to a slightly more passive role. On the other hand, the group (led by Idun) seems to test the seminar rules and the facilitator's ability to control the seminar. To be able to do this, they must understand the rules.

## 14.2 K to first grade (group B)

### 14.2.1 Grade K discussing "The dandelion and the apple twig"

#### 14.2.1.1 The setting of "The dandelion and the apple twig" seminar

Most of the group of 11 children in grade K, have participated in seminars for five months, while David and Nancy have participated for two years. The facilitator has conducted seminars for one year and four months. The seminar takes place in a classroom. The door is closed. The participants are seated around a square table. The literature discussed is a short story, "The Dandelion and the Apple twig". The seminar lasts for 12 minutes. Dark film made multimodal transcribing impossible.

Participants: Abel (m), Markus (m), Christian (m), Igor (m), David (m), Mickan (f) Nancy (f), Otilia (f), Kasper (m), Bella (f), Diana (f). Facilitator: Charlotte.

#### 14.2.1.2 Main outline of "The dandelion and the apple twig" seminar

The facilitator starts by asking which one of the flowers in the story they would want to be: the dandelion or the apple twig. There is half a minute's silence before the facilitator asks the first participant to answer. Some would like to be the apple twig because it is beautiful. Igor comments that it will also give apples. Otilia answers she would like to be the dandelion. David also wants to be the dandelion. The facilitator asks which flower is more common, but David interrupts this by saying he would want to be the sun (sequence 1, after 5 minutes). The facilitator quotes the text "there are differences in people" and asks what is meant and after some examples asks if it matters how one looks (sequence 2, after 10 minutes). Christian slides

under the table, and the facilitator ends the seminar, even though some participants try to continue it.

### 14.2.1.3 Sequence 1: Christian is stopped by the facilitator

The facilitator's question if the dandelion or the apple twig is the most common is not answered until Otilia makes an attempt and probably mistakes the dandelion for a water lily<sup>90</sup>. Instead, David introduces the sun as a possible answer to the opening question. Christian refutes the answer as impossible by saying that it's too hot on the sun (8). The facilitator contradicts this and then encourages David to investigate his answer further:

8 **Christian:** YEES (.) so warm you will DIIE  
9 **Facilitator:** it gives warmth mhm (2) but we won't die from the sun down here (.) we like the sun don'twe (.) mhm (1) do you think you would be the sun up there or do'ya think you'd be the sun shining here or down on the flowers  
10 **Christian:** That doesn't (?)  
11 **David:** Would be the sun up there  
12 **Christian:** ((sighs))

Mickan and Nancy also change their answers and now want to be the sun. Christian is reacting to what is said by making sounds and also implying that they are childish. He is even mimicking the facilitator:

19 **Facilitator:** How do you think then  
20 **Christian:** How do you think ((in a squeaky voice)) childish (?)

The facilitator finally asks him to speak. When Christian comments on the sun burning, she tries to put an end to the "sun-discussion". David tries to pick up the sun-discussion again, supported by Christian, but the facilitator once again stops it: first by asking them to talk about flowers instead (40) and then by posing a new question. She will not let the discussion continue when Christian brings it up, although she has accepted the subject earlier. It must be hard for the participants to see why. There is some confusion: Bella forgets what she wanted to say (41), and Abel changes the subject (43):

36 **Facilitator:** Yes Christian (.) what were you about to say  
37 **Christian:** If you were the sun then you would have been burned 'cause the sun first was like the moon (.) but then it has i started to burn on that sun  
38 **Facilitator:** Okay  
39 **Christian:** then then burned someone  
40 **Facilitator:** doyou know what Christian maybe we can talk about the sun in a while and we'll talk about the flowers now at first Bella wanted to say something  
41 **Bella:** Eeh (1) I don't remember (2)  
42 **Facilitator:** Abel  
43 **Abel:** Yea (.) bu (.) I've windflowers at home  
44 **Facilitator:** Already

90 The Swedish word for dandelion, maskros, resembles the word for water lily, näckros.

#### 14.2.1.4 Sequence 2: Christian disappearing under the table

The facilitator gives the word to Otilia (2) but is obviously not hearing what she says or is not interested (4). Otilia is not talking about differences in people (the subject) but differences between humans and flowers (3):

- |  |
|--|
| 1 <b>Mickan:</b> They have (.) eh all people don't have the same color of skin |
| 2 <b>Facilitator:</b> No exactly Otilia  |
| 3 <b>Otilia:</b> Buuh ehm (.) we have eyes that they don't (.)                 |
| 4 <b>Facilitator:</b> Exactly does it matter then                              |
| 5 <b>Mickan:</b> No  |
| 6 <b>Facilitator:</b> If we have the same hair color or skin color or          |
| 7 <b>Diana:</b> No it doesn't matter   |

The facilitator, however, seems anxious to ask the question whether it matters how one looks (4). Mickan and Diana answer no, and the facilitator accepts the answer without questioning. There is a long pause when the facilitator looks in her notes for the next question, and Christian now slides under the table. This results in the facilitator ending the seminar, talking to me via the microphone:

- |   |
|---|
| 17 <b>Facilitator:</b> I th Ann I think we'll have to (.) end thisere |
|---|

There are some protests to Christian's behavior but mostly the group seems to try to continue the seminar, even if it's hard to concentrate.

### 14.2.2 Analyzing the "The dandelion and the apple twig" seminar

#### 14.2.2.1 Seminar steps and intellectual process

The facilitator introduces the different steps in the intended seminar plan. The text does not help the facilitator; there are few dilemmas to discuss or the group doesn't really understand them. No personal or group goals are set and no evaluation except for the facilitator thanking the participants and saying they did well. The facilitator dominates the verbal communication, chiefly consisting of questions posed to different participants. The gestures and glances could not be transcribed reliably. Still, it is possible to register that the participants raise their hands frequently during seminar.

The intellectual process is slow through the seminar, but some ideas are tested and refuted. For example, the participants discuss the dilemmas in the text of the beautiful and rare apple twig, captured in the vase versus the dandelions, especially with David's reasoning in sequence 1. The different ideas, however, are not pursued and the group leaves the text frequently without the facilitator acting. Christian is challenging the group in sequence 1, but the facilitator seems to stop his comments rather than encouraging them. His line of thinking is out of "text", but the facilitator doesn't use questioning to get Christian to see where his reasoning is remiss or that he

gets on the wrong track; she just ends his line of thinking. It rather seems as if she is trying to control the seminar so that everyone should feel safe, rather than encouraging and challenging the intellectual process.

#### **14.2.2.2 Dialogic process**

Participants break the “rules” several times; most obvious is Christian’s acting out. He seems to be testing the “rules”. The “rules” seem fairly transparent to the participants, but the facilitator for some reason seems to want to control the seminar and by doing so breaks the “rules” herself. Goal setting at the start might have been a more productive way of coping with control. They need the facilitator as a role-model and this probably accounts for her dominating the verbal communication, but they also seem to get confused by her double messages. If her purpose is to make the participants feel safe, she doesn’t seem to succeed. Like the facilitator in the “Pippi Longstocking” seminar with five-year-olds, this facilitator also seems to have trouble sticking to the “rules” when values she consider important are challenged (e.g. everyone is valuable). Christian disappears under the table right after this has happened, maybe as a reaction to the facilitator breaking the “rules” or maybe due to the pause where facilitator looks at her notes. He has been trying to present ideas during the seminar, but these have not been acknowledged, partly because they didn’t relate to the text, but some of the other’s ideas didn’t either. Partly his ideas are not explored because the facilitator chooses not to pick them up, maybe as a way of disciplining him.

### **14.2.3 First grade discussing “Ronny and Julia”**

#### **14.2.3.1 The setting of the “Ronny and Julia” seminar**

Most of the group of 11 children in first grade has participated in seminars for ten months, while David and Nancy have participated for two and a half years. The facilitator has conducted seminars for two years. The seminar takes place in a classroom. The door is closed. The participants are seated around an oval table. The literature discussed is a rhymed picture book for children: “Ronny and Julia”. The seminar lasts for 30 minutes, including reading the text (six minutes).

Participants: Abel (m), Nancy (f), Carl (m), David (m), Bella (f), Kasper (m) Mickan (f), Christian (m), Otilia (f), Markus (m), Diana (f). Facilitator: Charlotte.

#### **14.2.3.2 Main outline of the “Ronny and Julia” seminar**

The facilitator welcomes all to the Socratic seminar and shows them the microphones. They repeat the seminar “rules” and write down their personal goals. There is a long pause for goal writing. The introduction lasts for almost ten minutes, with some questions and clarifications. The facilitator then

reads the text (six minutes). The opening question is introduced: Are there “cooties”<sup>91</sup> and if so, how do you know you have them? There is no such thing as “cooties”; the boys in the book only want to tease Ronny. They might want to join the game or they are jealous (sequence 1, after three minutes). Maybe they wanted Ronny to fight (sequence 2, after six minutes)? Why did Ronny get sick if there are no “cooties”? Christian starts hitting the table and the facilitator asks him to stop, referring to the microphones. How can one know that someone is anxious or worried (sequence 3, after 25 minutes)? The facilitator ends the seminar by inviting them to relate their personal goal.

#### 14.2.3.3 Sequence 1: Breaking the rules and restoring the order

David here introduces the idea that the boys talk about “cooties” because they are envious of Ronny and Julia playing. Judging from their gestures, the participants react to this statement. This is interrupted by Diana asking about when they are to evaluate their personal goals, written on pieces of paper:

9 **David:** Ehm (3) ehm they too wanted to play with Julian

10 **Facilitator:** okay (4) howd’ya what dya yuh Dian do you think there are cooties

11 **Diana:** When when do we get to read or /*She holds up the piece of paper in front of her*/

She has waved with her paper earlier, causing the facilitator to silently correct her by shaking her head. Diana goes on to repeat that she wants to read her paper in an affected way. This time, the facilitator corrects her by asking her a seminar question:

14 **Diana:** Eh I’wan’I’wan’I’wanto NOH (affected speech)

15 **Facilitator:** Do you think there could be

16 **Diana:** N

17 **Facilitator:** You seem a bit hesitant (1) could it be like that

18 **Diana:** Nope

Looking at the transcribed gestures and glances during the sequence, a lot of the individual action is concentrated on their own pieces of paper. Christian is more violently playing with his, causing Otilia to catch the facilitator’s attention, and the facilitator tells her to leave it be. Christian is trying to catch the facilitator’s attention by sounds and noises. She is aware of this, looking at him but ignores him until finally saying his name. He now contradicts the other speakers by claiming there are “cooties”, but without being able to support his idea when the facilitator asks him:

19 **Facilitator:** Christian

20 **Christian:** Eh (.) I think there are cooties

21 **Bella:** No there isn’t

22, 23 **Kasper, Diana:** No

91 The Swedish word “tjejbaciller” means girl bacillus or germs and has here been translated to “cooties”.



24 **Facilitator:** How do you know you've got them then

25 **Christian:** Nope yesno yesno yesno yes no

26 **Facilitator:** If they exist how do you know you have got them

Instead he repeats Diana's affected way of speaking, changing his mind. This is probably caused by the others' protests. The facilitator on the other hand chooses to take him seriously by asking a seminar question (26).

#### 14.2.3.4 Sequence 2: The participants trying to stop provocations

The verbal interaction in this sequence doesn't seem to be in focus. There is, however, anxiety in the group, judging from their glances. They look at each other a lot and change eye direction often. The speaker or their own piece of paper with personal goals is often the focus, but a lot of the time they watch Christian or his eraser<sup>92</sup>. Christian seems to want to provoke the seminar deliberately. He looks at both cameras in the beginning of the sequence and then starts hitting the table with his eraser stuck to the tip of his pencil. Some of the others silently try to correct him by shaking their heads or taking away the objects he uses. The facilitator notices Christian early but chooses not to correct him until Nancy has asked him to stop it. This does, however, not stop Christian, not even when he drops his eraser, and Mickan puts his pencil away. The microphones and cameras are the focus especially at the end of the sequence, when the facilitator reminds them of the filming by referring to the microphone when Christian is disrupting the seminar.

There are a lot of individual gestures that seem to lack connection to the group interactions. There is a reaction from a lot of the participants when Carl stresses coo:::ties, probably amplifying the importance of the utterance:

2 **Carl:** 'cause youknow (1) yes (.) itmight'be that (.) they said (.) that one gets coo:::ties (.)

3 **Bella:** ((coughs))

4 **Carl:** yeh an' thenah it thought they might have thought that Ronny would go home an'like an' cooties home at their place bu'there is no anthen they would play

Carl here presents a new idea: that the boys say there are cooties so that Ronny would leave Julia and play with them (4). David also introduces the idea that they might want to have a fight and later elaborates on this (13). They might want to scare Ronny off so that they could play with Julia. This however seem to get lost in the turmoil around Christian's eraser, David's speech is very slow and disrupted:

13 **David:** Ehm (1)/*Christian hits the table several times with his eraser stuck on the pencil/* a:n' the guys eh might say that there were cooties sothat Ronny would be angry an' start to (2) *Christian hits harder, "stamps"/*

14 **Christian:** Cause'he

15 **David:** moscha

16 **Facilitator:** That he would start to fight you mean

92 Christian's glances could not be reliably transcribed in turn 7-24.

It seems as if the group is trying to continue the seminar in spite of Christian's provocations. The way they go about it is by focusing the verbal interaction on the subject and carrying out the seminar "rules": they try to take no verbal notice of Christian's actions while correcting him silently.

#### 14.2.3.5 Sequence 3: The group cooperating to restore the seminar

The facilitator corrects Christian once more, and Diana supports this (1, 2). Christian answers by making a joke about his "eraser" having chickenpox:

- 1 **Facilitator:** D'youknow Christian you're disturbing the others theyhave think it's really to think an' (.) something else an'  
2 **Diana:** Christia:n  
3 **Christian:** To thishere chickenpox  
4, 5 **Abel, Otilia:** ((giggles))

The others laugh and seem to appreciate the joke, but Bella looks at the camera. The facilitator seems not to hear or understand (or pretends she doesn't) at first but then treats the utterance as if it was a new seminar idea presented:

- 11 **Facilitator:** Can you get chickenpox 'cause you're worried /*She and Kasper smiles*/  
12 **Abel, Nancy, Kasper, Mickan, Markus:** ((laughs)) /*Otilia smiles*/  
13 **Kasper:** Nohooo  
14 **Christian:** The eraser has got chickenpox  
15 **Facilitator:** The eraser has I thought it was Ronny ya meant who was all spotty  
16 **Mickan:** ((laughs))  
17 **Markus:** But then maybe it can infect you  
18 **Facilitator:** But listen if you notice that a friend is this worried or sad or something like Ronny was whatcan you do then

Christian then has to make clear that he meant the eraser, something that the others seem to have realized before, judging from their reactions. Is the facilitator aware of the joke or not? To some extent the joke is connected to the present discussion. Ronny is sick in the story and they have been talking about why and about the "cooties". The facilitator then ends this by posing a new seminar question. They go on to discuss what to do when a friend feels worried. Christian now suddenly presents an idea highly connected to the discussion (27). He suggests giving away a drawing but immediately seems to change his mind and provokes the group by specifying that it should be an UGLY drawing (29). This time no one seems to think it's a joke, although at least Carl seems aware that it is a provocation; he looks at the camera. The facilitator chooses to repeat the sentence in a neutral tone. Nancy and Markus, on the other hand, refute the idea in accordance with seminar practice:

- 24 **Facilitator:** What doyou think you should give then  
25 **Markus:** (1) a flower or whatever  
26 **Facilitator:** Yea you think something a gift orsomething  
27 **Christian:** A DRAWING /*He leans over the table with his arms out*/  
28 **Facilitator:** A drawing whatelse can you do

29 **Christian:** An UGLY

30 **Facilitator:** An ugly drawing

31 **Nancy:** That wouldn't make you glad

32 33 **Christian:** B (1)

34 **Markus:** If you make an ugly drawing then you just had to daub an' then you getah

There is now some confusion as how to go on. Nancy, Markus, Carl, David, and the facilitator seem to try to encourage each other to help finding the way to carry on by looking at each other but the verbal interaction is disrupted. Contrary to the usual behavior, individuals here are looking at a person who doesn't speak and the person speaks almost immediately after this. Nancy looks at Markus who speaks; the facilitator looks at Carl who speaks; Markus looks at David who speaks. The rest of the participants either look at the speaker or at their piece of paper (except for Abel who looks alternately at Nancy and Markus). Christian is trying to get into the interaction both by speech and by looking at the facilitator and Markus but with no success. The facilitator finally ends the seminar, which causes most of the participants to touch or move their pieces of papers with personal goals. Diana asks if they now can read their notes, and they go on discussing the procedures for this. As in earlier sequences, the individual gestures and glances throughout the seminar show that the participants are concentrated on their pieces of papers with personal goals, except when they find the verbal interaction interesting. For example Otilia, who has been supporting the facilitator in sequence 1, takes up her piece of paper later and plays with it, glancing quickly back and forth at the facilitator for the rest of the sequence.

## 14.2.4 Analyzing the "Ronny and Julia" seminar

### 14.2.4.1 Seminar steps and intellectual process

The facilitator introduces the different steps in the intended seminar plan in the order suggested. The text does not help the facilitator, there are few dilemmas to discuss and they are too easy for the group to grasp. No group goal is set but personal goals are set and evaluated. The goal setting, evaluation, and introduction take 14 minutes. The facilitator reads the text aloud for six minutes, and the actual seminar takes ten minutes. There is no pause for thinking after the opening question is posed. Many of the participants seem uncertain of how to handle the goal setting (this is the third time they do it), which might explain the domination of this step. They are also very concentrated on their individual notes throughout the seminar. The verbal communication time is shared equally among the participants and facilitator (if the reading of the text is excluded). Verbal communication is distributed equally among boys and girls, and they all look at each other. The boys are more active in trying to find reasons why the boys in the story say to Ronny that

there are “cooties”. Unlike the seminars with five year olds, both boys and girls collaborate with the facilitator to guard the seminar culture (against Christian’s provocations).

The intellectual process is weak through the seminar even if there are some different ideas tested. The first answer to the opening question seems to settle the agenda, maybe not so surprising since there is no pause given for reflection. The ideas presented are not pursued more thoroughly, the seminar time is too short and the text is of no help. The text is read to them for the first time at the seminar, which might make it hard for them to remember the specific details in the story. Christian is provoking the seminar in sequence 1, but seems to back off when the others protest. He goes on provoking in sequence 2; the group, however, tries to continue the intellectual investigation: two more ideas are presented. In sequence 3, Christian seems to try to participate by presenting a new idea but immediately backs off by making it a provocation.

#### **14.2.4.2 Dialogic process and “silent” interaction**

The facilitator is less concentrated on controlling this seminar than in the seminar of “The dandelion and the rose twig”. She waits longer before verbally or silently correcting. She also uses seminar questions or seriously considers provocative utterances to correct or put participants back on track (cf. sequence 1 and 3) On the other hand, the participants all seem to work together to correct Christian (cf. sequence 3). Except for Christian, they mostly act in accordance with seminar “rules”. They are aware of the “rules”. Does this mean that Christian is deliberately being excluded by the rest of the group? From time to time he is participating in the seminar, but it seems as if he gets taken aback by being taken seriously (cf. 1, 3). He seems aware of the seminar “rules” but eager to test them. The facilitator reminds the participants several times of the microphones. This might be one of the things that makes Christian provoke the seminar; he looks at both cameras before provoking in sequence 2. Participants, from time to time look at the cameras, as it seems when the seminar is threatened.

As in other seminars, most participants look at the person speaking or sitting opposite when they are interested in what is being said. At the end of sequence 3, some of the participants and the facilitator seem to work together by glancing at each other to decide how to carry on the seminar after managing Christian’s provocation with the ugly drawing.

#### **14.2.5 Comparing the seminars of group B**

The two seminars of group B show a development over the half year, especially in the facilitator’s and the participant’s handling of disturbances. The participants in both seminars try to stick to the seminar protocol when being provoked. But from trying to correct them in a silent, concealed fashion in

the first seminar, both the participants and the facilitator now tend to treat them as serious seminar ideas. This also seems more successful. The facilitator is more secure in the role and less apt to go back to the role as a teacher. The intellectual content in both seminars is weak. In the first seminar the focus is on finding a “right” answer, in the second on seminar “rules”. In the second seminar, the participants sometimes refer to each other, and they catch on to other participants’ ideas to a larger extent.

## 14.3 Second to fourth grade (group C)

### 14.3.1 Second grade discussing “Jack and the beanstalk”

#### 14.3.1.1 The setting of the “Jack and the beanstalk” seminar

The group of 12 children in second grade, have participated in seminar once before. The facilitator here conducts her first seminar. The seminar takes place in a classroom. The door is closed. The participants are seated around a square table. The literature discussed is the fairytale “Jack and the beanstalk”. The seminar lasts for 14 minutes. The use of only one camera made multimodal transcribing impossible.

Participants: Ofelia (f), Camilla (f), Ella (f), Agnes (f), Lars-Gunnar (m), Josefin (f) Jon (m), Lisa (f), Ester (f), Kalle (m), Astrid (f), Kitty (f). Facilitator: Charlotte.

#### 14.3.1.2 Main outline of the “Jack and the beanstalk” seminar

The facilitator starts by asking them if they think Jack did the right thing in accepting the beans. Some of the participants hesitatingly answer (sequence 1, after half a minute). The facilitator asks Jon what he was thinking when asking about the other beans (sequence 2, after three and a half minutes). Kitty interrupts by asking why the facilitator doesn’t write down Jon’s answer (sequence 3, after five minutes). How can one ensure not being swindled? Can one understand that the mother got angry (sequence 4, after seven minutes)? Jack is stealing. Are there laws in the ogre’s world? Is it alright to do things you’re not allowed? Agnes tells about sneaking away to buy something she has seen in a commercial. The facilitator ends the seminar when they start discussing that commercials might lie.

#### 14.3.1.3 Sequence 1: Trying to figure out the seminar procedures

Jon here asks what happened to the four beans that didn’t grow (2), and this is answered by the facilitator (6), but Jon is not satisfied. She has obviously misunderstood his question (7):

2 **Jon:** Hm (2) what have they have those four beans for  
3 **Lisa, Agnes:** Schh  
4 **Jon:** the other four beans for  
5 **Agnes:** Schh  
6 **Facilitator:** The mother threw all five out of the window  
7 **Jon:** YES but (.) but but

It is supposed to be a pause for reflection, and Agnes and Lisa correct him by hushing him. When the facilitator asks Jon to answer the question he replies that he hasn't finished thinking (11). The facilitator puts the question to Camilla. Maybe Jon is doing this as a protest to not getting his question answered; he seems to be protesting later by yawning and making sounds.

10 **Facilitator:** What d`you think Jon  
11 **Jon:** I haven` t finished thinking  
12 **Agnes:** But I have  
13 **Facilitator:** You can think for a short period

When the facilitator asks Lisa she contradicts Ofelia's answer that she would have traded the cow for the beans but after a pause Lisa changes her answer. However, she presents her idea later, and Astrid elaborates the idea:

34 **Lisa:** That is if I had as much luck so I could (.) h (.) takethat and change hi he (?)  
35 **Facilitator:** M though he didn` t know that when he traded the beans (.) or  
36 **Lisa:** Noh  
37 **Facilitator:** No (1) whatdid you think Astrid how wouldyou`ve done  
38 **Astrid:** If I had known that the beans would grow like that I would probably have traded but he gets to know that he should (?)

Kalle now says that Jack did know because the man told him that he would get the cow back and the facilitator agrees. This seems to confuse Astrid, she starts humming. There are a lot of pauses and hesitations during the whole sequence. The participants seem unsure of what is expected of them. Kalle asks about seminar procedure in the beginning and is answered by Ella:

14 **Kalle:** Can you think both  
15 **Ella:** You can think both

At the end Kalle comments on facilitator's writing. She ignores his comment and gets him back into the seminar by posing the opening question to him:

47, 48 **Kalle:** Eh on the line (1)  
49 **Facilitator:** What doyou think Kalle

#### 14.3.1.4 Sequence 2: Kalle and Jon presenting fantasy ideas

In this sequence, the facilitator accepts the different views exposed, she listens closely to what is said and shows that she is interested in what Jon meant a couple of minutes before (sequence 1):

1 **Facilitator:** Howditya` think whenya` asked about the other beans whawhat didya` think that one should do with`em

- 2 **Jon:** I though' (?) yesbut sorta eh my are jojust one why shou'it ehbe five (1)  
 3 **Facilitator:** Yes yes you thought that it was only one that grew in that fairy tale  
 4 **Jon:** Yeh an' that one came up

Kalle's and Jon's reasoning lacks in clarity, logic, and references to the text. Kalle suggests that the beans help each other in some way. Jon implies that the beans cooperate with thickness in some unexplained way:

- 22 **Jon:** one was so an' one was so o ol or th that it was as high (.) no:w that it was 'though th 'though further down o o or be thicker  
 23 **Facilitator:** Okay (1) why wouldit be thickerfurther down ya'think  
 24 **Jon:** N not further down all the way  
 25 **Facilitator:** All the way (.) okay (2) butwas that because it shouldbe stronger th there theno okay (.) it could have been like that too (1)

The language is staccato (Jon stutters) and in many ways unclear and hesitating. The facilitator chooses to accept the ideas without questioning them, or asking for some clarification.

#### 14.3.1.5 Sequence 3: Participants starting to cooperate after rule break

The facilitator seems to get disturbed when Kitty points out that she hasn't written down Jon's answer (11). She doesn't answer and changes the subject but seems to have a hard time coping with how to express herself (13):

- 11 **Kitty:** Why don't you write on Jon  
 12 **Ofelia:** I ha'onelikethat  
 13 **Facilitator:** Even ifone thoughtthink muchmuch more the cow might be wor' manymany /Jon raises and leans over to look at facilitator's notes/ (2) thatis th (.) the mum thoughtthat one should get (1) a hundred a hundred and fifty golden for this  
 14 **Kalle:** Yeabu (.) then he has got even more  
 15 **Astrid:** Yeh maybe  
 16 **Jon:** Then ehthen the mum was wrong

The participants, however, pick up her line of thought and discusses without interruption from the facilitator the price of the cow compared to what Jack got at the end. Jon establishes that the mother was wrong (16). Kalle and Camilla have been keeping track of who has spoken. As far as Kalle is concerned, he seems to try to make it into a contest by counting how many participants will have the same opinion. Directly after this, Ofelia answers that she would have traded the cow for the beans; but after the discussion about the price of the cow she changes her mind, taking the price of the cow into account.

#### 14.3.1.6 Sequence 4: The facilitator discouraging contradiction

In this sequence, the participants seem to grasp the seminar protocol: they talk more and address each other instead of the facilitator as earlier. The reasoning is more logical when discussing the mother's reactions and when the girls try to prove that girls might not be eaten:

11 **Ofelia:** Well I do think the mum got angry before (.) she probably thought that it was only (.) some beans  
12 **Astrid:** Ordinary beans  
13 **Ofelia:** Yes  
14 **Astrid:** M that you eat  
15 **Ofelia:** Yeh (1)  
16 **Facilitator:** An'then they wouldn't last long  
17 **Ofelia:** No

49 **Ofelia:** If you were lucky  
50 **Lisa:** But it's not certain that it is like that  
51 **Kitty:** go wrong it was like little boys  
52 **Facilitator:** Like you mean that girls would have gotten away  
53, 54, 55 **Ofelia, Kitty, Astrid:** Yeah

This idea is first introduced by Kitty (51). Lisa even contradicts the facilitator by referring to the text (58). The facilitator doesn't encourage this: she is negative and changes the subject (59):

58 **Lisa:** Ye:s (.) that he she said (.) it's only s it's those eh little boys like eh eh eh eats him (.)  
59 **Facilitator:** But listen this is what I think what do you think his mum thinks'an I think we should go back to the mum what do you think she thought (.) do you think she wanted him to climb that

Kalle has protested the girls' reasoning, and the facilitator might be trying to avoid debate between the boys and girls. The verbal interaction is dominated by the participants. For example, a counting of how long the beans would last is initiated by Kitty (26) and carried out almost entirely by participants:

26 **Kitty:** Yeabut (.) if you each take a bean thenit would lastah (.)  
27 **Astrid:** Five  
28 **Kalle:** Yeabut whoshould have the last one then  
29 **Astrid:** Yeh  
30 **Facilitator:** Yeh exactly then there will only be half a bean the last time  
31 **Kalle:** But then you have to split it

The language, however, is weak in this sequence too, even though more participants are active than in the previous ones, making the reasoning hard to understand. Does Ofelia have more to say after she says that she would have gone away when the ogre's wife told her to (43)?

43 **Ofelia:** Noh (.) I would but I wouldn't (.) I I (.) I would have gone 'cause the road over's there 'though no is it there (.) wh' the lady said go away I really would have done it

Later she says that the ogre didn't eat boys, but her meaning seems to be that he doesn't eat girls. They still seem to cooperate to come to some understanding. The facilitator speaks fast and is sometimes hard to understand.



## 14.3.2 Analyzing the “Jack and the beanstalk” seminar

### 14.3.2.1 Seminar steps and intellectual process

The facilitator introduces the steps in the intended plan in the order suggested, but with few textual analysis questions. No group or personal goals are set or evaluated. The thinking pause is short (20 seconds) and interrupted. The facilitator dominates the verbal communication, especially in the beginning. The story works well as a text.

The intellectual process continues through the seminar, and different ideas are tested. The idea that they all should have traded the cow for the beans in the beginning is elaborated by Ofelia later in the seminar (sequence 3). They also investigate the mother’s actions more closely. Jon says that the mother is wrong, but her motives are later made clearer. The speakers are building their ideas on the previous speaker, elaborating the ideas further together. There is no refutation except for Lisa contradicting the facilitator by referring to the text (sequence 4). The facilitator does not encourage this and seems to avoid the contradiction throughout the seminar. At the start of the seminar, the ideas are not pursued more thoroughly and they are presented hesitantly, but as the seminar continues the participants seem to understand the seminar protocol better, and the quality of the discussion improves.

### 14.3.2.2 Dialogic process

The participants seem to grasp the seminar “rules” better as the seminar continues. Several times the facilitator shows the participants that all sorts of statements are acceptable, something some of them seem unsure of. Maybe this is why she doesn’t encourage investigation. She prioritizes the open climate before the intellectual process, fearing that the participants wouldn’t cope with both at this early stage.

## 14.3.3 Forth grade discussing “Rode and Rode”

### 14.3.3.1 The setting of the “Rode and Rode” seminar

The group of 12 children in fourth grade has participated in seminar for more than one and a half years. The facilitator has conducted seminars for one and a half years. The seminar takes place in a classroom. The door is closed. The participants are seated around a round table. The children story discussed is “Rode and Rode”. The seminar lasts for 36 minutes.

Participants: Camilla (f), Josefin (f), Kitty (f), Astrid (f), Rufus (m) Jon (m), Dick (m), Lars-Gunnar (m), Lotta (f), Ella (f), Agnes (f), Kalle (m). Facilitator: Charlotte.

### 14.3.3.2 Main outline of the “Rode and Rode” seminar

The facilitator suggests a group goal: to put questions to each other. They discuss what to choose and finally settle on the suggested goal. The facilitator introduces writing personal goals with a pause for two and a half minutes interrupted by some disturbance. The opening question is: which Rode would you like as a friend and why? They decide to call the two different appearances Rode 1 and Rode 2. After a pause for reflection (40 seconds), some say that they would rather be friends with Rode 1, but on the other hand there is a risk you might get bullied just as he did. Rufus answers that he would prefer Rode 1 because he is kind, but Ella questions this (sequence 1, after ten minutes). Agnes contradicts Dick by saying that she doesn't choose friends by considering if they are bullied or not (sequence 2, after 12 minutes). Where in the text can one see that Rode is considerate? The facilitator asks participants if it is important how one looks the first time one meets someone. It's important to be as one is. Jon contradicts this by asking if one should be oneself even if one is a bully (sequence 3, after 19 minutes). They continue to discuss the importance of clothes and looks and white lies, referring to the text and their own experiences. With some disorder they assess their goals. Some wave to the cameras and shout goodbye.

### 14.3.3.3 Sequence 1: Effects of Rufus not having read the text

Ella questions Rufus' statement that Rode 1 is kind (7). Her point seems to be that a person that appears kind is not always so. Some of the other participants react intensely by asking her if she hasn't read the text, and by contradicting her. Her point gets lost since the facilitator is trying to get Rufus to specify his statement (15). Rufus finally admits that he hasn't read the text:

7 **Ella:** But howd'ya know he's kind  
8 **Kalle:** What  
9 **Agnes:** But that r  
10 **Kalle:** Kind  
11 **Agnes:** Have read the text  
12 **Kalle:** Have'ya read the text EY  
13 **Facilitator:** yesbut can you explain in some way  
14 **Ella:** Yesbut (.) he seems nice  
15 **Facilitator:** D'you remember anything (.) likeuh it (.)  
16 **Dick:** Seems  
17 **Facilitator:** You haven't read the text /*She points at Rufus with her pen*/  
18 **Rufus:** No noh

After this, Rufus disturbs the seminar by commenting on statements from others, and by trying to have a conversation with Kalle and Jon on the side. They, however, show no interest. Astrid introduces a different answer than the previous one. She says she would choose Rode 2, and Kitty follows:

22 **Astrid:** I'd like to be withro withRode two he was so funny ((laughs))

23 **Kalle:** O:h yeah you're so cool  
24 **Facilitator:** 'Kay  
25 **Kalle:** (?)  
26 **Facilitator:** what did'ya think was funny then  
27 **Astrid:** Don't know

Neither of them can explain why, perhaps because of Rufus previously making an attack on Ella or perhaps because Rufus and Kalle comment on their answers, implying that the girls admire Rode. Jon however seems to try to help Kitty by pointing out that Rode is swearing (46). He has just been told off by Rufus when playing with his paper. He goes on playing all the same. Rufus comments on Astrid's clothes, mimicking a seminar investigation:

46 **Jon:** He swears  
47 **Rufus:** I don't like those h ((inhaling)) that have different clothes than me h ((inhaling)) Astrid I don't like you (.) you have a skirt you'ra girl

Astrid, Kitty, and the facilitator seem to take it as a joke, and he catches a short interest from most of the other participants. The other participants and the facilitator have not been looking at him during the disturbances<sup>93</sup>. Most of the participants look at the speaker or someone sitting opposite and some at their story-paper. Some participants focus on the camera during the sequence: Kalle is joking right after he has looked at the camera. Kitty and Astrid are looking at the camera but it's hard to connect to individual or group interaction. The most common posture throughout the seminar is leaning the chin or cheek in hand/hands with the elbow(s) on table.

#### 14.3.3.4 Sequence 2: Agnes contradicting Dick

Dick's statement is mocked by Rufus (10), right after he has supported him:

5 **Facilitator:** Noe you also feel that you could be an friend (.) some support there  
6 **Dick:** Be some  
7 **Rufus:** Friendly support  
8 **Dick:** support yes to him  
9 **Facilitator:** Facilitator: Yeah  
10 **Rufus** ((affected voice)): You're scho ki:::nd

Dick is later seeking support from Kalle by looking at him but when he doesn't get it he seems confused and looks at Agnes who is speaking. Agnes presents a new idea by saying that she normally doesn't choose friends because they are bullied (12), contradicting Dick's earlier statement by saying that she might help someone in trouble but that she doesn't choose friends on those grounds. She's aware that she is contradicting Dick: there is a lot of hesitation in her speech:

12 **Agnes:** that leh (.) think eh about thatis (.) if they are eh (1) I(1) I think about if they are like if they (.)

<sup>93</sup> Lars-Gunnar's glances were not possible to transcribe, Agnes not in turns 27-46, Ella's glances and gestures from turn 31.

are bullied (.) eh eh then you usually come there an' ends (.) buteh (.) usually don't think ((giggle in voice)) about ah (1) I don't know how to explain im

13 **Rufus:** Take for friend such

14 **Facilitator:** You usually don't choose friends 'cause they are bullied or

15 **Agnes:** No:

16 **Facilitator:** You usually don't think about it first but you choose friends first is that so

17 **Agnes:** Myes if they're kind

18 **Dick:** NICE

19 **Agnes:** bat I (.) you don't think about it the first thing you do

Dick reacts with an ironic remark (18), and Agnes seems to want to defend herself (19). She acts nervously in her gestures but does still conclude her reasoning and looks at Astrid for support. Dick, the facilitator, or their own papers are the focus in the beginning for most participants and Agnes or their papers at the end. No one looks at Rufus during the sequence, even though he speaks. The few gestures are similar to those in sequence 1.

#### 14.3.3.5 Sequence 3: Jon contradicting and supporting Ella

Jon questions Ella's previous statement that one should be oneself by asking whether it would be accurate if the person is mean:

1 **Jon:** But Ella (1) i i if f shou se self eh eh

2 **Rufus:** ELLA /He waves a hand in front of Ella, who looks quickly at Rufus and then at Jon/

3 **Jon:** then she think eh eh eh bullies ain't likethis first like if you should be yourself the first day

Ella doesn't seem to take any notice of Jon until Rufus calls her attention (2). Jon's speech is staccato (stuttering) and that makes his reasoning difficult to follow. The facilitator asks him to repeat and explain. Ella answers Jon but turns to Rufus, who has been agreeing with Jon. Rufus interrupts her (16) and is corrected by the facilitator (18). Ella seems to mean that one can change ones conduct. Jon gets the meaning (19), and Ella supports him (20):

15 **Ella:** But ifyou ifyou if ifyou just want to be nice the first day then like (.) thenyou can either you can be like you are all the time or

16 **Rufus:** (?) that would never (?)

17 **Ella:** then like you can suddenly change turn an' go on (1)

18 **Facilitator:** B bu' bu' wait Rufus one at a time

19 **Jon:** You can change your style

20 **Ella:** That's hard bu' that

Jon takes a quick look at Ella and then looks down at his paper. Ella looks at the facilitator. Kalle seems to try to catch Rufus' eye but doesn't succeed until later, when they both disagree with Jon. Jon continues to state that one can change, and the facilitator supports him.. Rufus and Kalle now change their statement and so does Jon, saying that he said the wrong thing before:

33 **Facilitator:** I think it sounds exciting like you said that you can change style can you decide that yourself

34 **Rufus:** Yesyou can

35 **Lars-Gunnar:** Yes

36 **Kalle:** Yes you can

37 **Jon:** Not I I said wrong

Ella's and Jon's arguments are based on analytic reasoning: they are talking about whether a person in general could change or not. Rufus and Kalle are arguing from a personal point of view: if they themselves would change or not. Kalle refers to Rode in the text as someone who changed, but diminishes this by saying that he is stupid:

29 **Kalle:** But he want

30 **Rufus:** UUOHM ((yawns))

31 **Kalle:** but he's stupid /*He looks at Jon. Rufus looks at Kalle and nods/*

32 **Jon:** nobut n' I didn't say that you had to

Maybe this is why Jon contradicts himself at the end (37). He might want to make clear that he's not talking about himself. Participants look at Ella or Jon a lot of the time; some look at objects on the table<sup>94</sup>. Jon looks intensely at his paper after supporting Ella. Ella looks at the facilitator when agreeing with Jon. Both Ella and Jon look at each other when disagreeing.

### 14.3.4 Analyzing the "Rode and Rode" seminar

#### 14.3.4.1 Seminar steps and intellectual process

The facilitator introduces the different steps in the intended seminar plan in the order suggested, but with few textual analysis questions. Group and personal goals are set and evaluated. The chosen literature works well. There are thinking pauses. The participants dominate verbal communication slightly. Boys and girls are equally active, looking at and speaking to each other with some exceptions.

From time to time, the dialogue is somewhat disorderly; jokes and views obviously not meant seriously are thrown around. Rufus hasn't read the text and can therefore not participate in the intellectual inquiry. Instead, he disturbs the seminar and sometimes inspires Kalle and to some extent Jon to participate. Kalle and Jon do contribute to the intellectual inquiry. The participants are interested in the dilemma if one should try to please when being new or if one should just be as one normally is, an inquiry that could have been pursued further. The facilitator, however, chooses to introduce other areas through her questioning. The seminar covers a lot of different ideas, sometimes loosely or not related to the others (How does one choose a friend? Do the looks matter? Does the first impression make any difference? Are white lies justified?). All the same, the intellectual process continues through the seminar; different ideas are tested and discussed. In sequence 1

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94 Lotta's glances were not possible to transcribe in turns 1-14 and 33-38.

Ella questions Dick's and the previous participants' argument that Rode 1 is nice. This idea comes back and is elaborated on in sequence 3, when both Ella and Jon argue that it is possible to change. Some of the participants, however, don't seem to see the difference between a logical argument and a personal statement. All the participants seem to listen to the others' ideas and are most of the time able to contribute to and build their ideas on those of the previous speaker, sometimes elaborating the ideas further together. There is some inquiry resulting in refutation or at least questioning (Ella and Jon in sequence 3), but there are also incidents where this leads to participants taking the statement personally. The facilitator does not really promote the inquiry. She supports some ideas by asking for clarity, but she only asks for textual reference once and this never gets answered.

#### **14.3.4.2 Dialogic process**

The participants seem to grasp the "rules" in this seminar; they even seem to play around with the "rules", testing the facilitator. The facilitator is at ease even when they play around; she plays along from time to time, and she suggests a fairly complicated group goal (asking each other questions). She seems to trust their seminar skills. When she wants to call them to order, she raises her voice or in some cases refers to the filming. The participants seem to be able to understand the dialogical virtues and play with/abuse them, but they are not yet able to understand the intellectual virtues. There are individual differences; some participants (Agnes, Ella, and Jon) understand the seminar protocol better than others (Dick, and Kalle). Rufus is provoking the group, breaking the seminar "rules" deliberately. He cannot contribute in a productive way because he has not read the text.

#### **14.3.4.3 "Silent" interaction**

There are incidents where individual participants are seeking support from someone by looking at them. On the other hand, Jon and Ella look at each other when they disagree but avoid looking at each other when agreeing (sequence 3). Why? Rufus and Kalle have earlier tried to divide the seminar into a debate between boys and girls. Although this was not successful, it might still be unsafe to show too obviously that you support someone from the other sex. The most common posture throughout the seminar is leaning the chin or cheek in the hand/hands with the elbow(s) on table. Some participants look at the camera during the sequence: Kitty, Kalle, Astrid. It doesn't seem to be connected to the group interaction.

### **14.3.5 Comparing the seminars of group C**

The two seminars of group C show a development over one and a half years. The participants have developed their speech, and their ideas are expressed more clearly. The intellectual content and process is stronger in the later

seminar, but there are obvious individual differences. Some of the participants seem to be deliberately testing the seminar “rules” in the second seminar. When “rules” are tested or broken in the first seminar, it is because they are not understood. Participants speak more and the facilitator less in the second seminar. The facilitator is discouraging refutation in the first seminar, probably because she wants to get them to understand that the seminar is a safe place for testing ideas. In the second seminar, she doesn’t promote it actively but she doesn’t stop it. In the second seminar, her structure is more clear, all the seminar steps are followed and there is time to think (which is not the case in the first seminar). She still doesn’t actively use textual analysis, but the participants refer to the text anyway. She is also more relaxed, judging from her speech (which is very quick and staccato in the first seminar), and from her going along with some of the jokes.

Charlotte, who is the facilitator in these two seminars, also facilitates group B. In both groups, there are provocations made (by Christian in both B seminars and by Rufus in the latter C seminar). Both the facilitator and the groups handle the interruptions better in the later seminars. But there are some differences in Charlotte’s facilitation in the two groups. She performs more in accordance with the expected facilitator role (and less in the role as “teacher”) in both the group C seminars than in the first seminar in group B. The intellectual content in the C seminars is stronger and the texts seem better chosen. The difference in the facilitator’s actions cannot be explained as a difference in experience. The first seminar in group C is filmed more than a year before the first seminar in group B, and the two later seminars in B and C are filmed almost at the same time. In two of the seminars (B 1 and C 2) she asks if it matters how you look. In the first seminar in the younger group B, she seems to expect the participants to answer no. In the second seminar in the then three years older group C, she is asking the same thing but then adds that she’s talking about the first time one meets someone, making the question open. The children in the B group are younger when they start (six to seven years) than the ones in the C group (eight to nine years). This might be one reason why the facilitator acts differently in group B, choosing not to provoke or upset them too much. On the other hand, Anna, who is facilitating the even younger five-year-olds in group A, does not seem to make the same choices. She also asks if it matters how one looks, implying a right answer but later helps Tom to elaborate his different opinion (seminar A 1).

## 14.4 Fourth to fifth grade (group D)

### 14.4.1 Fourth grade discussing “The hunchback of Notre Dame”

#### 14.4.1.1 The setting of “The hunchback of Notre Dame” seminar

The group of 11 children in fourth grade, has participated in a seminar once before. The facilitator conducts her first seminar. The seminar takes place in a classroom. The door is closed. The participants are seated around a rectangular table. The literature discussed is “The hunchback of Notre Dame”. The seminar lasts for 45 minutes (ten minutes reading the text). The use of only one camera made multimodal transcribing impossible.

Participants: Sylvia (f), Anita (f), Susanne (f), Kalle (m), Fredrik (m), Magnus (m) Tom (m), Otto (m), Sigrid (f), Victoria (f), Mary (f). Facilitator: Margit.

#### 14.4.1.2 Main outline of “The hunchback of Notre Dame” seminar

The seminar starts with the facilitator reminding the participants about the rules. After eight minutes the group starts reading the text as a “round robin”. The facilitator asks the opening question: “Do you think it was a good thing that there were asylums?” It is good if you’re innocent but might be bad if you have done a crime. Being poor might excuse the crime. Where in the text does it say that the asylum also is a punishment? Three different passages are read aloud by participants. How does Quasimodo feel? Is it important to be beautiful (sequence 1, after 34 minutes)? Otto now jokes (sequence 2, after 36 minutes). Could an accident change someone’s personality? Who decides what is beautiful? Fredrik answers that others might think he looks like a pig but he himself thinks he is beautiful. There are some disturbances and giggles. Sigrid says that one has to think about what one says (sequence 3, after 41 minutes). When the facilitator ends the seminar, the girls comment that it felt good and that they thought about their own lives, and the boys continue to giggle.

#### 14.4.1.3 Sequence 1: The seminar turning into an ordinary lesson

The facilitator here asks if looks are important and four of the girls answer no. Mary now uses Susanne as an example (8), and the facilitator asks Mary to list the qualities that she finds important in a person (9), and then she redirects the question to Sigrid and to Tom:

8 **Mary:** The main think is that you like yourself as your own personality f’example if I think that Susanne is really ugly an’ stuff ‘though she’s really friendly

9 **Facilitator:** M what qualities do you think are imortant in a person

10 **Mary:** Yes

11 **Facilitator:** You said (.) Sigrid did you say I thought each of you can think about that what do you



think is important in a person you meet (1) wha' quality what do'ya think Tom

12 **Susanne, Kalle, Fredrik, Otto:** ((laughs))

13 **Facilitator:** What quality did you think is important in a person (2)

Participants start listing qualities (nice, kind, love, pleasant, and honest), supported by the facilitator, who repeats and stresses the answers. There is a lot of laughing and some disturbances during the sequence (which hadn't existed earlier). Some can be explained by Mary and Victoria using other participants (Susanne and Magnus) as examples when stating that you might look ugly but be good or nice. In both incidents, the girls are breaking the seminar rules. The others react by laughing. Parallel to this, the seminar here seems to convert into an ordinary lesson in ethics or good behavior, implying a "right" way of thinking. Victoria is perhaps mocking this by first answering as might be expected in such a context: that it's the inside that counts (22), and then making a joke of it by referring to Magnus as an example (24). The other participants react to this as if it's a joke:

22 **Victoria:** Yesbut this is the (.) is the inside that counts not the outside

23 **Facilitator:** Insi

24 **Victoria:** F'example th eh (.) magnus he isn' (.) not that good looking then but he's kind

25 **Sylvia, Anita, Susanne, Fredrik, Magnus, Tom, Otto, Sigrid, Mary:** ((laughs))

#### 14.4.1.4 Sequence 2: Otto testing the rules

4 **Otto:** W what if you can't yeh this's just an ex example

5 **Facilitator:** Yeh

6 **Otto:** whatif you could meet someone who looked like a pig ((giggles, laughs))

7 **Fredrik:** ((laughs))

8 **Sylvia:** Yeah you have already th in the mirror ((laughs))

After excusing himself (4), Otto asks what would happen if one meets someone looking like a pig (6). He giggles and laughs but still tries to make a serious comment later on, saying that the person still could be kind. Kalle uses this as an excuse to interrupt the seminar, suggesting that Esmeralda in the story would think of sausage when meeting the hunchback. Otto and Tom repeat this appreciatively. Sylvia, on the other hand, cooperates with the facilitator by presenting a plausible answer which the facilitator amplifies:

33 **Sylvia:** I think (?) a monster

34 **Facilitator:** Eeh

35 **Sylvia:** A monster

36 **Facilitator:** Doyou doyou hear wha' Sylvia said she thought that what did she think before she thought really how horrible thoug' she (?)

Sylvia has earlier corrected Otto's joke rather crudely by saying that he has met a pig when looking in the mirror (8). Sigrid is telling Kalle to stop interrupting. The facilitator shows distress during the disturbance. Her speech is disrupted and sometimes unintelligible.

### 14.4.1.5 Sequence 3: Trying to support the facilitator or not

Sigrid starts by saying that one has to think before one speaks (5). She uses as an example Sylvia saying to someone that he or she is really ugly (3). Kalle once more takes Magnus as an example of someone being ugly (4):

3 **Sigrid:** f example if Silvia says (.) I think you're rea::lly u:::gly

4 **Kalle:** Magnus ahm ((inhales))

5 **Sigrid:** well th' you have to think before you say that

6 **Otto:** Ugly ((laughs)) (?)

7 **Sigrid:** that's to tease

8 **Tom:** Ugly ((laughs))

Sylvia now starts a long and rambling statement where, in the end she seems to be trying to say that it's wrong to say things behind a person's back. It's hard to say if this is what she intends when she starts talking: she starts talking about messing around, and ends up talking about broken friendship. Sigrid, by calling attention to the facilitator, picks up this line of reasoning. The lower parts of the table, where the boys and Susanne are seated, have their own interaction going on, laughing and giggling, interrupting the ongoing verbal exchange between Sigrid and Sylvia. This is partly nourished by the "official" verbal action, at least in the beginning. The facilitator tries to call the seminar to order by directing a question to the boys: she asks if they think it's possible to resist group pressure and makes it sound as if they said this before, which they haven't:

52 **Facilitator:** Can I thought about that guys (.) d'ya mean thatyou can resi:st that group pressure and (1) think like this that I'm alright as I am

53 **Fredrik:** M yes

54, 55, 56 **Magnus, Otto, Tom:** Yes

57 **Susanne, Sigrid:** ((giggles))

58 **Otto:** Yes

59 **Facilitator:** That's good then

This has little effect on the order, and she repeats her correction explicitly:

66 **Facilitator:** LOOK HERE MY FRIENDS now now

Sigrid and Sylvia dominate the verbal interaction completely and seem totally focused on getting the facilitator's attention. Not much is said; their statements are disrupted as well as intellectually plain. They don't relate to each other's statements, even though they are connected. In addition, their ideas have no connection to the text. They take no notice of what is going on in the rest of the group, even though it is obvious that none is attentive. As long as the facilitator shows her interest by her frequent humming and affirming, they continue. Sylvia and Sigrid seem to take on a teacher supportive role going along with what they think is the facilitator's intention. Sylvia tries to quiet the others by shouting (87), something that has happened in earlier sequences. They break some of the core rules of seminar: showing no respect for the other participants and lacking intellectual references. The

facilitator's humming might be done to hurry the girls along but if so, why is she asking Sigrid to continue (88)?

87 Sylvia: QUIET

88 Facilitator: w we we listen to what Sigrid wants to say here an'

## 14.4.2 Analyzing the "The hunchback of Notre Dame" seminar

### 14.4.2.1 Seminar steps and intellectual process

The facilitator introduces the different steps in the intended seminar plan more-or-less in the order suggested. No personal or group goals are set. The facilitator repeats the seminar rules before and asks the participants how it went afterwards. The verbal communication is shared by the participants and the facilitator. A very short thinking pause (eight seconds) follows the opening question. A fairly long time (more than ten minutes) is spent reading the text and repeating the rules, making the seminar very long.

Up till the listing of the qualities that they find important in a person in sequence 1, the seminar goes fairly well. There are ideas tested with references to the text and to personal experience. After this point, the intellectual process seems to collapse into nonsensical comments. It seems as if both boys and girls seem to test the seminar, the facilitator, and the limits.

### 14.4.2.2 Dialogical process

They play around with seminar practice but also frequently abuse the seminar rules, making the seminar an unsafe place by taking one another as personal examples of being ugly, and laughing at each other. At this point, the boys and Susanne are openly disruptive without the facilitator acting. Sylvia and Sigrid, who are cooperating with the facilitator, are in fact not helping: they are breaking the rules while chatting along. Two factors might have an influence on this line of events. Reading the text within the seminar took a long time, and they might be tired. They might also have problems remembering the text well enough to stick to it and to refer to it. They are seated with all the boys far away from the facilitator, making it less possible for her to control them actively by hands or glances. The disturbances start after the facilitator has used the seminar as a common lesson with a "right" way of thinking (sequence 1). On the other hand, she doesn't interrupt the seminar to correct the obvious abuses both to the seminar culture and the participants. If she normally controls the classroom interaction closely, the participants seem to realize that she lacks her ordinary control.

### 14.4.3 Fifth grade discussing “Who will comfort Toffle?”

#### 14.4.3.1 The setting of the “Who will comfort Toffle?” seminar

The group of 13 children in fifth grade has participated in seminar for one and a half years. The facilitator has conducted seminars for one and a half years. The seminar takes place in a classroom. The door is closed. The participants are seated in a semicircle: facilitator sits opposite in the middle. The literature discussed is a rhymed picture book, “Who will comfort Toffle?”. The seminar lasts for 26 minutes.

Participants: Tom (m), Anita (f), Susanne (f), Otto (m), Petra (f), Sigrid (f), Ingrid (f), Mary (f), Sylvia (f), Kalle (m), Magnus (m), Fredrik (m). Facilitator: Margit.

#### 14.4.3.2 Main outline of the “Who will comfort Toffle?” seminar

The facilitator starts the seminar by commenting that it’s the last seminar this semester. She poses the opening question: “Could you sleep alone like Toffle did?” Is it worse to sleep alone in the country, where there are no people or in the city where there are? What was Toffle afraid of (sequence 1, after seven minutes)? Can “the Groke” be compared to something that they are afraid of (sequence 2, after nine minutes)? Why was Toffle too shy to meet others? Have you felt like this? Maybe Toffle never has experienced friendship. Can it feel better to be angry than sad (sequence 3, after 18 minutes)? Who will comfort Toffle? Would Toffle be able to help himself? The participants comment that it was hard to understand the text: they forgot parts of it; they heard a tape-recorded version with singing.

#### 14.4.3.3 Sequence 1: Victoria risking participating

The sequence starts with the facilitator asking the first question related to the text – what or who was Toffle afraid of. The opening question earlier only asked for their personal experiences of sleeping alone. Victoria answers the question by referring to Toffle being afraid of the hemulens.

14 **Victoria:** He’s afraid of the hemulens ((thick L)) that go and tramp around it says so

15 **Facilitator:** Yeah who’re the hemulens then

16 **Victoria:** Ehme they’re strange ol’ men with umbrellas ((thick L)) inthere

For some reason she answers in an affected manner, laughing and pronouncing some, but not all, the letters L in a thick manner, like she was imitating some sort of dialect. Yet her suggestion seems to be serious. Is she for some reason, trying to hide the seriousness of her statement? Her gestures and, to some extent, her glances seem restless and nervous, like she’s trying to check on what the others think. Victoria seems to be suggesting in her manner of speaking that what is asked for is obvious:

10 **Victoria:** ((laughs)) well it says so (?)

But the story is not obvious to everyone: Fredrik and Tom have not understood who the Groke is, one of the central characters in the story. The facilitator asks no further questions on how to interpret this passage of the text, which makes the analysis a question of finding the right answer in the book. During this sequence, most participants are looking at either Victoria, the facilitator, or the text (and some on Kalle in the beginning). Some look away from Victoria after she speaks affectedly. Kalle is commenting on things as if making fun of them. Judging from his glances and the way he acts, he is participating in the seminar actively. Most of the gestures are concentrated on the texts: the participants are holding them in their hands with no table in front of them. Susanne focuses on the camera once.

#### 14.4.3.4 Sequence 2: Asking for personal experience too early

- 1 **Facilitator:** Canou compare the Groke to something that you are afraid of then  
2 (1)  
3 **Magnus:** Hm (.) my brothers  
4 **Tom, Otto, Petra, Sigrid, Ingrid, Kalle, Fredrik:** ((laughs))  
5 **Victoria:** ((laughs)) Yeah exactly  
6 **Facilitator:** I was thinking in the night Magnus  
7 **Magnus:** All right an' then it went a litt'  
8 (3)  
9 **Anita:** Spiders

The facilitator here asks for participants to describe their personal experiences of being afraid of something (1). Magnus answers that he is afraid of his brothers, and the others take this as a joke (3). The facilitator corrects him by commenting that she was referring to something they were afraid of at night, looking down at her papers at the same time. There is a pause, and then Anita suggests spiders (9). Ingrid agrees with emphasis but then explains that she's not afraid of them; they're just yucky. Almost all participants but the ones sitting next to her turn to Ingrid when she says this while only two (and the facilitator) turn to look at Anita when she speaks and two at Tom when he later suggests a snake. During the sequence, participants mostly look at either the facilitator or at the text or something else in the room. There seems to be a lot of hesitation about what to answer or how to act. There are also whispering conversations going on outside the official interaction. Maybe the ground isn't safe enough to answer such a personal question, especially not this early in the seminar, almost right after the opening question. They are not able to use insights they might attain from analyzing the text. At the end, the facilitator asks them to compare their own experience of being afraid with Toffle's of being afraid of the Groke. The participants seem to react to this by pausing and whispering side-conversations:

- 23 **Sylvia:** ((whispers))  
24 **Facilitator:** Something else that can (.) feel like the Groke

25 **Tom:** They are yucky  
26 (2)  
26 **Kalle:** ((whispers))  
27 (4)  
29, 30 **Victoria, Sylvia:** ((whispers))  
31 **Facilitator:** M (.) listen we can (.) go on in the text so (2)  
32 **Mary:** ((whispers))

The Groke is a fairy-tail figure, maybe a childish thing to be afraid of. Her question is not answered, and she moves on to the next question. As in sequence 1, most of the gestures concern moving or fiddling with the texts. Fredrik focuses on the camera once and Sigrid on the microphone.

#### 14.4.3.5 Sequence 3: Abusing Victoria

Fredrik and Sylvia cooperate in answering the facilitator's request to relate the events in the text to their own experience:

2 **Fredrik:** M but n you are sad then you often get angry sorta' like  
3 **Sylvia:** Then you're so sad you get angry  
4 **Fredrik:** Yes (.) like  
5 **Facilitator:** Mm (2) so you've noticed  
6 **Sylvia:** Yeah  
7 **Fredrik:** It might be like that  
8 **Facilitator:** Yeah  
9 **Victoria:** When I get sad I get lazy  
10 **Kalle:** You're always lazy Vicky

When Victoria introduces a different idea (9), this is diminished by Kalle, who makes a negative comment referring to Victoria as a person (10). Most of the others participate in the joke, including the facilitator. Anita, Susanne, Otto, Petra and Sigrid do not. Ingrid looks quickly at the facilitator and then laughs. Victoria hits Kalle on the head with the text and then, encouraged by the facilitator, continues to state her point but now in an affected voice:

13 **Facilitator:** Okay so you feel don' you don't get angry (.) 'cause you're sad (.) Victoria  
14 **Victoria** ((affected voice)): I v (.) v I get depeRETions  
15 **Sylvia:** M it looks 's if you can do (?)  
16 **Kalle:** (?)  
17 **Facilitator:** Then you get even more sad  
18 **Victoria** ((affected voice)): An'then I hate myself and life  
19 **Magnus:** Life huh  
20 **Facilitator:** M mhm

Not many of the participants look at Victoria during this part and those who have done so look away. Magnus comments by repeating her last stressed word (19), and Victoria hits him on the head too. This causes the facilitator to correct Victoria in a low voice while looking away from her (27):

26 **Magnus:** AOCH

27 **Facilitator:** Victoria we don't use the text paper to hit

28 **Magnus:** Exactly /*Magnus hits his hand in his fist with a smacking sound*/

She doesn't correct the boys' personal remarks. Magnus, however, seems to know he is breaking the rules, checking quickly with the facilitator and camera after commenting on Victoria's person once more. Kalle also checks the camera once. The situation is tense in many ways. Victoria is very personal in her remarks, and she is made a target for personalized attacks and threats (Magnus hitting his fist, 28) without anyone defending her or guarding the seminar culture. The participants look at who is speaking or at something else in the room<sup>95</sup>. The movements do not concern the texts as in the earlier sequences; instead the participants turn their heads to be able to follow the conversation.

#### 14.4.4 Analyzing the "Who will comfort Toffle?" seminar

##### 14.4.4.1 Seminar steps and intellectual process

The facilitator introduces the different steps in the seminar plan fairly in the order suggested. She asks the participants early to relate to their own personal ideas, directly after asking the opening question (sequence 2). No personal or group goals are set or evaluated. The text is evaluated at the end, showing that some of the participants have found it hard to understand. The participants dominate the verbal communication, especially when taking the unofficial verbal conversations into account. No thinking pause follows the opening question.

The traditional seminar circle is here made into a semi-circle with the facilitator in the middle. This affects the seminar communication. The official verbal seminar interaction passes through the facilitator as through a switchboard: she gives the questions, receives and comments on the answer, and connects to someone else by posing a question. On the other hand, there are plenty of sub-interactions going on beside the official conversation. These are not carried out so much by glances and gestures as in the other seminars. Instead there are whispered conversations taking place, and these interactions sometimes disturb the official seminar conversation. This also seems to be a consequence of the furnishings: the participants see the facilitator and she sees them, but the participants don't see each other. Their hands are also occupied by holding the texts, since there are no tables to put them on. The discussion following the opening question works according to seminar rules fairly well. The participants are only asked to relate to their own experience of being alone at home. When the facilitator asks them to relate to the text, the ground seems to get more insecure and there is no or little intellectual inquiry. This is also the case when she very early asks them to relate their

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95 Petra's glances were not possible to transcribe in turn 3-4 and 14-29.

own experience to that of being afraid of “the Groke”. One of the explanations might be that the text is regarded as too childish by the participants (even if it’s not too easily understood). They resent discussing it and comparing themselves to it.

There are few new ideas presented or tested after the opening question. Some of the participants say at the end of the seminar that they have trouble understanding the text and during the seminar some haven’t understood who one of the central figures, “the Groke”, is. In spite of this, the participants in general seem to have no problems answering the facilitator’s questions about the text. The seminar tends to turn into a common school literature discussion with the facilitator asking questions with a “right” answer. When someone tries to cooperate with the facilitator by answering her question seriously, he or she is ignored or abused personally. It is all done in a playful manner, but the comments made are personal and the abusers (or jokers) are not corrected by the facilitator.

#### **14.4.4.2 Dialogic process**

Some of the participants are noticed more than others and seem to have a higher ranking in the group. Victoria is actively challenging this by taking the seminar seriously and by challenging even though abused. The seminar circle is not safe enough for someone to speak, let alone to take an intellectual risk. Victoria copes with this by talking in silly ways or acting childish, causing the others to look away, probably because she is acting out of the protocol or because they feel embarrassed.

#### **14.4.4.3 “Silent” interaction**

The participants and the facilitator seem to show dislike by not looking at someone. The facilitator looks away when correcting. All participants are not taking part of the interplay creating the unsafe ground. Some don’t laugh along with the others, they look away from the abusers and some of them try to answer the questions from time to time. The facilitator seems to go along with the abusers (or jokers) even if it’s not done actively: She is not actively stopping them. The seminar frame seems frail and insecure. Is she afraid the seminar would break down if she acted differently? She is no longer the teacher of this group and that might affect her impact on the participants. She is leaving the rules to the participants, so that some participants are trying to guard the seminar. The interaction is more like an ordinary school lesson, where the teacher normally would keep order and guard the safe ground. Who is responsible here? The microphones and cameras are the focus sometimes but it’s hard to see connections to the group interaction except in sequence 3.



#### 14.4.5 Comparing the seminars of group D

The two seminars of group D show some development over the one and a half years, not all concerning mastering the Socratic seminars. The participants are able to express themselves more clearly: their thoughts are easier to follow. In the first seminar they seem to understand the seminar rules and play with them. One and a half year later they still seem to know the rules. Some of them try to keep to them but some seem to use the seminar circle to play their own interactive games, making the ground highly insecure for taking intellectual risks. In both seminars they don't respect that someone else is speaking. The facilitator seems to cope well with the planning of seminars and seems to understand what questions to ask and fairly well in what order but she has trouble in both seminars in guarding the seminar circle or coping with rule-breaking.

### 14.5 Fifth to sixth grade (group E)

#### 14.5.1 Fifth grade discussing "Diabolo baby"

##### 14.5.1.1 The setting of the "Diabolo baby" seminar

The group of 14 children in fifth grade has participated in seminars for one year. The facilitator has conducted seminars for one year. The seminar takes place in a classroom. The door is closed. The participants are seated around an oval table. The work of art discussed is a painting: "Diabolo Baby". The seminar lasts for 42 minutes.

Participants: Kalle (m), Susanne (f), Anders (m), Åsa (f), Niclas (m), Cordelia (f) Conny (m), Lena (f), Sebastian (m), Lisa (f), Johan (m), Pia (f), Oscar (m), Anna (f). Facilitator: Maria.

##### 14.5.1.2 Main outline of the "Diabolo baby" seminar

Individual goals are set and the group goal "not to use the facilitator as a telephone switchboard" is chosen. The picture is distributed and the opening question is: Do you think the baby is good or evil? There is a thinking pause for some minutes. The baby might look evil but has nice eyes or looks sad. It looks sweet but has horns and tattoos. Oscar comments that it might be the devil as young, but some of the others disagree: the baby looks kind. Anders now tries to get the others to listen (sequence 1, after nine minutes). How can one know if a person is good or evil? Åsa jokes that the baby might be half goat (sequence 2, after 21 minutes). What importance has upbringing if becoming good or evil? Can one chose to look evil and why would one? Is looking evil the same thing as being evil? Cordelia says that retarded people

are as kind as “normal” people. Johan objects to this by sharing some of his own experience (sequence 3, after 37 minutes). The seminar ends by evaluating goals. They want to go on: the seminar was interesting.

### 14.5.1.3 Sequence 1: Anders getting an idea

In this sequence Anders presents a new idea, refuting the previously discussed hypothesis that the baby in the picture is the devil when young. He points out that the baby has the devil tattooed on his belly. Some of the other participants are occupied with the previous subject and don't notice that Anders tries to say something until the facilitator points this out:

- 9 **Anders:** But hello /He points at his picture/  
10 **Facilitator:** Anders had something  
11 **Anders:** but like if he's the DEVIL then it must be someone that (.) can predict the future 'cause he has the devil tattooed on his belly  
12 **Lisa:** Oh ((laughs))  
13 **Åsa, Lena, Lisa, Johan, Pia:** ((laugh)) /Cordelia, Conny and Anna smile/  
14 **Susanne:** Yes  
15 **Pia:** bu (.) it's like a cross above

His observation is obviously new to the rest of the group: they react by quickly turning to the picture to look at it. Pia is probably trying to refute or at least question his idea by pointing out that there is a cross tattooed above and Anders looks down at the picture (15). There are some quick speculations about what the tattoo might mean, and Pia laughs. The facilitator now asks Anders to repeat what he said so that everyone will understand it (21). This might seem strange since they obviously have understood his meaning immediately, showing this by turning to the picture, laughing and commenting. Anders is not really willing to do this, and the facilitator has to urge him, signaling that the idea is a good one (24).

- 21 **Facilitator:** 'Cause can you elaborate on that again more Anders what you just said  
22 **Pia:** ((laughs))  
23 **Anders:** Bu I don't wa  
24 **Facilitator:** Yesbut so that everyone can understand wha y (.) I I understand what you meant  
25 **Susanne:** Yes  
26 **Anders:** Yesbut  
27 **Facilitator:** Yes

Pia is acting very contradictory: she laughs and smiles, which no one else does at this point; she looks intensely at Anders, has her hands and arms stretched out over the table towards Anders and taps her fingers drumming on the table surface. This might be one of the reasons why Anders hesitates. He doesn't look at Pia, but it must be hard not to notice her gestures and noises. Pia's reaction is not echoed by anything else in the group. She is probably acting out something concerning herself. She has made a statement that equals Anders' in status: he refutes the earlier ideas by pointing out the

tattooed devil, and she refutes his idea by pointing out the tattooed cross. His idea is picked up and amplified by the facilitator, but hers isn't. She probably can't understand why and gets confused over what the seminar is about. This may be the reason why the facilitator chooses to amplify Anders' idea: Pia's actions can be interpreted as diminishing his idea (Anders seems to react to them as if they are), and the facilitator might want to correct this. Pia later tries to come back (37) by supporting Lisa and Susanne when they refute Anders' idea by suggesting an order of succession of devils. However, she does this in an affected voice, probably because she's unsure of how to act:

31 **Lisa:** like it must have been a devil before (.) that's what I think  
32 **Susanne:** eh have some dad  
33 **Pia** ((affected voice)): Yeah  
34 **Susanne:** an' he inherit sorta after  
35 **Pia:** Yes  
36 **Susanne:** e:h takes over  
37 **Pia:** Yes after his dad  
38 **Lisa:** Yes he can't just become the devil  
39 **Pia** ((affected voice)): Right okhaya ((laughter)) okay

The others react by quickly looking at her and looking away or not looking at her at all. The participants mostly look at the speaker or at the picture<sup>96</sup>. The facilitator interrupts Pia and Susann by turning to Cordelia (45), who also seems to have been trying to interrupt by changing the subject (40):

40 **Cordelia:** Is there someone who knows if there were any devils  
41 **Susanne:** Ye well that cross might stand for his father being dead  
42 **Pia:** YES  
43 **Susanne:** Yes  
44 **Pia** ((affected voice)): I agree with YOU  
45 **Facilitator:** M Cordelia what do you think abouteh

Anders' idea is refuted in favor of the succession idea but stays on as an active factor during the rest of the textual analysis.

#### 14.5.1.4 Sequence 2: Balancing the intellectual inquiry

1 **Åsa:** How do we know this is a real baby what if it's a mix of a goat then then it could be nasty  
2 **Pia:** ((laughs))  
3 **Oscar:** That then how do you know that  
4 **Åsa:** Sorta evil then it could be born evil we we don't know weh if they are kind or nasty or how they're born  
5 **Lisa:** But I think all babies like everything that is born I think is (.) like good from the start  
6 **Åsa:** Yeh but I don't think th

The discussion during this sequence starts off with Åsa suggesting that if the baby is partly animal (goat), we cannot know if it's evil or not, since it's not

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96 Oscar's glances were not possible to transcribe.

human in the way that we are (4). Lisa contradicts this by saying that all that is born is good (5) and introduces the idea of upbringing influencing the further discussion (6). Cordelia states in long and disrupted talk-turns that babies only can feel rudimentary things such as being sad or angry. The group looks alternately at her and the picture, probably trying to grasp what she's referring to. She is finally interrupted by Lisa, claiming that babies aren't evil all the same, causing almost the whole group to look at her. The discussion concludes in consensus about the importance of upbringing if people are to become evil or not. Cordelia tries to refute the idea that upbringing is the sole cause by stating that one might get into bad company (56). Åsa and Susanne contradict this by claiming that company should be considered a part of the upbringing (60, 61):

56 **Cordelia:** it can be that you hang out with t the wrong friends (.) crowd an' sorta (.) wrong wrong friends

57 **Conny:** Yeh

58 **Sebastian:** Company

59 **Susanne:** But they're people

60 **Åsa:** That's also upbringing

61 **Susanne:** That's also upbringing

62 **Lisa:** But then it's parents

63 **Cordelia:** Yesbut it's like not the upbringing with the parents like

64 **Susanne:** No but w' haven't said that it's just the upbringing with the parents

The discussion almost seems at risk of turning into a debate, but the body language and the glances show respect. There are few movements and they look at the speaker and even smile and laugh during the toughest parts<sup>97</sup>. An exception is Anders, who seems to alternate between following the seminar and what Pia is doing. Pia is gesturing a lot, drawing her hands over the table, touching her hair and face, but she is following the verbal interaction judging from her glances. She is also trying to get into the verbal interaction three times. Twice she exclaims supportive things, not elaborated. Most of the participants glance quickly at her but then look away. The last exclamation seems to be directed towards Cordelia, who has been proven wrong:

67 **Pia:** RIGHTY

68 **Åsa:** Aahm (1) /Cordelia looks at Pia and wrings her hands/

It also seems to make Cordelia nervous (68). Pia also claims that she believes that the devil's child is born evil and is supported by Anders. The others notice them for some time but then turn away. Pia's idea is however picked up and refuted by Lisa right after the sequence.

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<sup>97</sup> Oscar's glances were not possible to transcribe for most of the time.

### 14.5.1.5 Sequence 3: Contradicting by sharing a personal experience

Johan shares the very personal experience of being the brother of a retarded person (5). This seems to be a consequence of a long and reasonably uncritical appraisal of retarded people from Cordelia right before the sequence. The room gets very quiet, and there are almost no gestures after a while, and everybody is looking intensely at Johan with some few glances at the picture or at the facilitator<sup>98</sup>. The facilitator, on the other hand, seems to intensify her humming to support him.

5 **Johan:** what's difficult is thateh (1) huh welleh some of them they they don't understand like ordinary things they cannot talk either (1) so it's really very hard for them it's a big burden (2)

6 **Facilitator:** M

7 **Johan:** I remember being a brother I myself think it's m hard to me (.) to have him as a brother

8 **Facilitator:** Yah

9 **Johan:** well think how hard for him then

10-12 **Facilitator:** M (1) M

13 **Johan:** not to be able to say what he thinks (.) f'exam' n not be able to say what sort of candy he wan' not be able to see w wha' film if he eve' wants to se a film

Johan is looking first at Susanne, who has been speaking most recently, and whom he is gently refuting by telling about his experiences, and later at the facilitator. Lisa supports Johan by pointing out the difficulty for the parents, and Susanne now changes her statement in favor of a more complex idea:

14 **Lisa:** I also think about when you see how hard it can be to be retarded the parents then it's like having (.) baby your whole life (2) must be really hard

15 **Facilitator:** Mm

16 **Susanne:** An' but you probably think much more an' want to take care of you thenlike eh sure you might get irritated likethis 'cause (.) it's not what you've imagined

At the end, someone from outside enters through the door behind the facilitator, the door making a squeaking noise, disturbing and causing almost everyone to look at the door and back. Some participants have obviously seen the disturbance coming; they react with distressing gestures before the door opens. They are probably afraid of a disturbance at this delicate moment. However, Lisa connects back by talking about parental love.

## 14.5.2 Analyzing the "Diabolo baby" seminar

### 14.5.2.1 Seminar steps and intellectual process

The facilitator introduces the different steps in the intended seminar plan in the order suggested. Personal and group goals are set and evaluated, and the group is familiar with the proceedings. The participants dominate the verbal

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<sup>98</sup> Oscar's gestures and glances were not possible to transcribe in turns 1-4 and 16-18, Lena's and Lisa's glances in turns 1-4 and Conny's and Niclas' in turns 6-12.

communication; they pose questions to each other and manage to carry out the conversation on their own in long sections. The “text” offers intellectual challenges.

The intellectual process is lively and is developing during the seminar, with questions and refutations. The textual analysis is carried out rather quickly. The participants refer to the picture when answering, but the facilitator doesn’t explicitly urge them to go on with the analysis. Instead, she urges them to relate their own experiences soon after all have answered the opening question. This part of the seminar becomes a mixture of critical inquiry (more frequent in the beginning) and “storytelling” (more frequent at the end). However, the ideas are being thoroughly pursued (cf. sequence 2).

#### **14.5.2.2 Dialogic process**

The “rules” seems transparent to the participants. They have mastered how to contradict each other without getting into debate. Many new ideas are presented with few incidents of “rule” breaking. Pia is an exception, acting in a disturbing way in both sequences 1 and 2. In sequence 1 her statement isn’t picked up by the facilitator, which seems to make her frustrated and/or insecure. When evaluating at the end, she says she didn’t succeed in her personal goal to contradict, but the facilitator answers that she did but that she has to support her opinions.

#### **14.5.2.3 “Silent” interaction**

There are some indications during the seminar that the facilitator is reacting to Pia’s actions or utterances by trying to silently discipline her to behave according to seminar procedures. The others react to her by looking away from her or not taking any notice of her statements as long as they are not substantial. Her two statements within the protocol are, however, picked up in the discussion by other participants. Another exception is Kalle, who seems occupied with other things during most of the seminar. His glances suggest that he is listening to the verbal interaction, even though he isn’t signaling participation: he looks up when a new idea or something controversial is presented. In sequence 3 Johan shares a very personal experience, causing the others to show sympathy and respect by looking at him (or the paper) and by quieting their sounds and gestures while the facilitator signals general support by humming.

### **14.5.3 Sixth grade discussing “Portrait”**

#### **14.5.3.1 The setting of the “Portrait” seminar**

This group of 19 children in sixth grade has participated in seminars for one year and nine months. Jill, Johanna, and Agnes are participating in their first seminar. The facilitator has conducted seminars for one year and nine

months. The seminar takes place in a classroom. The door is closed. The participants are seated around an oval table. The work of art discussed is a painting, “Portrait of Alexander Cassatt and his son Robert Kelso”. The seminar lasts for one hour.

Participants: Sebastian (m), Johanna (f), Agnes (f), Lena (f), Helen (f), Pia (f), Anders (m), Susanne (f), Jenny (f), Kalle (m), Oscar (m), Lisa (f), Jill (f), Åsa, (f), Conny (m), Niclas (m), Benjamin (m), Johan (m), Cordelia (f). Facilitator: Maria.

#### 14.5.3.2 Main outline of the “Portrait” seminar

The facilitator and some participants start by helping the newcomers, suggesting possible personal goals. Goals are written during a long thinking pause. The group goal is discussed and set: Listen to each other closely. The opening question is followed by a thinking pause: Do the persons in the picture want to sit there? Why/why not? It might be a father and a son. They seem hypnotized by the paper. Is it an old picture, from what country and are they rich or poor? What are they looking at (sequence 1, after 29 minutes)? The man in the picture might be unemployed. Is money more important than love? If you had to choose, what would you prefer? Can you live without love? A poor family might be better for the kid than a rich, if they’re better at showing love. Is there a difference between being ignored and bullied? Between physical and psychological abuse? Does one get apathetic or strive more if one has a hard time (sequence 2, after 41 minutes)? It’s important to be loved when you’re a kid, but some parents can’t show love (sequence 3, after 51 minutes). During the evaluation, they complain that it was hard hearing and seeing across the table. They discuss that they next time might pick “not talking at the same time” as a goal. They also discuss the presence of the cameras and if they would want to see the film.

#### 14.5.3.3 Sequence 1: Correcting Kalle without cause

The facilitator gets impatient with Kalle, who hasn’t got the picture in front of him. She disciplines him by posing a question to him and openly telling him that she suspects he hasn’t looked at it (10):

6 **Facilitator:** Do you agree Kalle

7 **Kalle:** Myes ahnoo

8 **Facilitator:** What are they looking at

9 **Kalle:** no o

10 **Facilitator:** I don’t think you’ve even looked at the picture in front of you

11 **Kalle:** Yes eh yeas I havit here (1) they’re looking at a book b’ I think it looks like some (.) map on some (.) likethis un unfolded it looks bigger

Looking at the gestures there is a silent interaction going on between Anders and Pia. Does the facilitator think Kalle is a part of this? Pia looks quickly at the facilitator when she starts speaking but looks down again when it’s ob-

vious that it's directed to Kalle. Kalle, however, answers according to seminar protocol, and his answer is a new idea that contributes to the following critical inquiry in the group (11). The conversation is pretty slow and there are pauses, probably due to thinking. The participants are very focused on the picture; they're either looking at it or at the speaker<sup>99</sup>. One exception is Pia, who is occupied with the object she has taken from Anders. The group moves almost simultaneously to look at the picture when Kalle introduces the new idea (11). There are also some words that seem to cause movements in the group, for example book, map, BIBle, picture.

#### 14.5.3.4 Sequence 2: Susanne contradicting by refuting

Susanne here claims that you might work harder to get out of poverty (6). She is contradicting what has been said by Cordelia (4):

4 **Cordelia:** that is if you're felling bad (2) in school th'maybe you don't work as good then you might not get any job later

5 **Pia:** (?)

6 **Susanne:** You might work even better too

7 **Cordelia:** But really it's a bit more that is I think that it goes in a circle sorta

8 **Susanne:** But whatever

9 **Cordelia:** that it

10 **Susanne:** you might work even better because 'cause you want to forget everything else (.) might get an even better job

Susanne is particularly active in trying to refute ideas throughout the seminar and discloses at the evaluation at the end that this has been her personal goal. Cordelia seems to change her mind or tries to merge the two ideas:

20 **Cordelia:** I sorta think it's either (.) that it goes in a circle like I said or it can be that you sorta (.) really grab on an' really try not to be poor

Agnes agrees with Susanne. She speaks hesitantly, looking at the facilitator and down at the table with ambiguous expressions. At the evaluation at the end of the seminar she says she has been nervous from the filming. She is participating in her first seminar and might not be used to expressing her ideas in this way. She and Johanna (participating for the first time) participate actively at the end of the seminar. The participants look mostly at the person speaking, the picture, or other objects<sup>100</sup>. There are more gestures when words are stressed. Helen is fidgeting and seems nervous. Right before the sequence she has been talking about feeling depressed and seeing a doctor. Pia, Anders, and Kalle are occupied part of the time with other things. Jenny, Johanna, and Helen turn towards the camera/door in the middle due to some noise outside the door behind the camera.

99 The glances of Niclas and Johan were not possible to transcribe from turn 1- 5.

100 The gestures and glances of Johan were not possible to transcribe, nor the glances of Pia in turns 13-15, Susanne in turn 11, Kalle in turns 11-19 and Niclas in turns 1, 11-15.



### 14.5.3.5 Sequence 3: Oscar presenting a personal problem

The first part of the discussion concerns whether or not parents who haven't been loved as children can give love to their own children, and Susanne and Lena suggest that one might learn from others and also get love from others.

12 **Lena:** I think you do m like you can hate your parents and love a friend

13 **Lisa:** Yeh exactly (.) but it's not the same way like /Oscar looks quickly at facilitator/

14 **Oscar:** I hate my dad ((silent at the end)) /He bends down/

15 **Cordelia:** NOH (.) like (.) I (.) don't hate my parents

They then discuss if there are different kinds of love for parents and friends, and this leads Lena to comment that she thinks that one can hate one's parents but love a friend (12). Oscar now quietly says that he hates his dad, a very personal remark and outside the seminar protocol (14). There is a tension in the group; they turn to Oscar and look at him or the facilitator, and some go on looking at Oscar for a long time while others look down at the table or at the picture<sup>101</sup>. Cordelia immediately exclaims NOH and hastily adds that she doesn't hate her parents (15). There is a risk of the seminar either becoming therapeutic or a shallow conversation, trying to avoid the dangerous subject brought up by Oscar. The facilitator, however, chooses to take the remark as a philosophical statement: she returns to Oscar and asks if it's the same thing to hate a parent as it is to hate a friend (17):

16, 17 **Facilitator:** Is it isit like isit the same then as if you would hate a friend Oscar (1)

18 **Oscar:** What d'ya mean the same

19 **Facilitator:** Yeahbut I think about love can be different are the hates different too

20 **Lena:** Ye:s

21 **Facilitator:** If you say like this I hate you to someone (.) isit the same kind of hate likeif I you say  
yesbut I hate my dad

22 **Lena:** (?)

23 **Facilitator:** orif yous think that it's

24 **Oscar:** N oh NOT really 'cause

25 **Facilitator:** Noh

26 **Oscar:** well (.) a parent has like (.) like sorta responsibility like this

27 **Facilitator:** Yes

28 **Oscar:** that you have to do (.) like this (.) some stuff that's something another person doesn't have to

Oscar seems confused (18), but after the facilitator has explained further (19, 21), he answers with a logical explanation: parents have a unique responsibility and that's the difference (26, 28). The facilitator supports him through the answer by sticking in supportive words, looking at Oscar, and nodding and shaking her head. Cordelia still seems worried by Oscar's statement. She starts talking hastily but with many pauses about loving friends and her grandmother. Her talk is confused and hard to interpret, but she is looking at Oscar while talking and seems to try to comfort him by saying that other

101 The glances of Johan were not possible to transcribe.

people might take his father's place by comparing him with her mother and grandmother. She goes on talking uninterrupted even when the facilitator seems to mark that it's too long by humming:

30 **Cordelia:** An' then one might huh feel love for like (.) to (2) like I think I can feel love like this to a friend (1) an'then f'example if my mom dies (.) then I can feel that my grand ma (2) I feel the same love that I got from my m like I got fro'my fro'my mom sorta

31 **Facilitator:** M

32 **Cordelia:** so I think maybe it's more that yeh (2) yes like mom has (1) sorta was raised (1) by grandma an'then she raised me an'then has raised I my children like mom but maybe different like different in some ways but like

Pia is also signaling sympathy towards Oscar at the end; she smiles and waves, and Oscar and Kalle participate in the silent interaction. As in the preceding sequence, participants seem to react to certain stressed words.

## 14.5.4 Analyzing the "Portrait" seminar

### 14.5.4.1 Seminar steps and intellectual process

The facilitator introduces the different steps in the intended seminar plan in the order suggested and there are plenty of thinking pauses. Personal and group goals are set and evaluated thoroughly, almost ten minutes in the beginning and ten minutes at the end including thinking time. The verbal communication is dominated by the participants. The facilitator is more active during goal setting and evaluation and during textual analysis.

The facilitator almost merely speaks to contrast different statements or to ask for clarification. A lot of ideas are heard before the facilitator asks them to start analyzing the picture. The group is big, 19 participants, but that doesn't seem to affect the seminar negatively except that they have trouble hearing each other over the big table. There is a difference in pace between different parts. The opening question, the values discussion, and the goal setting and evaluation float quickly and vividly. During the textual analysis, the pace is slower, with more pauses. The painting discussed is maybe a little plain and lacks complexity, but they are still able to analyze it and pick out the main ideas for the further discussion. The slow pace during the analysis is probably because they are thinking hard. Their glances are very focused on the picture. There are a lot of ideas tried and also refuted (Susanne in sequence 2). This active inquiry goes on when they move into the third phase of the seminar, relating the ideas to their own experience. The ideas develop and are enriched during the seminar, and many new ideas are presented, making the choice of sequences hard.

#### 14.5.4.2 Dialogic process and “silent” interaction

The seminar is long; it lasts for an hour. The participants are familiar with seminar procedures, there is almost no “rule” breaking, and they answer the opening question quickly without missing anyone and by connecting to each others’ statements and by referring to the text. They manage this with little interference from the facilitator. The new participants adapt to the seminar culture and procedures during the seminar.

The participants react with gestures and glances to some of the words, often stressed by the speaker in the sequences. Significant for the words they react to is that they have a strong or even controversial meaning in the context: hate, map, and BIBle. There are few gestures except turning the head towards the speaker. A common gesture among participants is to push the hair back to the neck. This is performed both by boys and girls, maybe as a way of showing affinity. The whole group focuses on the person speaking.

#### 14.5.5 Comparing the seminars of group E

Both the seminars of group E show great skill in seminar procedures by the participants and the facilitator, but there is all the same some development over the nine months, both in understanding of the seminar “rules” and how to use the different steps for different purposes. The participants’ individual goals are more developed as are their arguments, with fewer tendencies to lapse into “storytelling” in the later seminar. The growing competencies are visible when looking at individual participation. For example, Kalle and Pia had problems understanding the seminar protocol in the first seminar but understand them (but do not always make use of them) in the second. The facilitator also seems to have developed from trying to correct participants in a silent, concealed fashion to doing it openly if needed. On the other hand, there are fewer interruptions in the second seminar.

Notable is that the facilitator doesn’t seem to have any trouble leading the second seminar in this group, where she no longer is a teacher, as was a trouble to the facilitator in the second seminar of group D. Another notable difference is that in this group, very personal remarks seem to draw sympathy and respect from the others instead of ridicule as in group D. The facilitator signals general support in this group during both these passages as a contrast to the facilitator in group D, who doesn’t interfere or goes along with the abusers (or jokers).

## 14.6 Fifth grade to seventh grade (group F)

### 14.6.1 Fifth grade discussing “Let the ice bears dance”

#### 14.6.1.1 The setting of the “Let the ice bears dance” seminar

Most of this group of 14 children in fifth grade has participated in seminars for half a year with some of them for one year. The facilitator has conducted seminars for one year. The seminar takes place in a class-room. The door is closed until the last minutes of the seminar when other students enter. The participants are seated around an oval table. The literature discussed is a chapter from a book for youngsters: “Let the ice bears dance”. The seminar lasts for 40 minutes. The use of only one camera made multimodal transcribing impossible.

Participants: Ann B (f), Jack (m), Anna A (f), Lee (m), Lisa (f), Jakob (m), Susanne (f), Niclas (m), Amanda (f), Tobias (m), Lucy (f), Lucas (m), Catti (f), Mattis (m). Facilitator: Maria

#### 14.6.1.2 Main outline of the “Let the ice bears dance” seminar

The participants start by writing down their personal goals and repeating why goals are set. Lukas comments that the text does not seem “Socratic” (sequence 1, after two minutes). They agree on having the same group goal as last time: trying to address each other and not the facilitator. The opening question is: Do you think that Torstensson helps Lasse in a good way or not? There is a thinking pause. Torstensson did help but he did it the wrong way. Torstensson doesn’t do anything when Lollo laughs (sequence 2, after five minutes). Torstensson did good things for Lasse like taking him to the optician and buying him clothes but he didn’t check up on what Lasse liked. Does Lasse feel better if he is well-dressed or not? Do wearing elegant clothes<sup>102</sup> have a positive effect on schoolwork? Why didn’t Lasse protest? What are Lollo’s motives (sequence 3, after 25 minutes)? Anna A points out that Susanne hasn’t spoken yet (sequence 4, after 30 minutes). The facilitator ends the seminar and asks Lukas if the text is Socratic (sequence 5, after 33 minutes). The facilitator gets positive feedback for being good at inviting others into the conversation.

#### 14.6.1.3 Sequence 1: Lukas questioning the choice of text

After the introduction from the facilitator, Lukas questions the choice of text (4), and Niclas supports him (9):

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<sup>102</sup>The Swedish noun “finkläder”, here translated “elegant clothes”, means in direct translation “nice clothes”, an expression used among children and adults to describe (children’s) clothes you might have at a party or a celebration. The adjective “finklädd” means “well-dressed”.

4 **Lukas:** It does no it doesn't seem to be a Socratic text I'd say it's like it use to be so  
 5 **Facilitator:** It does not seem socratic  
 6 **Lukas:** No: (1) I dunn'  
 7 **Facilitator:** Noeh (.) andah (1) in what way then  
 8 **Lukas:** I dunn' I think (?) he's only supposed to help him get better at school  
 9 **Niclas:** It's sorta feels like they're talking about it's someone talking yea they talk (?)  
 10 **Facilitator:** There is nothing to have opinions about is that what you mean do you agree

The facilitator tries to figure out why and seems surprised, judging from her stressing the words (5). She leaves the subject when Tobias and Amanda state that there are things to discuss, leaving Lukas in confusion, saying he doesn't "get it". The facilitator, Anna A, Catti, and Amanda try to remember the goal from last time and finally recollect it and decide to keep it with consent from the others. The goal is speaking directly to each other, using names. Jakob comments on the cameras being present and that one shouldn't take any notice. The facilitator interrupts Anna B commenting on the camera by raising her voice and trying to exemplify the group goal. Is this done to detract participants' interest from the camera?

34 **Anna B:** It's like I::: think that mm /*She turns to the camera*/  
 35 **Facilitator:** Except except (.) if it's like you want to contradict forexample (.) Catti when she says something (.) then you don't turn to me but then you say but Catti that which you said (.) I think it sounded really good I agree with you  
 36 **Jakob:** Not do that to the camera either  
 37 **Facilitator:** or like that are we to have the same goal since it didn't work out so well the last time

#### 14.6.1.4 Sequence 2: The facilitator interrupting an investigation

Jakob's answer (2) refers to Lollo laughing and seems to confuse the group. Lucy states that she hasn't understood, and the facilitator clarifies (8):

2 **Jakob:** I kinda think like Mattiis because thatah (.) girl did laugh at him an' he doesn't tell her off or anything  
 3 **Facilitator:** Mm  
 4 **Lucy:** I didn't get that  
 5 **Jakob:** well when  
 6 **Niclas:** Wasn't that what he did  
 7 **Someone:** M n  
 8 **Facilitator:** The girl called Lollo that was Torstensson's daughter

This does not seem to make things clearer. Niclas questions Jakob's interpretation (10), and Mattis is trying to bring some light into what happens in the story (13) but gets interrupted by the facilitator, who, by giving him a reprimand, returns the original question back to Jakob (14).

10 **Niclas:** I did say that he had told her off but  
 11 **Mattis:** Yesbut thatwas that was wheneh (2) the guy said to  
 12 **Lukas:** Who the guy Lasse  
 13 **Mattis:** Yea Lasse eh he saideh (?)

14 **Facilitator:** Though now the question was whether Jakob thought that Torstensson helped Lasse in a good way (.) did you think so too

15 **Jakob:** M

16 **Facilitator:** Then you said that you agreed with Mattis

17 **Jakob:** Yea a little like Mattihad sortof (1) ehm (.) but I like think it was well said (.) 'cause u:h (2) but (.) I don't understand to help him with the looks shou' help him in school

Why does the facilitator interrupt the spontaneous textual analysis? Jakob seems confused after her interruption and has a hard time formulating his statement, stuttering and pausing (17). The facilitator breaks the rules rather brusquely, but is getting the seminar back to the opening question.

#### 14.6.1.5 Sequence 3: The facilitator stopping and supporting inquiry

The group is here back to analyzing the same passage that they tried to address in sequence 2, right before the facilitator interrupted Mattis. This time it is Amanda bringing up the subject by answering the opening question, and this time facilitator lets the group go on pursuing the passage without interruption. She utters supportive and clarifying comments. Jakob, Lukas, and Lucy try to sort out what is really happening in the text:

10 **Jakob:** She said nthis to her mum

11 **Facilitator:** Yeah thatsright

12 **Lukas:** She said something stupid as well (.) to Torsten

13 **Jakob:** And giggled and stuff (??)

14 **Lukas:** Yesbut not only giggle it says here somewhere

15 **Jakob:** She said yeah that's right

16 **Lucy:** Yesbut (.) ehm do you really think that you can teach him something she said he's totally gone

However, this is interrupted when the facilitator gives the word to Anna A by calling her name. Anna A, Amanda, and Jakob now try to find different explanations for Lollo's behavior. When Niclas introduces an opposing idea (29), the facilitator asks if this is important at all (31):

29 **Niclas:** What if she was smart an' that's why she said so because she knew she exactly what it was an' that's why she said something it can be like that too it can be any way

30 **Amanda:** It might be the same

31 **Facilitator:** Does it matter if she was smart or not that is I only think when she says this about' e:h do you really think that you can teach him something she say she he's totally gone (.) that's what she says an' then we don't know if she can or cannot

Mattis now leads the group back to analyzing the text by asking if Lasse is present when Lollo says he is totally gone, and with help from the group and the facilitator concludes that he is. At the end, Catti, Lukas, and Niclas connect two ideas: that Lollo is not very clever and that she is jealous of the new family, and that's why she acts the way she does. The facilitator supports them:

46 **Catti:** Yesbut I had something more but that she it doesn't say that she has been the same not to in the same sit s ation as Lasse and (.) maybe she didn't learn from thatand an' and (.) then maybe she shou'

47 **Lukas:** Then she probably shouldn't gone on to (.) all the wrong answers yeahbut like

48 **Niclas:** Then she didn't know if it was right or wrong

49 **Lukas:** Ye but check out yea he maybe she failed and they became another like this in the family an' siblings an' likethis usually fights like (.) Yes then she might not have wanted that he should be better than her and so

50 **Facilitator:** An' then she thin' she says that he's stupid an'

Why is the facilitator here supporting the analysis when she interrupted it earlier? The reason might be that this sequence is in the middle of the seminar and almost everyone has answered the opening question. The textual analysis makes their utterances short and the meaning difficult to follow.

#### 14.6.1.6 Sequence 4: Facilitator coping differently with rule breaks

2 **Anna A:** An' I jus wanna say that Susanne she so (.) she hasn't expressed anything

3 **Facilitator:** M no noey maybe she's having as a goal today to be quiet I don't know (1) /*Susanne nods*/ but I would still like to think that (.) that you told something maybe only this if you thought that it was any good help (1) that Torstensson gave to Lasse

Anna A points out that Susanne is breaking the rules by not speaking (2), but the facilitator seems to try to elaborate Anna A's somewhat rudimentary understanding of the rules by pointing out that Susanne might have a personal goal explaining her silence, and Susanne silently acknowledges that this is the case (3). The facilitator still asks Susanne to participate at least by answering the opening question, which she does. Anna A suddenly verbalizing the rules seems to lead to Lukas also doing so (4) and Niclas defending himself for having a squeaky chair (5). The facilitator seems to try to end this by shortly stating that one has to sit still (7):

4 **Lukas:** Who's chair is squeaking

5 **Niclas:** Bu' check out I we (?) it's Magnus' chair that I've borrowed

6 **Jakob:** Yes it is

7 **Facilitator:** You have to sit a bit still

When Lukas goes on verbalizing the rules by telling Amanda she doesn't have to raise her hand (13), and getting Amanda confused, the facilitator does not comment. Lukas also stops commenting on the rules, even though Anna A has her hand raised for quite some time during the sequence:

11 **Facilitator:** Mm /*Amanda raises her hand*/

12 **Niclas:** He didn't say that

13 **Lukas:** You don't have to raise your hand it's just to say

14 **Amanda:** Eh (.) eh (.) he could choose clothes just that he (1) didn't (1) say it

15 **Lukas:** Yebut myeah

The facilitator is faced with the double task of acknowledging the rules that are verbalized as correct but at the same time showing the group that they should manage the rules without verbalizing them. She is doing this by explaining what might be behind the first (Susanne's silence, 3), by shortly commenting on the second (the squeaky chair, 7), and by ignoring the next

(Amanda's raised hand, 13). The point seems to be taken by the participants: during the rest of the seminar no one comments on the rules within seminar time. Amanda's statement that Lasse should have been able to choose clothes starts a discussion that quickly turns into a harsh debate. Lucy points out that they only went to expensive stores, and Lukas says that this meant that there were only elegant clothes to choose from. This triggers protests from others (29), even though Mattis seems to try to find arguments supporting Lukas (28), and Lukas firmly presses his view (31, 33). The facilitator suggests that they should define "elegant clothes" (34), and Mattis does so with several participants agreeing with the definition (36, 37):

28 **Mattis:** There are a lot of those sort of brand clothes that maybe costs over a thousand bucks  
 29 **Several participants:** ((mumble and protesting noises))  
 30 **Niclas:** Uh  
 31 **Lukas:** Yeah  
 32 **Several participants:** ((mumble and protesting noises))  
 33 **Lukas:** Oh yeeeah:::h  
 34 **Facilitator:** Then one first has to find out what one means by elegant clothes is it tie a  
 35 **Lukas:** Yeah  
 36 **Mattis:** Yeah tie jacket shirt  
 37 **Several participants:** Yeah

Amanda points out that this is not what the disagreement is about; it concerns whether or not there are only elegant clothes to buy at the store (and hence nothing else for Lasse to choose from). Lukas asks for proof, which seems to cause some confusion among the rest of the participants:

46 **Lukas:** Let's see some proof  
 47 **Several participants:** ((mumble))  
 48 **Anna A:** Eh  
 49 **Facilitator:** Anna has something sh:  
 50 **Anna A:** Like  
 51 **Niclas:** You're gonna get it  
 52 **Lucy:** Like here it says  
 53 **Facilitator:** Yea  
 54 **Lucy:** we we bought several pairs of sweaters two pairs of pants one (.) lum (.) lumber jacket an' one jacket three shirts two ties and an overcoat

According to seminar rules, asking for textual proof might be correct behavior. However, Niclas' comment to Lukas that he will "get it" (51), seems to be done to provoke the other side in the debate. Lucy, however, finds a passage in the text (54), and the participants try to analyze if the specified clothes are "elegant clothes", turning the seminar back to dialogic inquiry. Anna A leaves the text to refer to her friend's experience:

68 **Anna A:** Ahm (.) I just want to say one thing because (.) they were like at NK (1) when they were gonna (.) buy (.) certain things there are (.) really not just elegant clothes there sorta because my pa ors my old friend or whatever you'd call her ehm she her dad's wife or something like that she had bought



(.) a really nice jack jacket fo h at like NK an' then also at a lot of like really expensive stores

69 **Lukas:** Was it for real

70 **Mattis:** eh

71 **Anna A:** Yes for real

72 **Lukas:** Is NK for real

Lukas is confused; he hasn't realized that the department store NK<sup>103</sup> really exists (72). Maybe he isn't able to connect the text to his own experience?

#### 14.6.1.7 Sequence 5: Evaluating the text and the seminar

This sequence starts with the facilitator ending the seminar, and, (after Niclas checked if they have to do their chores), turning to Lukas to check if he now considers the text to be Socratic, which he reluctantly seems to admit:

6 **Facilitator:** But on the other hand I really would wa:nt (.) to hear from you Lukas who said that this was not a Socratic text have you changed your view

7 **Lukas:** M yea m

8 **Facilitator:** You have there were some things to talk about

9 **Lukas:** I was gonna say that I was gonna say that

10 **Niclas:** I didn't knowif questionif Porstenson was coming if he was good or bad with (.) or that that I almost put aside 'cause I didn't think it was gonna be such a big seminar (?)

11 **Facilitator:** Yea no but it was

12 **Lukas:** But (.) but I

13 **Niclas:** I didn't know

Niclas, who also questioned this in sequence 1, voluntarily admits that he has changed his mind. This is done as if in confusion, trying to explain the reasons for his earlier stand (10). Both Lukas and Niclas seem to want to defend their earlier view. However, when the facilitator concludes that they are to continue with the text, Lukas agrees that they are not yet finished discussing it. By making a point of returning to what he said in sequence 1, the facilitator might have wanted to show them that they could change their minds without loosing. When the facilitator asks for an evaluation of the group goal, Anna A and two others answer that it went badly, but this is immediately followed by Lukas, Niclas, Mattis, and Jack saying it went well, and Anna A changes her answer. After the facilitator has supported the boys, Niclas wants to know who said it went badly, and Jack points out Anna A, who firmly denies it, seemingly surprised (31):

29 **Niclas:** Who thought it was bad who thought it was bad I ha a question t that

30 **Jack:** I thought it was Anna

31 **Anna A:** me::: (↑) I didn't think so

Even though the facilitator tries to give the word to Susanna, Lukas now continues the investigation, causing Anna A to reformulate her answer to “so

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103 NK, Nordiska Kompaniet, an old exclusive department store in Stockholm, in the book where Torstensson buys Lasse clothes.

and so”. Are Lukas and Niclas here trying to get Anna A to see that she can change her mind without losing? Or are they trying to “win” a debate? Looking at the facilitator’s behavior, she at least seems to think it’s a debate. The facilitator finally presents an evaluation supporting both sides by referring to Susanne’s answer (40), and all seem to agree at the end:

40 **Facilitator:** I thought you made it but then maybe you would need a little more of what you said  
Susanne ‘cause for a while you were very eager an’ all were talking at the same time although it (.) did  
work out too but it  
41, 42 **Lukas:** M (.) yes ((noises from outside the room))  
43 **Niclas:** You’re a little afraid that the other will say what ya exactly what you think is that good  
44 **Anna A:** Mm  
45 **Jakob:** Yes  
46 **Facilitator:** Yes (.) yes exactly  
47 **Jakob:** Then you might be seen as bad when ah others

Niclas and Jakob comment that one might not have the patience to listen since one is afraid of someone else “stealing” an idea, thus returning to a more dialogical position (43, 47).

## 14.6.2 Analyzing “Let the ice bears dance” seminar

### 14.6.2.1 Seminar steps and intellectual process

The facilitator introduces most of the different steps in the intended seminar plan in the order that is suggested. She never specifically asks them to relate the discussion to themselves at the end, even if this is done spontaneously by the participants to some extent during the seminar. When the participants tend to continue to textual analysis or to discussing the ideas introduced, she takes them back to the opening question after a while, commenting on what she is doing (“everyone has not answered the opening question yet”). The text seems well chosen and has been read by the participants before the seminar as intended. There is no pause for reflection when setting the personal goal, but the time of discussing and commenting seems to give everyone time enough. The pause for reflection after the opening question is about one minute but disturbed by both the facilitator’s and the participants’ comments. The participants dominate the verbal communication, especially in the latter half of the seminar. Most of the time the facilitator and the participants share the talking time, the facilitator’s speech consisting of questions posed to participants, reformulating their ideas, and asking if her interpretation is correct and in some cases supporting, informing or correcting.

The intellectual process continues throughout the seminar, ideas are tested and refuted, and new solutions are found, for example in sequence 3. In the beginning this is carried out by individual participants stating their view and other participants listening and catching up on the idea, but after a while

there are also some discussions about the different ideas carried out by the participants referring to and questioning each other. The participants tend to mix the different steps during the seminar and seem pretty familiar with the different steps. They need guidance from the facilitator to carry out some of the “intellectual virtues”, for instance to express their ideas clearly and understandably to others.

#### **14.6.2.2 Dialogic process**

The participants and the facilitator act in accordance with the seminar “rules”. When the participants have strong opinions about the subject discussed (choice of clothes), the dialogue tends to end in debate. They cannot yet fully master or understand the dialogical virtues (cf. sequence 1 and 5) and still need the facilitator to guide them, for instance to be able to change their minds without feeling as if they lose (Lukas, Niclas, and Anna A changing their minds in sequence 5). The facilitator spends a lot of time discussing goals and seminar rules when starting (four and a half minutes) and ending the seminar (six minutes).

The facilitator uses verbal communication to comment on the participants’ breaking the rules (not listening to each other), the participants comment on others’ behavior (sequence 4), and the facilitator and the group spend a long time discussing rules/goals before and after seminar. The facilitator, however, seems to use other means to communicate what is acceptable or not, sometimes leading her to break one rule to emphasize another (interrupting Mattis to show him that Jakob has not answered the opening question). She is balancing between teaching the group the prerequisites of the seminar by being a role model and trying to fulfill the role as facilitator, leaving her with some tough choices, sometimes making the right ones for the seminar to proceed in a productive way and sometimes missing what is going on in the group (when she is asking them to define elegant clothes when the dispute concerns something else, sequence 4).

### **14.6.3 Seventh grade group 1 discussing “Dress codes”**

#### **14.6.3.1 The setting of the “Dress codes” seminar in group 1**

Most of this group of ten youngsters in seventh grade, group 1, has participated in seminars for two and a half years and some of them for three years. The facilitator has conducted seminars for four years. The seminar takes place in a class-room. The door is closed. The participants are seated around a rectangular table. The literature discussed is a newspaper article on dress codes. The seminar lasts for almost one hour.

Participants: Tobias (m), Lukas (m), John (m), Stina (f), Elsa (f), Catti (f), Jonte (m), Lee (m), Hanna (f), Niclas (m). Facilitator: Sandra.

### 14.6.3.2 Main outline of the “Dress codes” seminar in group 1

The group gathers while discussing their personal goals. As group goal they settle on: politely contradicting each other. There is a thinking pause. They clarify the group goal: contradicting will help identify ideas. The opening question is: “Would you consider having school uniforms?” There is a silent pause for a couple of minutes. Some would like uniforms if they would look like Japanese school uniforms. Would having a uniform mean that one wouldn’t recognize each other? What are the principal’s motives? Who is to decide: the parents, the child, or the school (sequence 1, after 20 minutes)? The voices are low and hesitating; few ideas are presented. Elsa suddenly states that the principal acts like a bitch (sequence 2, after 26 minutes). The facilitator asks what would they think if a doctor and a dentist wore provocative clothes? There is a dress code for certain professions. Is it the same with a school uniform (sequence 3, after 34 minutes)? Is the principal violating the students’ rights? Will only the math geniuses and the jerks stay in that school? The facilitator ends the seminar, and the group goal is evaluated. Few participants have been speaking: they should have invited others more. They evaluate their personal goals (sequence 4, after 48 minutes).

### 14.6.3.3 Sequence 1: Elsa is provoked, pressed, and supported

In the beginning, Lukas is pressing his point that parents should tell their children what to wear. Elsa is objecting to this, supported by Catti, arguing that this might have an opposite effect when it comes to teenagers. Lukas provokes Elsa by drastically emphasizing his point, turning the dialogue into a debate or even a quarrel and confusing the others:

21 **Lukas:** And then you get raped  
22 **Elsa:** RAPed /*She nods*/  
23 **Lukas:** Yea raped /*He nods*/  
24 **John:** But check out has really  
25 **Catti:** Do we think  
26 **Lukas:** Right  
27 **Elsa:** How are you THINkning (expiration in speech) Lukas  
28 **Lukas:** I think SMA:rt /*He shakes his head*/  
29 **Elsa:** Noho  
30 **Niclas:** E:h (1) like it’s also that the parents (.) like that you can think that there’s no idea to listen to your parents but it’s still there notall the time thatah they have said something that they maybe sort of (.) like you still remember so it’s

Niclas (30) and Tobias seem to try to get the dialogue back on track by elaborating on what Elsa said earlier. Niclas states that parents’ advice will still be remembered by the teenager. The facilitator brings rape back into discussion by giving examples from trials (43):

43 **Facilitator:** Ba then you get to makethe decision yourself Lukas was suggesting that sometimes it can be too late that you get into a role and if you get in real trouble (1) there are cases of rape where (.) the

one who has carried out the rape has said yeabut she had such a short skirt

44 **Elsa:** Yabut that's so bad excuse give me a BRA:KEH ((expiration in speech))

45 **Lukas:** Mm but maybe it's not

46 **Elsa:** Y yeabhbut GHO:::D (2) ho' oneh (.) like short skirt

This is obviously annoying and upsetting Elsa, who shows her opinion by stressing and prolonging the words, even suggesting contempt and laughter, but having a hard time finding the right words to verbalize her opinions (44, 46). Lukas and the facilitator go on pressing their point. John seems to be trying to lessen their effect by making it clearer that it's not rape that is signaled, and by making a joke:

52 **John:** But not raped but wanted (2) hmm (.) right ((laughs))

53 **Elsa:** Like AH

This only seems to upset Elsa more, even if she smiles (53). The facilitator now sums up the discussion by trying to find consensus (56). When the facilitator asks Elsa if she agrees (58), the answer suggests that she doesn't, and the facilitator alters the meaning to try and include Elsa's point (60):

56 **Facilitator:** Who is (.) to tell (.) some were suggesting are you agree eing on are you united on that grown-ups have as an important duty to tell youngsters whatthey shall

57 **Some participants:** M

58 **Facilitator:** You thought so too Elsa /*She turns to Elsa, nods*/

59 **Elsa:** (1) M (.) hm

60 **Facilitator:** Anthen you can (.) go away and make your own decision from there

Instead of pointing out the different perspectives present, the facilitator chooses to try to find a shared point of view. Is she trying to mediate in the quarrel between Lukas and Elsa or is she trying to find a point from which the seminar can go on developing? Is she pressing her own view?

The participants' glances in all the chosen sequences are distributed on the speaker or close to the speaker, on the article or, when the speaker is sitting close to oneself, to the person sitting opposite. The participant's gestures increase when the facilitator mentions "cases of rape". Some of the boys are connecting to and supporting each other when the risk of being raped is discussed, by looking at each other, smiling, and nodding. When the facilitator asks Niclas if parents have a duty to tell youngsters about dress codes, Elsa looks down at her article. She keeps looking down for the rest of the sequence except for one glance at the facilitator and one at Lukas. From this point on, more than half the group looks at the article or objects at the table. This might be a reaction to Elsa being pressed both by the facilitator and by the boys. The facilitator is soon after this concentrating on Elsa, looking intensely at her almost for the rest of the sequence. Is she trying to support her or to persuade her? The facilitator's gestures seem to imply the former: she is supporting Elsa with nods and open gestures while speaking to Elsa or while Elsa is speaking. She even seems to mimic Elsa's gestures, leaning backward and forward.

#### 14.6.3.4 Sequence 2: The articulate Niclas interrupting Elsa

4 **Facilitator:** Don't know how old she is eh I've seen her picture I'd guess fortyfive fifty mayb' it's very hard to say

5 **Elsa** ((soft voice)): She acts like a bitch

6 **Facilitator:** What'you say Elsa

7 **Lukas:** Tshhh

8 **Elsa:** She acts like a BITCH (2) /Elsa looks up at facilitator/

Elsa interrupts the analysis of the motives of the principal - carried out chiefly by the facilitator, Niclas, Lukas, and Jonte - by stating that the principal is a bitch (5), first in a low voice and later more loudly (8), causing everyone to react by looking at her followed by a pause. She seems to be arguing that the principal's opinions are old-fashioned. The facilitator picks up Elsa's views and later contradicts them:

10 **Facilitator:** But she does it for the benefit of the children says she wants order in school

11 **Elsa:** But it isnot f' the benefit of the children

12 **Jonte:** It's (?)

13 **Facilitator:** M

14 **Niclas:** She might be brought up an' so in that kind of family so she might think that it should be like that for orat this school too

Elsa tries to defend her opinion after the refutations, but gets interrupted by Niclas both times (14, 22), and it's his more articulate view that is explored:

22 **Elsa:** Yeabut

23 **Niclas:** But usually it's usually it's so that it is sometimes turn sometimes it goes on but most often it doesn't go that far thatis it comes to a turning point sort

24 **Facilitator:** Okay

Elsa looks down at her article when she speaks except for a glance at the facilitator<sup>104</sup>. The facilitator looks alternately at Elsa and the note pad, with shorter glances at other participants and the article. Most of the participants move when Niclas interrupts Elsa. Are they reacting to his interruption? As in sequence 1, some of the boys connect to and support each other.

#### 14.6.3.5 Sequence 3: Elsa trying to present a new idea

Lukas and Niclas here use the previous discussion about working clothes to nominate school uniforms as a way for students to take school more seriously. Elsa tries to refute this, but it's hard to understand what she is trying to say. She seems to be arguing that it's too early to start dressing in working clothes; in time you will have to adapt:

9 **Elsa:** It s (?)like i y would wear a school uniform now probably when you get older sorta what you choose like often th you have to have sorta similar clothes that you use at work bu if we wore school uniforms now lik then you stuck like the rest of the life 'cause you have the same sort of clothes that you have for all people

104 Elsa's glances were not possible to transcribe reliably in turn 1-7 nor Catti's in turn 1-11.

Lukas answers this by saying that it's just a job, a remark that seems unclear if Elsa's talk turn is interpreted as above. Elsa tries to clarify her point by explaining that thinking of school as a job makes the time when you can choose to dress personally too short. Lukas once again states that it is a job (14), and Elsa doesn't seem to be able to answer (15), so she gets quiet (17):

- 14 **Lukas:** Yes it's just a job buhwha  
15 **Elsa:** Y yheahbut just a job an' just a job  
16 **Lukas:** Yes just a job  
17 **Elsa:** B it /*She shakes her head*/

Niclas seems to make an effort to negotiate by saying that he isn't sure what he would think (21), but the sequence still ends in Lukas and Niclas confirming their mutual opinion (22), and with a very long pause (23):

- 21 **Niclas:** Thin I shou think it was just fun hasit been a little (?)  
22 **Lukas:** Cool Japanese school uniforms ((giggles)) /*Lukas smiles and shakes his head. Niclas smiles*/  
23 **Niclas:** Yeah ((giggles)) (4)  
24 **Facilitator:** Okay so you are still two separate sides  
25 **Niclas:** Nyea /*He smiles*/

When the facilitator points out that there are two sides (24), Niclas seems to hesitate to confirm this (25). The facilitator is mostly focusing on the article and on her notes, writing<sup>105</sup>. The participants move quite a lot during the sequence, turning their heads toward the speaker or toward the paper but also moving hands, arms, and bodies, picking with things on the table. The movements seem unsynchronized with a few exceptions, such as stressing something by nodding or shaking their heads. Jonte and Lee are playing with pencils and papers in the second part.

#### 14.6.3.6 Sequence 4: Elsa is pleased with having reached her goal

Evaluating the personal goals reveals some clues to the rest of the seminar. Elsa has been working on stating her view (7), trying to overcome her shyness. She is obviously very proud to have succeeded (3):

- 1 **Facilitator:** How didit go with your personal goals  
2 **Lukas:** Bad  
3 **Elsa:** Really good  
4 **Niclas:** Now what did I write to contradict  
5 **Lukas:** Did you write what you had  
6 **Facilitator:** Really good whatyasay Elsa what did you have as a goal ((giggles))  
7 **Elsa:** Toa:hh say what I think and believe

The facilitator confirms that she has taken a big step. Lukas continues to contradict and try to diminish Elsa's progress by questioning her goal (9):

- 9 **Lukas:** But that isn't so difficult  
10 **Elsa:** No but like can it be so that one sits quiet just because one is so shy: (1) wanna say what one

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105 Elsa's glances were not possible to transcribe from turn 1-22, nor Catti's from 1-8.

thinks an'

Later he says he didn't hear what her goal was, and once again questions it. Niclas, who is concentrated on Lukas, turns away from him when this happens. Lukas seems to misunderstand the facilitator's praise for Elsa (17) as if it concerned himself (18), but realizes his misunderstanding (20):

17 **Facilitator:** Buh I think you have made a great progress

18 **Lukas:** Yes? /*He looks at facilitator/*

19 **Facilitator:** If I may say (1) but Elsa it worked really well

20 **Lukas:** Oh /*He turns out his hand and looks down at his paper/*

21 **Facilitator:** It did, didn't it /*Elsa turns to Catti and back down to her hands and smiles. Catti turns to Elsa, smiles and nods/*

Niclas has had as a goal to contradict others but considers this hard since others contradicted, presumably Elsa. Lukas had to talk a lot and thinks he has succeeded with that. The facilitator is focused on Elsa when her goal is evaluated. Elsa is looking down at her hands except for a quick glance at Catti after the facilitator's praise, smiling. The movements are discrete. Jonte and Lee are occupied doing something under the table, smiling and looking at each other. Lee throws quick glances towards Elsa, Stina, and the facilitator as if to check that no one is noticing them. Some of Catti's, Tobias's, John's, the facilitator's, and Lukas' attentions are from time to time drawn to this activity. John accidentally gets stuck in the microphone cord, and Lukas looks at the microphone when questioning Elsa's goal the second time.

## 14.6.4 Analyzing the "Dress codes" seminar, group 1

### 14.6.4.1 Seminar steps

The facilitator introduces the different steps in the intended seminar plan in the order that is suggested. All the participants do not answer the opening question in the beginning, textual analysis is very short, and relating ideas to self is introduced early. The text seems fairly well chosen and has been read by the participants before the seminar. The pauses for reflection when setting personal goals and after the opening question are long (one and two minutes). The discussion is, however, slow and hesitating. One explanation might be the choice of the opening question. It leads away from the dilemmas in the text, forcing the participants to work with two different themes: one about school uniforms and one about the principal's right to decide the things she does. They only partly coincide and are both big questions. The participants dominate the verbal communication, but the facilitator speaks more than in the later seminar with group 2, especially during the second half of the seminar. Two or three participants dominate the verbal conversation: Lukas, Niclas, and to some extent, Elsa. Niclas points this out at the evaluation. The rest of the participants, however, show by looks that they are



interested in what is going on up to the last part of the seminar, where Jonte and Lee have something else going on.

#### **14.6.4.2 Intellectual process**

The intellectual process is not really continuing through the seminar; ideas are tested and refuted, but this does not seem to lead to new solutions: Lukas, Niclas, and Elsa are holding on to their views without much change throughout the seminar. The participants tend to mix the different steps during the seminar. They seem familiar with the steps but also seem free to use them when appropriate. They do not seem to need guidance from the facilitator to carry out the “intellectual virtues”, but some use the intellectual contradiction process for other means.

The facilitator takes on Lukas’ and Niclas’ line of argumentation, questioning Elsa’s line. She never refutes Lukas or Niclas. At the end, she says that she was sure she was only going to get one line of reasoning (probably against school uniforms). Maybe she was prepared to refute that line (presented by Elsa) but not the opposite and got stuck in arguing against Elsa’s line instead of trying to get the boys to reconsider their views. The result is somewhat unlucky, since it thus becomes a question of gender. The examples concern females: rape and short skirts. Elsa continues to question the facilitator’s and the boys’ line, and the facilitator supports her throughout the seminar by looking at her and by gestures. Even though Niclas is negotiating and seems to understand the rules, he tends to return to agreeing with Lukas. Elsa’s position is difficult, and she reacts by looking down even when talking, as if trying to concentrate on what to say (she declares at the end that she is normally shy). One of her problems is her difficulty in verbalizing her point, where for instance Niclas has an advantage. At the end, Elsa’s progress is pointed out both by herself and by the facilitator, and she is seemingly proud and happy. This seems to leave Lukas confused as to what has been going on. He has been focused on refuting Elsa and was seemingly supported by the facilitator and Niclas. Is he trying to get Elsa interested or confused or is he just trying to impress the filmmaker (he looks at the microphone at the end of sequence 4)?

#### **14.6.4.3 Dialogic process**

The participants and the facilitator act in accordance with the seminar “rules”, but they also break the rules on quite a lot of occasions. The dialogue turns into debate a couple of times. At the end, Niclas and Elsa seem to have used the debating technique as a way to analyze the text and the arguments, but Lukas rather seems to need to “win” the discussion or to use the seminar as an arena for something else. Maybe this is why the rest of the group stops participating verbally after a while. What is accepted in the seminar is shown when they discuss the rules/goals outside the seminar. Their

group goal is to politely contradict each other, maybe a reason to why the speech is low and hesitating in the beginning.

#### **14.6.4.4 “Silent” interaction**

The most important actions taken within the seminar to show what is accepted seems to be in non-verbal communication, looking or not looking at the speaker. The participants spend a lot of time looking at their articles, writing, or drawing but showing that they are participating by looking up when something they consider important is said or when a new speaker is heard. Most of the gestures are “quiet”: writing or drawing on the paper or picking at things on the table, and seem to lack connection to the group interaction. One way of showing respect for the seminar seems to be not to attract attention by quick or “big” movements. Higher interest in what is happening in the group interaction seems to intensify the gestures.

During parts of the seminar, the boys have connections, supporting each other. It doesn't seem to be a consequence of them having the same point of view but rather of what is being discussed. They are playing some other game without correction (and sometimes with support) from the facilitator. The seminar is not safe, and other participants choose not to participate.

### **14.6.5 Seventh grade group 2 discussing “Dress codes”**

#### **14.6.5.1 The setting of the “Dress code” seminar in group 2**

Most of this group of 12 youngsters in seventh grade, group 2, has participated in seminars for two and a half years with some of them for three years. The facilitator has conducted seminars for four years. The seminar takes place in a class-room. The door is closed. The participants are seated around a rectangular table. The same article as in group 1 is discussed. The seminar lasts for almost one hour.

Participants: Anna B (f), Anna A (f), Susanne (f), Lisa (f), Lucy (f), Sofia (f), Ruben (m), Mattis (m), Jack (m), Johnny (m), Jakob (m), John (m). Facilitator: Sandra.

#### **14.6.5.2 Main outline of the “Dress code” seminar in group 2**

Several goals are suggested. They finally settle on: inviting each other to speak by asking questions. Personal goals are set in silence. The opening question is followed by silent reflection: “Would you consider having school uniforms?” One would not be able to be personal. It would be nice not having to think about what to wear. It would depend on how the uniform looked. It might make it easier for people to get to know each other (sequence 1, after seven minutes). It's intruding on integrity. How is the principal justifying her decision to forbid some types of clothes and jewellery? School has an obligation to foster (sequence 2, after 15 minutes). The facilitator asks if

they would trust a dentist wearing provocative clothes. There are dress codes for adults working, but children shouldn't have to adapt to this (sequence 3, after 30 minutes). The principal can't see the difference between personal clothes and jewellery and those that could be sending wrong signals. But there are judges who, when convicting rapists, have taken into account that the girl had a very short skirt. Who can control students (sequence 4, after 50 minutes)? At the end the goals are evaluated.

### 14.6.5.3 Sequence 1: Cooperating to define the concepts

1 **Mattis:** Agree with Anna a little (1) just because it is part of the personality you (2) by getting to know people sorta if they are (.) shy or if they're kinda (.) somewhat tough type or if they (1) well it was

Mattis here refers to a previous statement made by Anna A, agreeing that there are advantages to wearing a school uniform as one will be judged by personality instead of appearance. When Ruben comments that this is the function of school uniforms (5), the facilitator points out that this, in effect, is the opposite of what Mattis is stating (11). Ruben, however, answers that he has only been stating why there are school uniforms (12):

5 **Ruben:** That's why there are school uniforms because (2) it's (.) eh (3) that is uh so you wouldn't (.) s' everyone should have the same sorta not VALue but (.) yes all shall be the same (.) yahalue ((laugh ter in word)) what didya say?

6 **Anna A:** ((coughs))

7 **Mattis:** M

8 **Johnny:** Because uniforms

9 **Mattis:** That you don't press down others it's sorta like teasing because they don't have the latest brand or stuff like that

10 **Ruben:** Yeah (1) yeah right

11 **Facilitator:** So you have you are in effect saying the opposite to Mattis (1) that eh (.) school uniform? Ruben that is school uniform would smooth out the difference

12 **Ruben:** No what I said was that that's why there (.) are school uniforms

The group spends the following minutes trying to define the concept of school uniforms by noting their advantages and disadvantages. Anna B is making a joke, smiled at by Anna A, who seems to be the chief addressee. Anna A still seems to reject the joke, trying to return to her previous point:

2 **Anna A:** In a way I think it's good to have school uniform 'cause it's easier to (.) you learn to sorta know the person not just by the outside (1) in the beginning s bu' in the same time itsorta ah m it feels a little dull (.) cause (1) an' then I you would have to pay the school uniform yourself (.) then (1) I wouldn't think it was that (.) very good 'cause (.) I'd rather put my money on other things (.)

3 **Anna B:** On other clothes ((laughter in voice))

4 **Anna A:** Yes or su (.) so it's a bit

The participants' glances are as in the group 1 seminar on the speaker or close, on the article or, when the speaker is sitting close to oneself, to the

person sitting opposite<sup>106</sup>. When Anna A, Mattis, and Ruben are addressing one another they tend to look in other directions while speaking, just looking quickly at the person addressed. For example, Anna A is during the utterance above (2) looking at the article, at Mattis, at the article, at her hand, and at the article. The facilitator is looking at the paper and taking notes during the sequence, only increasing her moves while she is talking. The participants' movements increase when Mattis mentions "tough types" in the beginning and when Ruben makes his statement (5); some of the participants look alternately at Ruben and Anna A, as if looking for tensions or reactions. Ruben pauses a lot during the statement (5), as if he is uncertain of how the others are going to react. He also laughs a bit at the end, maybe to make it less "serious" when stating it is to give equal value to all. When the facilitator points out that Ruben is contradicting Mattis, the same sort of tense focus seems (after a glance on the facilitator) to be on Mattis, Ruben, and Anna A.

#### 14.6.5.4 Sequence 2: Ruben taking the facilitating role

In this fairly long sequence, the dialogue is almost entirely carried out by the participants. The facilitator's three utterances, all in the end of the sequence, last in all 13 seconds, and aim at clarifying facts, and clarifying the participants' use of concepts. By pointing out that the principal has communicated her rules both to students and teachers, Ruben (after some disbelief from Jakob and Anna A leads Susanna and Lucy to question the principal's logic:

- 5 **Ruben:** She couldn't find it like that (.) she woke up like in bed an' ah now I'll (.) have a new idea
- 6 **Anna A:** No but wonder if she talks to those who have short (.) short skirts big earrings
- 7 **Jakob:** I think she just talks to those who doesn't wear it
- 8 **Anna A:** Exactly
- 9 **Susanne:** You can't switch schools just because you have piercings nobody cares about it, usually you
- 10 **Anna A:** No
- 11 **Lucy:** Sorta pierced ears is also a kind of piercing
- 12 **Susanne:** Yes
- 13 **Lucy:** So in that case that should also be banned. That is totally strange cause everybody has it the principal probably has it too

Mattis (15), and later Ruben (25), force Anna A (29) with some support of Jakob (28), to identify the different dress codes in different contexts (in school or at a hospital with elderly patients):

- 15 **Mattis:** On the other hand I can understand this new thing that (.) it was at some hospital that (.) banned piercings a:::nd (.) extremely dyed hair an so on just because the middle age was so h high there that the elderly sorta took offense when they (.) were treated by

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106 Ruben's glances were not possible to transcribe due to his position during the sequence.

Ruben takes the facilitating role, asking other participants to clarify their ideas. He is anxious to do this, even raising his voice when Mattis is about to interrupt him. This attracts attention from the participants and the facilitator.

- 25 **Ruben:** Can you explain why that is a completely different thing?
- 26 **Anna A:** This here is a school here everyone looks like sorta
- 27 **Jan:** Yeah but yea
- 28 **Jakob:** Here there's kids
- 29 **Anna A:** Here there's kids it's how you look you can't ban this here (.) In a hospital when there's older people (.) that are (.) and that are sick (1) then (.) then I can understand more that they would not think that (1) if you're poor then (.) an' you're old this here is a completely new thing if there comes a heavy pierced and someone with real really dyed hair that's a bit (?)
- 30 **Ruben:** So it's
- 31 **Mattis:** But on the other hand
- 32 **Ruben:** It's because they're ill that's the difference
- 33 **Anna A:** Yeah
- 34 **Mattis:** Yeah sort of
- 35 **Anna A:** and older
- 36 **Mattis:** just that (.) they are older they are from another generation (.) now we're coming sort of born with it sorta (.) new clothes an' (.) piercing an'so on (.) so
- 37 **Ruben:** Teachers are also from another generation
- 38 **Mattis:** Yeah
- 39 **Anna A:** Yesbut they have chosen to work with youngsters you have to

At the end of the sequence, they seem to have made clear that the difference lies in whether or not one has a choice to be in the context or not and therefore be affronted or not. (The students cannot choose to go to school, but the teachers can choose to work there. The patients cannot choose to be in hospital, but the young people working there can.)

Boys and girls look at both boys and girls speaking<sup>107</sup>. Almost half of the time is spent looking at, and maybe writing or drawing on, the article. When someone new starts talking or when something interesting (or provocative) is said, they look up and keep track of the dialogue for a while and then go back to their papers. In this sequence, the speaker looks at the addressee for a much longer time. Anna A, who is very active during the whole sequence, looks both at the addressee (Mattis and Ruben) but also at a lot of the other participants. In the above passage she starts by looking at Jakob, who has supported her by saying "Here there's kids" (28). She then looks at Ruben who has asked the question, turns to Johnny who is seated opposite to her, back to Ruben, Johnny, Ruben, Johnny, Mattis, Johnny, Mattis, and turns to Ruben again. The facilitator spends most of the time looking at her paper, taking notes. She looks up shortly at Susanne, Ruben, and Anna A at differ-

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107 Ruben's glances were not possible to transcribe due to his position during the sequence, nor were Anna B's from turn 29, Sofia's in turn 42-46 and Jack's in turn 41-46, due to one camera not functioning.

ent times. In the end she looks at the active participants. Jakob glances at the camera twice, when Anna A is criticizing the principal and commenting on heavy piercing. The participants scarcely move, mostly turning their heads towards the speaker or towards the paper at different times. Some utterances seem to have an effect on almost the whole group. Lucy's idea that pierced ears are a kind of piercing seems to make everyone move and look directly at her. When Mattis is mentioning high middle age, stressing the word high (15), he gets direct attention from half of the group. The participants seem to move or react when the words "pierced" or "piercing" are mentioned.

#### 14.6.5.5 Sequence 3: Anna A breaking the rules by pressing her point

In this long sequence, the verbal communication includes several of the participants: Anna A, Anna B, Lucy, Ruben, Johnny, Jakob, and the facilitator and, to some extent, Susanne, Lisa, Mattis, and Jack. About one third of the talk time is used by Anna A, first pressing her earlier point that you cannot forbid students to wear what they like, but here with the argument that children should not have to grow up too fast. She is supported by Johnny. Ruben supports this with the example of three year olds wearing bras:

11 **Ruben:** Nowa nowadays there are juh (1) maybe three year olds that have bra sort of  
12 **Mattis:** Yes  
13 **Johnny:** Yes  
14 **Facilitator:** It might have gone lower in ages  
15 **Anna A:** No:  
16 **Johnny:** No but it's sort of  
17 **Ruben:** Three year olds

Anna A argues that the shops selling these types of clothes are to blame, stressing the word shops (26), and Johnny that media is to blame (26), stressing the word media. The facilitator questions this (27):

26 **Anna A:** It has gone toofar but then it is that the shops that should not produce bra's that seven year olds can wear  
25 **Facilitator:** But they have  
26 **Johnny:** Well, it's media's fault if you look at like telly look at the commercials (.) like the look outside at (.) posters an so on (1) commercial anduh (.) yes everything (1) it'sah (.) affects how young people look at (.) things that is (?)  
27 **Facilitator:** But who has the choice after that (.) media affects you  
28 **Mattis:** ((coughs))  
29 **Johnny:** But listen then most people think (.) most people think that it is right this is the way to look  
30 **Ruben:** But there is  
31 **Anna B:** Then you can't have very good relation to your parents if one sorta (.)

Anna B introduces the role of the parents (31), a point clarified by Jakob:

34 **Jakob:** It's like a litt parents too cause they it's mostly the parents buying (.) clothes for their children whenthey're (.) seven sortof  
35 **Lucy:** M it won'tbe bra it's top whenyou

36 **Jakob:** then they shouldn't bu then they shouldn't have and buy a bra to some seven year old

He is supported by Ruben asking Jack if he would buy a bra for his little daughter, causing some giggle. When the facilitator summarizes that they now are discussing both the role of school and of parents, Anna A strongly stresses that the school has got no right to tell the students what to wear, but that the parents have and that the school should talk to the parents. She starts by talking about seven year olds, but ends up taking an example from ninth graders. She stresses a lot of words in stating this:

45 **Anna A:** Ah school has (.) nothing with (.) if a seven year old wears a bra parents on the other hand have if the school thinks that (.) students come wearing too provocative clothes then you talk then you don't go through the students then you go through the parents and say (.) maybe you should be present when your child buys clothes she's seven years old and wears like -string panties if your walking around in

46 **Susanne:** ((giggles))

47 **Facilitator:** School

48 **Lucy:** Yeahbut like you don't show your g-strings in school are you

The other participants' glances are here alternately turned towards Anna A, objects at the table or in the room, with a few glances at Ruben and most participants looking at Lucy when she is protesting (48)<sup>108</sup>. Ruben seems to find a logical error in Anna A's reasoning when he points out that it would be more effective to tell those of the pupils who have the wrong dress code (56). He calls out: "But wait", almost everyone turns to him. The facilitator seems to try to make him elaborate this point further (61), but is interrupted by Anna A (62):

56 **Ruben:** But wait (.) if you tell the parents (.) instead of eh (.) forbidding everyone for every (1) then you can sortah (.) like say to those students that have

57 **Johnny:** M

58 **Lisa:** No

59 **Facilitator:** Whatdoya gain then why would you tell the students and not the parents

60 **Anna A:** No like

61 **Facilitator:** Whatdoya gain think one step further

62 **Anna A:** I think that the parents the parents do have

63 **Ruben:** Yeah auh (.) whatyou say?

Ruben doesn't seem to understand the facilitator's question (63). Both the facilitator and Ruben drop it in favor of letting Anna A once again stress her point that parents shouldn't allow children to dress how they want. This time the facilitator challenges Anna A by asking her to return to the situation in the text, where students are teenagers. Lucy supports the facilitator by pointing out the difference, leaving Anna A in obvious confusion (73):

69 **Lucy:** Yeahbut like parents don't decide how you dress

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108 Ruben's glances were not possible to transcribe from turn 1-3, 41-4, 46-52, 65, 68-73 due to his position during the sequence.

70 **Anna A:** Nobut no

71 **Facilitator:** No

72 **Lucy:** No I do buy my own clothes

73 **Anna A:** Yeahbutlike(.) I don't think that a principal (.) ((lowers her voice:)) can do things like this  
*/She looks down and shakes her head, picks up her pen/*

74 **Facilitator:** What's she really saying then (1) column two in the lower article (.) school shall be a place where you can work in peace and quiet an' then it says can someone else read (1) last two lines in column two (3) someone

The facilitator chooses to focus on a new question and directs attention to the paper (74). This causes all the participants to refocus on their papers, even though most of them have chosen to do so during Anna A's confusion. In the turn right before, they all looked at the speaker Lucy. Not looking at Anna A directly is probably used as a means to communicate that her actions are not acceptable when pushing her point without admitting that she is changing her views. It might also be a way of letting her alone in an embarrassing moment, dealing with her own confusion. However, participants looked away when she was stressing her point intensely in the earlier sequences too.

Lucy tries to interrupt to inform the boys that what they are talking about are not bras but tops (42), a point that Johnny abruptly dismisses as uninteresting, but that has attracted the group's interest judging from their glances:

42 **Lucy:** No: there are like (1) really small bra's butit's not seven year olds

43 **Johnny:** But what (.) big deal

Lucy later protests that one would not show one's string pants in school. Lucy is corrected for missing the point, this time in a more elaborate way by Ruben, who seems to be pointing out that it is not a question either of bras or string pants, it might as well be low cut shirts or something else.

The participants' glances follow the same pattern as in sequence 2. One exception is Mattis in the first half of the seminar, who looks intensely at the facilitator. When talking, Anna A keeps looking at the addressee changing quickly to other participants round the side of the table she can see. Jakob glances at the camera twice when Johnny is blaming the media, and once when Anna A is criticizing school. Jan looks at it when Ruben and the facilitator discuss why the school should talk to the students. The participants move quite a lot during the sequence, turning their heads towards the speaker or towards the paper but they also move hands, arms and bodies, picking at things on the table. However, the movements seem unsynchronized most of the time, with a few exceptions. During the beginning, when the discussion is quick and the speakers change rapidly, almost everyone moves very quickly, changing direction from one speaker to another. Anna A moves almost all the time and, when stressing words, marking this with movements.



#### 14.6.5.6 Sequence 4: Mattis interrupting the inquiry to reach his goal

Anna A, Ruben, Mattis, and the facilitator are the most verbally active in this sequence. In the beginning the utterances are quick and with a lot of interruptions. Anna A is still pressing her point that it's the parents' responsibility to foster the child but that school also has a role in informing. The quick conversation seems to end in consensus, with Anna A, Anna B, and the facilitator all agreeing, almost simultaneously uttering the same words:

17 **Facilitator:** No yea the parents can choose that as they like

18 **Anna B:** If they are

19 **Anna A:** If they are

20 **Facilitator:** If they are (.) exactly

Ruben has earlier tried to point out that their way of reasoning might fail if parents don't take their responsibility; although, he expresses it vaguely. The point is partly taken up by the facilitator, but is lost when Anna A still presses her earlier point. Mattis, however, tries to elaborate Ruben's point by saying hesitatingly that the parents in this case do not seem to have taken their responsibility in time. Ruben takes this up once more by trying to point out that the principal seems to act with good intentions:

25 **Ruben:** Well I think this principal seems to care about the students still although: (.) a:h (.) although everyone seems to think she is sort (.) really evil but

26 **Facilitator:** M

27 **Mattis:** M

28 **Johnny:** But I think she /*Mattis looks at Lisa*/

29 **Ruben:** look sheso wanna grade s talkin' about grades

30 **Johnny:** I think she is contradicting herself

31 **Mattis:** N what does silent Lisa think /*Looks at Lisa and smiles*/

32 **Ruben:** Really

33 **Lisa:** I think (1) wrong /*She moves her body, leans back, moves her fingers trough her hair*/

Mattis abruptly interrupts this line of reasoning by asking what "silent Lisa" thinks; he is probably contemplating this move earlier when he looks at her. The question seems to surprise and offend Lisa, who reacts negatively both in speech and gestures and later by imitating Mattis' wording but directing them towards Jan, who has been silent during long parts of the seminar:

38 **Lisa:** M bu what does silent ja (.) m Janne (?)

39 **Mattis:** What?

The rest of the participants also seem to react strongly to Mattis' utterance, chiefly by checking out how Lisa will take it by looking at her. The same thing does not happen when Lisa directs the same line towards Jan. Here, the participants all look at Lisa or Mattis and seem to take it as a joke<sup>109</sup>. Jan looks down at his paper and makes no move showing that he has even heard

109 Transcription of Ruben's glances was not reliable from turn 4-13, 38-47 due to his position during the sequence.

it. When the facilitator ends the seminar, the group reacts by joking, laughing, and by gesturing; there seems to be an almost simultaneous move or shake out of the circle, as if a game is over. Anna A, Susanne, Sofia, Ruben, Mattis, Lucy, and Lisa seem to look at most of the speakers intensely during most of the sequence, whereas Anna B, Jakob, and Jan only look up from their papers around the “silent Lisa” passage and Jack only occasionally. Anna A looks at the camera when Mattis emphasizes the word teacher, explaining that school might have an obligation, and Lisa and Lucy look at the camera when Ruben is defending the principal. The facilitator in this sequence looks more intensely at the participants with very few glances at the article or the paper. When Jakob is trying to get into the discussion, she seems to want to encourage him by glances and gestures. She finally checks her watch, almost immediately resulting in her closing the seminar.

The participants move with small movements a lot during the sequence, especially when Mattis is contradicting Anna A's, Anna B's, and the facilitator's reasoning. As earlier, the movements seem unsynchronized most of the time except when the facilitator is announcing that the seminar is over, and when they react on Mattis addressing Lisa.

## 14.6.6 Analyzing the “Dress codes” seminar, group 2

### 14.6.6.1 Seminar steps and intellectual process

The facilitator introduces the different steps in the intended seminar plan in the order that is suggested. The text works well and has been read by the participants before the seminar. The pauses for reflection when setting personal goals and after the opening question are long. The participants dominate the verbal communication, especially in the first half of the seminar. In the second half, the facilitator and the participants share the talking time, the facilitator's speech chiefly consisting of questions posed to different participants.

Selecting sequences from this long seminar was difficult, since new ideas are tested and refuted and new solutions are found almost all the time; for example, from trying to define the concept of dress codes in sequence 1, elaborating the concept, introducing context as an important factor, and also discussing if school is violating the pupil's right to personality in sequence 2. In sequence 3 this idea is made more complex by participants discussing the grown-ups' responsibility to foster and protect children and in sequence 4 finding a solution (parents shall foster but school shall inform, and then refuting it as an overall solution (since some parents might not take their responsibility). The participants tend to mix the different steps during the seminar. They start analyzing both text and statements very early and refer to their own experience throughout the seminar. They seem familiar with the

different steps but also seem free to use them when appropriate. They do not need guidance from the facilitator to carry out the “intellectual virtues”.

#### **14.6.6.2 Dialogic process**

The participants and the facilitator act in accordance with the seminar “rules” throughout the entire seminar in various degrees. There does not seem to be more than two incidents when seminar “rules” are broken (by Anna A in sequence 3 and by Mattis in sequence 4). When the facilitator ends the seminar, the participants by gestures and utterances convey to each other that there is a change; the seminar frame is broken. Ruben takes on the facilitating role in all sequences, obviously trying to find what would refute the statements made. He also presents the idea of every person’s equal value in sequence 1, in other seminars often defended by the facilitator, even if he shows signs of embarrassment or is trying to make the statement less pompous. Anna A is very actively and firmly stressing her views, often using gestures, looks, and stressed words as a way of convincing the others. Her views change during the seminar, but she never comments on this or acknowledges that she is susceptible to impressions. When she is proven wrong (sequence 3), she still presses her point but in obvious confusion. Even though the dialogue sometimes has a tendency towards debate, this doesn’t seem to affect the dialogical relations during the seminar, something confirmed by the participants at the end in evaluation. It seems as if the participants here can cope with using more of a debating technique when analyzing the text and the arguments presented, without other participants taking personal offence. One incident that seems to be interpreted as a rule break is when Mattis asks what silent Lisa” is thinking. Lisa protests by answering reluctantly that she thinks “wrong”. The group, including Mattis, considers this rule break in the evaluation even if it was done for a good purpose.

There are some verbal actions that the participants take to show what is acceptable in the seminar culture in this seminar: the facilitator initiates discussing the rules/goals before and after, and during the seminar when the facilitator reminds them to listen, and Mattis tells Lisa you cannot say anything wrong.

#### **14.6.6.3 “Silent” interaction**

In non-verbal communication, the most important actions seem to be to look at the speaker or close to the speaker or, when the speaker is sitting close to oneself, to the person sitting opposite. There is, however, a development from sequence 1, where the speakers throw quick glances at the addressee, to sequence 2-4 where they look directly at the addressee for longer times. The participants spend a lot of time looking at their articles, writing or drawing, but showing that they are participating by looking up when something they consider important is said or when a new speaker is heard. Not looking at someone is used to show that actions are not accepted. Simultaneous ges-

tures and glances by (almost) the whole group probably amplify the interactional effects and they seem to cooperate silently even if they contradict one another in verbal communication. The two most common positions throughout the seminar are either sitting with the elbow on the table, resting one's cheek or chin in the hand or resting the hands on one's knee under the table. Most of the quiet gestures and movements when writing or drawing on the paper or picking at things on the table seem to lack connection to the group interaction. One way of showing respect for the seminar is not to attract attention by quick or big movements. Higher interest in what is happening in group interaction seems to intensify the gestures and movements. Gestures are, in a few cases, used as an amplifier of what is said (Anna A stressing her point by pointing at the article and at the end "breaking" the seminar circle).

The facilitator is writing or looking down at her paper during most of the seminar, probably trying to promote group interaction. In the last sequence, she is participating more intensely in looks, gestures, and verbal communication. She uses glances and gestures to show her respect or to be supportive in some cases (encouraging Jakob to participate in sequence 4).

The cameras are the focus a couple of times in sequence 2-4, sometimes when the school or the principal is criticized or discussed, or when some other subject seems controversial (piercing in sequence 2).

#### 14.6.7 Comparing the seminars of group F

There is clearly a development over time both in intellectual process and acting in accordance with seminar "rules", especially when comparing the seminar in fifth grade and in seventh grade, group 2. Less time is spent communicating the "rules" before and after, and there are fewer mistakes during the seminar. The facilitator's role is also more passive. This might be a result of there being two different facilitators (Maria in fifth grade and Sandra in seventh grade). To some extent, there has been a positive development comparing fifth grade to seventh grade, group 1; for example, in understanding seminar "rules" without having to repeat them before and after. However, two circumstances disturb the later seminar: The facilitator is prepared for one line of refutation and is not able to readjust. In the next seminar in group 2, she uses the same questions and arguments but is more apt to change views and listen to different lines of argument. Secondly, at least one of the participants in group 1 is playing some other game, probably preventing some participants from taking part in the verbal interaction.

## 14.7 Eight to ninth grade (group G)

### 14.7.1 Eight grade discussing “Jack and the beanstalk”

#### 14.7.1.1 The setting of the “Jack and the beanstalk” seminar

This group of 11 children in the eighth grade has participated in their first seminar a year ago. This is their second seminar. The facilitator is conducting her third seminar. The seminar takes place in a class-room. The participants are seated around a rectangular table. The literature discussed is the fairy tale “Jack and the beanstalk”. The seminar lasts for 34 minutes.

Participants: Levi (m), Jim (m), Jasmin (f), Katinka (f), Sanna (f), Nenne (f), Lukas (m), Alfred (m), Asta (f), Louise (f), Jeanette (f). Facilitator: Jennifer.

#### 14.7.1.2 Main outline of the “Jack and the beanstalk” seminar

They start by discussing different versions of the story. The facilitator then asks the opening question: “Would you climb the beanstalk?” It depends on what one would find there. There might be nice looking guys there? Can one trust the old man in the story? How does a trustworthy person look (sequence 1, after six minutes)? Did Jack do the right thing when trading the cow for the beans? Why does Jack contact the ogre’s wife? Maybe he was too hungry to be able to resist the temptation. Why does Jack trust the man but not the ogre’s wife? Would you have gone inside the ogre’s house? What risks would you take (sequence 2, after 20 minutes)? You have to take the consequences if you take a risk (sequence 3, after 25 minutes). It’s better to risk your own life than someone else’s. It’s worth taking risks in life; otherwise, it would be too boring. The facilitator ends the seminar by joking with the boys that they shouldn’t go climbing any masts.

#### 14.7.1.3 Sequence 1: Jeff flirting with Jasmin and Lukas insulting her

Jeff comments on Jasmin’s assertion that an evil person would answer that he or she is good if asked:

5 **Jasmin:** Then they’d say (.) yes off course I’m kind

6 **Facilitator:** Doesit

7 **Jeff:** You’re not as stupid as you look /*He turns to Jasmin*/

8 **Facilitator, Levi, Jasmin, Alfred, Asta:** ((laughs)) /*Jeff, Lukas, Alfred, Katinka and Louise smile*/

9 **Facilitator:** Jeff /*She leans forward, looking at her paper, smiling*/

His comment is hard to interpret. It’s verbally an insult but also to some extent a compliment, saying that she’s not as stupid as she looks. Jasmin and the others seem to take it as a friendly joke or maybe a kind of flirtation, laughing and smiling. When Lukas quickly comments that Jasmin is “stupid-er”; the joke is over, the others stop smiling, Lukas has broken the rules:

10 **Lukas:** No she’s stupider

11 **Facilitator:** Mm (2)

What is done differently in these two incidents to account for the differing reactions? Jeff looks attentively at Jasmin when she speaks, before he utters his comment. He keeps looking at her, turning to her smiling as he makes the comment. Lukas, on the other hand, keeps looking down at the table the whole time; he even turns his head slightly away from Jasmin when commenting. Jeff's address is direct: "**You're** not as..." while Lukas' is indirect: "...**she's** stupider". The facilitator jokingly tells Jeff off by calling his name laughingly, but she is more prompt in humming at Lukas, making a pause on two seconds, probably to mark the severity. In both cases she looks down at her paper. These incidents are followed by Jasmin elaborating the idea that Jack sells the cow to get food (19). The facilitator tries to refute this by pointing out that there are only five beans (21):

19 **Jasmin:** Nobuthe thinks (.) like (.) if he could eat'em sorta (2) give her his mom the beans so that she could cook'em

20 **Louise:** He thinks

21 **Facilitator:** Five beans /*She spreads her fingers, sticking up five/*

22 **Jasmin:** Yeh ((laughs))

Jeff comments on this ironically: that's "a lot of food", and then points out that the cow gives so much more weight in kilos than even big beans would (30). Jasmin seems to accept this argument without any visible loss of prestige (33). The facilitator comments that Jeff has real knowledge (31):

30 **Jeff:** Yesbut a cow weighs a (.) four hundred kilos slaughtered so that (.) is alright (.)

31 **Facilitator:** Now it's the farmer speaking here an'who knows (laughs)

32 **Jeff:** two thre twothree hundred kilos so that

33 **Jasmin:** Ah okay

Jeff, who up to this point in the seminar has had a scornful or ironic attitude, seems to participate earnestly after being taken seriously here. He even corrects his own somewhat exaggerated data on cows' weight (32). Both Jasmin and Jeff show anxiety in glances and Jasmin also in gestures throughout the sequence. They look alternately at the facilitator and the table but not much at each other. In fact, the whole group seems to look down at the table or their papers more than at the speaker. The girls look at Jasmin for longer times, the boys only with quick glances. Rather, they look at the table in front of the speaker. Levi is trying to catch the facilitator's attention by looking intensely at her at the end of the sequence before he speaks. In almost all seminars there are a few participants who to me seem to be "markers" on how to interpret the "interactive game". Asta is one in this seminar. She is intensely interested in what is said, reacting to it with glances, gestures, and mimicry and she is also trying to carry the inquiry further.

#### 14.7.1.4 Sequence 2: Supporting Lukas to participate

Lukas tells about working up on the roof during scary conditions (2, 3), but adds that it's a job that had to be done (12):

2, 3 **Lukas:** Yes this summer I han hanged in a lashing strap in the roof ridge an' then I screwed the roof rake off (1) it wasscary as hell ((giggles)) /*He nods several times and smiles*/ (1)  
4 **Facilitator:** What (.) now I didn't really follow you you hanged  
5 **Lukas:** A LASHING strap in the roof ridge  
6 **Facilitator:** Yeh (.) yeh  
7 **Lukas:** Like in th ra:ke  
8 **Facilitator:** Aha  
9 **Lukas:** an' then I went down there s so I kept screwing off the roof rakes  
10 **Facilitator:** Okay why did'ya do that then  
11 **Asta:** ((laughs))  
12 **Lukas:** 'Cause (.) they supposed to be taken away ((giggles))

Alfred starts by saying that he never takes any risks like the girls and will continue to say this after this sequence. But when forced to admit that he does take at least minor risks (cross the street when there's a red light, 23) he answers that he can't just stand there waiting (34). His speech here is slow and with a lot of pauses. Lukas and Alfred seem to want to show off a nonchalant macho attitude at the end of their otherwise hesitating utterances (Lukas is stuttering) (12, 34).

22 **Facilitator:** You've never walked when it was red  
23 **Alfred:** Why yes  
24 **Facilitator:** Then there might come a car an' run you over  
25 **Levi:** Buteh  
26 **Alfred:** Yesyes but  
27 **Jasmin:** Yesyeh  
28 **Facilitator:** But that's not so particular I almost said that's not so dangerous  
29 **Alfred:** Noeh  
30 **Facilitator:** Wh why why take 'cause it's a risk anyway (.) why do'ya take such a risk then  
31 **Jasmin:** But listen it's unusual to take such risk  
32 **Alfred:** Yes very  
33 **Facilitator:** crossing when it's red  
34 **Alfred:** yeah but standing there waiting

Looking at their gestures and glances they, as well as the rest of the boys, seem nervous or confused. They are fidgeting and glancing back and forth between the facilitator and the speaker. They also seem to look at the person who is going to talk next, before he or she has spoken as if they want to control the reaction of what has just been said. They especially seem to check up on the facilitator's reactions. Some of the girls move less and are looking more often at the table and their papers. The facilitator, Asta, Jasmin, and Jeff seem, however, to cooperate by quick glances at each other, chiefly focusing on the speaker and by vivid mimicry (laughing, smiling) to support

Lukas and Alfred. These seemingly reluctant speakers might need this intense support to be able to participate in the constructive way they do, in spite of or maybe because of their seemingly macho attitude. Words stressed like ridge or risk causes most participants to look at the speaker.

#### 14.7.1.5 Sequence 3: Jasmin challenging by rejecting responsibility

Here the boys, Jeff and Lukas supported by Alfred, take on a responsible and grown-up attitude, talking about the importance of wearing safety belts:

3 **Lukas:** You (.) have yourself to blame if ya'don' if you haven't safety belt on then f'example  
4 **Facilitator:** Mm  
5 **Lukas:** Eh  
**Jasmin:** You can die ANYway (2)  
7 **Lukas:** Yeahbut (.) it's less ri (.) sorta  
8 **Jeff:** Yeh it's less risk to do that whe when you have the safety belt  
9 **Jasmin:** Buh  
10 **Asta:** ((giggles))  
11 **Jeff:** You wouldn't have whiplash or could pass the worst injuries if you're lucky  
12 **Jasmin:** Buh hello eh

Jasmin argues against this forcefully; she seems to have set out to disagree and maybe provoke. She giggles when she's contradicted and sticks to her point to the end, even when some of the boys react with a paternal attitude:

25 **Jasmin:** ((giggles))  
26 **Lukas:** It doesn't sit please  
27 **Alfred:** PLEASE now  
28 **Jeff:** Are you sitt sittingwith the belt like this on your throat when you collide t (.) your head will fly off ((laughs))

She gets some support from the facilitator, who points out that if you're short, the safety belt might kill you. Jeff corrects this by saying short people have to sit on a cushion. But he does it laughingly and has agreed with Jasmin just before. When Jeff comments that the head will fly off (28), the rest of the group reacts by looking up or looking at Jeff and then at the facilitator (probably to check her reaction). Jasmin is rather passive in the other chosen sequences. Here she moves a lot, and so do Jeff and Alfred (even though he's not talking, probably as support). Lukas doesn't move even though he is speaking nor do the other participants to any great extent. The air is friendly and seems to support wild ideas or guesses like Jasmin's. Jeff and Jasmin sit right beside each other but still turn and smile to each other. It's different from the stumbling at the beginning of the seminar, especially regarding the boys' interaction. They all look attentively at the speakers or at participants sitting opposite (when sitting close to the speaker).



## 14.7.2 Analyzing the “Jack and the beanstalk” seminar

### 14.7.2.1 The seminar steps and intellectual process

The facilitator introduces the different steps in the order that is suggested but there are no goals set or evaluated. No thinking time is given. There is a risk that this text could be too easy to grasp for the participants this age or considered too “childish” but this doesn’t seem to be the case when watching the seminar. The participants have read the story before the seminar. The planning seems well done, and the facilitator seems to adapt the plan to what comes up in the group discussion. She is active in posing counterarguments and points out contradictions in a non-provocative way.

A lot of new ideas are presented and inquired into and there is an intellectual development of ideas over time. The chief insight for participants, however, seems to be that they become aware of that their ideas and attitudes can be questioned and that it sometimes isn’t as easy as it seemed at first. A lot of joy and playfulness is exposed in the group interaction, and as the seminar continues, a safe atmosphere is created and maintained by the facilitator and some of the participants, who seem to actively cooperate by coaching others.

### 14.7.2.2 Dialogic process and “silent” interaction

The participants dominate verbal communication slightly, and they manage to stick to the “rules” most of the time, with some exceptions (Lukas in sequence 1). The group is not used to the seminar protocol, but the facilitator’s active coaching and questioning makes it a Socratic seminar with learners.

The boys seem to take a position as “machos” in the beginning of the seminar while the girls are taking on a more traditionally feminine passive role. The girls state in the beginning that they wouldn’t dare to do anything, and the boys state that they would do almost everything. At the end this has changed. Jasmin in sequence 3 is the daredevil and the boys are taking on a “sensible”, “grown-up” attitude. The roles seem to have changed during the seminar when the participants gradually understand its function and terms. This might be one of the explanations to the confusion of the boys in sequence 2. They are experiencing a “Socratic perplexity”, not as to ideas, but as to interaction.

The most common posture in some of the other seminar groups: the elbow on the table and cheeks in hands is not at all common in this group. Instead they tend to keep their hands under the table a lot. The body language is overall much less outspoken in this group than in the other groups.

### 14.7.3 Ninth grade discussing “Sandor/Ida”

#### 14.7.3.1 The setting of the “Sandor/Ida” seminar

This group of ten youngsters in ninth grade has participated in seminars on a regular basis for nine months. The facilitator has conducted seminars for about the same period. The seminar takes place in a class-room. The door is closed. The participants are seated around a rectangular table. The literature discussed is a chapter in a book for teenagers “Sandor/Ida” The seminar lasts for 26 minutes.

Participants: Erin (f), Malin (f), Linn (f), Katinka (f), Alfred (m), Jeff (m), Tony (m), Lukas (m), Ann (f), Janet (f). Facilitator: Jennifer.

#### 14.7.3.2 Main outline of the “Sandor/Ida” seminar

Has someone read the book? What happens in the first page? They answer hesitatingly, and the pace is slow. Did the bus driver do the right thing when he stopped the bus? No he didn't, the time was out. If you would have kicked the disturbing boys out, would you be better or worse than them? How did the other passengers react (sequence 1, after three minutes)? Even if you would want to do something it would feel embarrassing. Would you do something if you were a little old lady (sequence 2, after ten minutes)? Why does Babak cause trouble? He might have a violent father. What could Sandor do to get out of trouble? What makes a person a bully? He may be nervous, jealous, or he might have been doing it since he was young. Would Babak's friend risk anything if he told Babak off? What would you do if Lukas jumped on someone (sequence 3, after 34 minutes)? The seminar ends, and Alfred and the facilitator turn off the cameras.

#### 14.7.3.3 Sequence 1: Challenging by not answering

Alfred is at first very determined that he would have done nothing if it was a fifty year old lady being harassed on a bus (2). Later on, he cannot explain why there is a difference if someone is younger (4):

2 **Alfred:** Yeh (.) fifty year ol' ladies I dunno if (1) if (.) yeah (.) but if they had been younger then other then then I would have done it

3 **Facilitator:** Why does it matter how old they were an' (.) like that

4 **Alfred:** I don't know

Lukas, who has been very active right before this sequence, is still moving very much, looking alternately at the facilitator and Alfred. He seems to have something to say, but he is ignored by the facilitator. Instead, she turns to Ann. At least some in the group seem to take Alfred's second answer that he doesn't know as a challenge or a break (4). They either turn to the facilitator or to Alfred to check their reactions. Alfred gives no signs of trying to provoke. He seems to be thinking, pausing, and looking at the facilitator and the table alternately. Lukas seems to be interpreting it as insecurity: he sup-

ports Alfred, and does not speak his own mind even though he seems to be anxious to do so during the rest of the time. The girls are silent and holding their hands under the table during the sequence.

#### 14.7.3.4 Sequence 2: Inquiring intellectually

In this sequence Lukas gives a long comment on what the obligations of the passengers really are. He makes a distinct difference between an obligation by law and a moral obligation (13). He talks almost undisturbed during this fairly long time, with short comments from the facilitator. They both exclaim “morally” almost simultaneously (19, 20):

13 **Lukas:** so so (.) yeh you can't (.) th if they would have asked (.) if it would become something legal  
you couldn't charge them cause they didn't do anything  
14 **Facilitator:** No you mean like purely legally  
15 **Lukas:** M  
16 **Facilitator:** No (.) okay  
17 **Lukas:** So really (1) by the law they haven't done anything wrong  
18 **Facilitator:** No but  
19 **Lukas:** Morally /*He nods*/  
20 **Facilitator:** Morally  
21 **Lukas:** Morally then it would be (1) it would be alitt much easier for him (.) what's hisname (.)

Lukas has some difficulty in expressing his views, probably from trying to formulate new (and complex) thoughts. The communication seems to run between the facilitator and Lukas, and most of the participants look at one of them. Their gestures are few except for Jeff, who seems anxious and disinterested. The facilitator amplifies her meaning by pointing at and patting the text, a silent textual reference.

#### 14.7.3.5 Sequence 3: The facilitator provoking the participants

Alfred starts by answering that he would try to stop the bullying if he was a witness. The facilitator doesn't seem to accept this as she presses him to think further by Lukas as an example of a troublemaker (3, 5):

3 **Facilitator:** M (1) okay now we say like this now (.) like (.) it's Alfred an' Lukas (.) Alfred an' Lukas  
you're in town (1)  
4 **Alfred:** M  
5 **Facilitator:** an' then (.) you meet some (.) some few you d an' like ju' Lukas jumps on them and say  
(in an affected voice:)) A:H you bloody mongrels U:H like that (.) ((in a normal voice:)) yeah what  
would you do then  
6, 7 **Malin:** ((snuffles)) (2)  
8 **Alfred:** No bu' (1) I think I'd walk away

She does this with an aggressive approach, raising her voice, swearing when imitating the supposed “Lukas” (5). Her intention seems to be to provoke Alfred into answering more truthfully or maybe to participate more vigorously. Most of the others react by looking intensely either at the facilitator

or Alfred. Some of them smile and there seems to be some confusion whether or not to take this as a joke. On the whole, the participants as well as the facilitator seem unsure during the entire sequence. Overall, there are many and long pauses, Lukas is stuttering, the facilitator is talking low and inarticulately from time to time, and Alfred is talking with long pauses within the sentences, Tony is picking with his paper, fidgeting about, and so is Malin to some extent. It's hard to tell if it's because of discomfort or because they are all trying to reflect hard. The rest of the girls are very quiet and don't seem to move very much at all. They are following the conversation intensely, judging from where they look. The facilitator is breaking the rules of the seminar by taking Lukas as a personal example, but both Alfred and Lukas seem to accept this. Alfred changes his answer and now says that he would just walk away (8). He also alters the example from being about Lukas to being about "whoever", thereby restoring the safe seminar circle:

11 **Facilitator:** Not say anything to Lukas just

12 **Alfred:** would just go (.) 'cause then I think Lukas would stop or whoever would stop

Tony contributes by pointing out the importance of group pressure. Lukas elaborates on this further, and refers to the text by pointing at it (27). He also seems to want to dissociate from the bully label of the "Lukas" in the facilitator's example by stating that it's really cheap to support the bully (32, 34):

27 **Lukas:** A per a person alone isn't that strong as (.) they stand alone in front of you and the others are sort of (.) an' n they other the others (.) so the rest aren aren't on the bully's side (.)

28 **Facilitator:** M

29 30 **Lukas:** then they th then they can turn instantly and the bully becomes the bullied (1)

31 **Facilitator:** M (2) so the bully have more self (.) confidence on you can say

32 **Lukas:** Yeh it's sorta the the worst are those who hang on to the bully

33 **Facilitator:** M /She nods/ (1)

34 **Lukas:** That's like as cheap as ever /He shakes his head/

If the facilitator is trying to provoke the boys to get them out of their "macho" game, she seems to succeed, but she is taking a severe risk. She might be relying on her knowledge of how they normally react. However, she is watching the boy who is speaking intensely as if she wants to check on their state of mind. The speakers seem to be supported by this; all look intensely at the facilitator. Right after Alfred has answered the provocation, she quickly turns to Lukas and then to the girls at her left: Malin, Linn, and Erin, as if looking for their support and then to Tony, who starts talking.

## 14.7.4 Analyzing the "Sandor/Ida" seminar

### 14.7.4.1 Seminar steps and intellectual process

The facilitator introduces the different steps in the intended seminar plan fairly in the order that is suggested. No goals are set or evaluated.

Even though this seminar tends to circle around value questions, the seminar doesn't consist solely of the participants stating their own points of view and it does offer intellectual challenges. The participants dominate the verbal communication. Girls and boys tend to participate about the same amount of time if you look at the entire seminar (the chosen sequences expose boys talking). The facilitator challenges the boys to a much larger extent than she does the girls. The participants do not seem to need guidance from the facilitator to carry out the "intellectual virtues"; they show intellectual capability in their reasoning (cf. Alfred's reasoning developing from not being able to articulate his view in sequence 1 but with help doing so in sequence 3, or Lukas making a difference between a juridical and an ethical standpoint).

#### **14.7.4.2 Dialogic process and "silent" interaction**

They don't seem unsure of the seminar "rules" (cf. Alfred making the seminar circle safe again in sequence 3). There is, however, some other kind of interaction going on beneath the official one, something the facilitator seems to try to challenge and is prepared to take some risks to address. The participants seem to be locked in some sort of gender game. There isn't any direct verbal interaction between boys and girls. They all participate, but this seems to be done as two parallel interlocutions, where each gender listens to the other but doesn't comment or interact directly and where the facilitator takes an active (and necessary) role as "switchboard" between the two. As in the first seminar of this group, the body language is less outspoken than in the other groups, and they tend to keep their hands under the table.

#### **14.7.5 Comparing the seminars of group G**

There is some progress comparing the seminar in eighth grade and the one in ninth grade as to knowledge and understanding of the intellectual and dialogical virtues, but on the other hand the later seminar interaction seems to be more locked into a gender game. In the first seminar, the boys and girls communicate. In the later seminar, the boys and the girls seem to interact in parallel interlocutions. The facilitator also seems locked in this underlying culture, trying to challenge it, succeeding to some extent, but not entirely. As a whole, this group seems more cautious than the others. Are they less used to critical and analytical reasoning and to questioning their own ideas? They haven't participated in seminars recurrently.

# 15 Seminar Study Interpretations and Conclusions

Existence will not disclose its secrets if we put a revolver to the forehead and shout "hands up!" It will only do so if we resolutely approach it with sympathy and a desire to understand.

Alf Ahlberg<sup>110</sup>

The results from the seven groups show different events, actions, and strategies taken by the facilitators and the participants to either promote the seminar or not. It is by no means a picture of what will always occur in seminars, or everything that occurred in these seminars, but it does give an insight into, and examples from, seminar interactions. No differences in results seemed to originate from the school where the films were recorded. There were some group-related differences described in the text. I will reflect on the results in six themes: 1.) learning the game, 2.) teaching the game, 3.) rule breaking, 4.) playing the game, 5.) intellectual habits, and 6.) distribution of power. To some extent the results reflect and elaborate on, or differ from findings and theories related in "Previous Research and Theoretical Tools for Analysis", and this is noted in the text with cf. and the reference: (cf. Billings 1999). Comments from other areas of research are sometimes used to interpret or enlighten the findings made in this study, and this is noted as a reference: (Pramling, Asplund Carlsson et al. 1993). The findings are illustrated with examples from seminars or groups and this is noted in the text with a c. and the title of the seminar or the name of the group: (c. Diabolo baby, sequence 1). At the end of each section is a summary of the findings and conclusions of that theme.

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110 Ahlberg (1986), p. 192 (author's translation): "Tillvaron yppar icke sina hemligheter, om man sätter revolvern för pannan och ropar "upp med händerna!". Den gör det blott om man beslutsamt nalkas den med sympati och vilja att förstå."

## 15.1 Learning the game

### 15.1.1 Learning the game over time

Intellectually and dialogically the skills of the participants and the facilitators developed over time in the seminars. It was not a completely linear process, and it differed on an individual basis and depended on the interaction and culture of the group. The two seminars of group C, filmed in second and fourth grade, are examples of this development. Not so surprisingly, new participants adapted quickly to the seminar protocol when they participated for the first time in a skilled group (c. "Portrait"); and groups facilitated by a skilled facilitator had an advantage when learning the game (c. group F).

The early seminars tended to focus on understanding what the seminar is about (c. "Jack and the beanstalk", group C). There was a lot of hesitation while working out what was expected, and there was confusion when participants realized that a multitude of ideas could be exposed. The confusion often led to caution and to trying to protect oneself, similar to what a participant did to avoid being abused (taking on an attitude, pretending to make a joke, using an affected voice, and looking down). The ideas were not so clearly defined, and language and meaning were imprecise and sometimes unintelligible. The intellectual process was in a sense individual and relativistic; participants stated their own mind, and others accepted it. They might get ideas from the other participants' statements or from the facilitator's questions, but these were not outspoken or consciously connected. The dialogue tended to be "conversation" rather than "inquiry". The chief focus here was that there can be different ideas, and that these might be questioned and that this was a different "game" than what normally takes place in school or in everyday conversation. The rules of this game were understood to some extent, and when they were broken it was because participants/facilitators didn't understand them fully. The same pattern could be observed when a newcomer entered a more skilled seminar circle. He or she acted more cautiously than the other participants; he or she showed signs of being upset when the seminar game was different from "classroom context", and the speech was less articulate (c. Martin in "Pippi Longstocking").

After experience, the group interaction revealed other patterns (c. "All together"). The participants' language and ability to express their ideas were generally better when compared to earlier seminars. Ideas were presented and sometimes refuted, but the participants were less concerned with the intellectual process and seemed to focus almost entirely on the rules of the game. The rules were understood by most participants, but they were tested.

The experienced and functioning seminar group focused almost entirely on the intellectual content of the seminar, working together to come to a better understanding as a group and as individuals (c. "Portrait"). This was

accomplished by using the tools of the Socratic dialogue: inquiring, defining, refuting, and trying new ideas. The participants mastered the rules, and the circle was quickly made safer for contradiction and even for using debating techniques when exploring ideas.

### 15.1.2 Learning the game at different ages

The younger children (five to six years old, group A, B) didn't seem to have any problems learning the game, but they seemed to go about it differently than the older students. The youngest were less inclined to communicate for long with their fellow participants; and if they did, they were more likely to get into debate or quarrel when having different opinions. They listened to and picked up other's ideas, but seldom referred to, or acknowledged that they did. They seemed more in need of direct guidance from the facilitator. This might be explained by the actions of the two facilitators guiding them (Anna in E, and Charlotte in B, C). They tended to be more active throughout the entire seminar, than they or other facilitators were when facilitating older students. Learners of all ages were dependent on the facilitator as a role model, but the younger children were focused (and more dependent) on the facilitator for a longer time while learning. When direct contact was denied (the facilitator looking away to promote group interaction or the facilitator not giving direct affirmation), they tended to focus on her notes and what she was writing to understand what was considered important in seminar (c. "Pippi Longstocking, sequence 3). Younger children learning through close interaction with a more knowledgeable "master" (like a parent) has been the object of other studies (Cazden 2001, Rogoff 1990, Säljö 2000). In the primary phase of socialization, the child will learn through apprenticeship, by close interaction with people they have a close emotional relation to. This also seems to be the case when learning ethics (Dahlin 2004).

This study shows that learning to participate in seminars seemed to need close apprenticeship learning for all ages, but that the older participants learned more quickly to act independently of the facilitator in non-challenging situations. The older students made quicker use of their fellow participants as role models or as interactive partners (c. "Jack and the beanstalk" in D, sequence 4). On the other hand, the seminars with younger children also displayed cooperation and interaction between the participants, carried out verbally and "silently". Sometimes the interaction was productive, and sometimes there were conflicts resulting in quarrels that had to be mediated by the facilitator (c. "Pippi Longstocking"). Previous research shows that children communicating in pairs or groups seem to think more effectively, as long as the participating children have different experiences (Williams 2001). Their development zones will overlap, as multiple zones of development, and thus promote individual development (Brown 1994, Forman 1989, Kumpulainen, Mutanen 1999). The key factor in peer learning does not seem



to be age or competence, but differences in experience combined with mutual respect, even when disagreeing (Schilter Golay, Perret et al. 1999, Underwood, Underwood 1999, Williams 2001).

Looking at the intellectual abilities in the analyzed seminars, there was surprisingly little difference between the results from seminars with younger or older participants. Regardless of age, the learner had problems expressing ideas, finding the words, and making use of language to support his or her thoughts. Naturally, vocabulary grew with age. The younger participants tended to use gestures to support their speech to a higher extent. The older participants grasped larger areas of experiences when giving examples, or when supporting their views. Learners of all ages tended not to support their statements and, from time to time, produced more improbable ideas or answers. Examples of this are Jon in second grade in the seminar on “Jack and the beanstalk”, arguing that the beans cooperate in thickness in some unexplained way; and Jasmin in eighth grade discussing the same text and arguing that Jack sells the cow to get the five beans to eat. The experienced participants were often capable of arguing with greater intellectual accuracy. An example of this is the fourth graders in the “Rode and Rode” seminar and the seventh graders in the “Dress codes” seminar, group 2. It seems as if the younger children in this study were able to think intellectually, even if they might lack the vocabulary to express their ideas, or the experience of the older participants.

Peter Gärdenfors (2000) argues that the child around four years of age is mature enough to make assumptions on what other people are aware of. Deanna Kuhn (1991) found some developmental changes in argumentative skills in the early years before adolescence (but none from adolescence and on). Training and experience in the area discussed did not automatically lead to better argumentative skills, but training in thinking and argumentation seemed to make a difference (Kuhn 1991). Discussion and inquiry into texts and art works are important when developing the thinking skills of preschool children (Pramling, Asplund Carlsson et al. 1993). The participants in my study had, when filmed in the later seminars, participated in seminars from eight months to two and a half years. They had practiced the seminar game and their intellectual skills regularly during this time, using texts and art works. They were five years and older, and seemed to be able to philosophize and improve from practice. There were individual differences within the age groups and/or within the actual seminar groups. Some of the participants seemed to benefit more quickly, and some more slowly, from the practice. The discussion in fourth grade on “Rode and Rode” displays differences in understanding within an age/actual group. However, it is not possible to tell from these results if the individual differences are bigger than those existing between age/actual groups. The material presented is too narrow, since looking at individual participants hasn't been the focus of the study.

### 15.1.3 Summary and conclusions from learning the game

The intellectual and dialogical skills of participants developed over time in the seminars. It was not a linear process; it differed on an individual basis, depending on the interaction of the group and the skill of the facilitator. The early seminars tended to focus on understanding what the seminar was about. After gaining some experience, the group was less concerned with the intellectual process and seemed to focus almost entirely on the rules of the game. The experienced and functioning seminar group focused almost entirely on the intellectual content of the seminar.

Table 10. *Participant differences from age and experience in seminar practice*

	<i>Age differences</i>		<i>Experience differences</i>	
	<i>Young participants</i>	<i>Older participants</i>	<i>Learners</i>	<i>Skilled</i>
<b>Facilitator's role</b>	More, and for a longer time, dependent on the facilitator as a role-model. The facilitator is more actively supporting.	Dependent on the facilitator as role-model a short time in the beginning of learning.	Dependent on the facilitator as a role-model. Participants learn quicker from skilled facilitators; and unskilled participants learn quicker in skilled groups.	Fellow participants are looked upon as role-models, and actions are autonomous of the facilitator in non-challenging situations.
<b>Intellectual progress</b>	Ideas are picked up from others but references are seldom made.	Larger areas of experience are used when giving examples or when supporting views.	The process is individual and relativistic; the ideas are not so clearly defined and not consciously connected to other ideas. Statements are not supported, and improbable ideas or answers are presented.	Intellectual tools like inquiring, defining, refuting, and trying new ideas, are used collaboratively. Arguing is done with greater intellectual adequacy, and statements are often supported.
<b>Dialogic progress</b>	Communication is mostly done with the facilitator, and debate or quarrel is more common when communicating with other participants.		The dialogue tends to be "conversation". Focus on the game and it's "rules".	The dialogue tends to be "inquiry". The rules are mastered and the circle is quickly made safe for contradicting.
<b>Language progress</b>	Sometimes lack of vocabulary to express ideas. Gestures are used more extensively.	More elaborate vocabulary. Less use of gestures.	Language (and meaning) is imprecise, hesitant, and sometimes unintelligible.	Language and ability to express ideas are generally adequate.

A comprehensive view of the results in Table 10 shows that there were age differences when it comes to the use of gestures, language, experience, and ability to interact with the group, but there were even more differences between inexperienced learners of all ages and more skilled participants. The younger children (five to six years old) were more dependent on a close interaction with the adult facilitator, but participants of all ages were able to philosophize and improve this from practice.

## 15.2 Teaching the game

The facilitators taught the seminar game by more or less effective strategies. These strategies were sometimes recurrent in several seminars and sometimes only represented once or a couple of times. The strategies were sometimes intentional and sometimes used without deliberate intention, even accidentally. Whether used intentionally or not, they all had certain effects in interaction. All the facilitators went through a developmental process, learning the game as they were teaching seminar practice to participants. In the first filmed seminars, some facilitators were holding their first seminar (c. Margit in “The hunchback of Notre Dame”) and others had had seminar practice for one and a half years (c. Anna in “Pippi Longstocking”) This affected their way of teaching the game. It’s also reasonable to think that they modified their strategies for different groups, taking the groups’ culture or individual needs into account (c. Charlotte in group B and C).

### 15.2.1 Creating a safe seminar circle

Most facilitators actively promoted a safe seminar circle by supporting insecure participants: stuttering and logically unclear statements were repeated (and clarified), or the participant was asked to repeat or to clarify. In the more skilled groups, clarifications were accomplished by the facilitator or another participant questioning the speaker, pressing him or her to clarify the idea or the point of view. Facilitators seemed to choose when to ask for clarifications so as not to discourage beginners (c. “Jack and the beanstalk”, group C). When the facilitator was asking for ideas, or when someone was about to present new ideas in a group of beginners, she showed openness to different answers with contradictory gestures/mimics: smiling and frowning, nodding, and shaking her head on the same occasion (c. “Pippi Longstocking”, sequence 3). The younger participants were supported with more body language.

When the groups had got some experience, the facilitator spent a long time on goal-setting and evaluating as a way to promote the safe circle, although sometimes at the expense of the intellectual process (c. “Rode and Rode”). Allowing a friendly and open atmosphere with jokes and laughter seemed productive as long as the jokes concerned the topic being discussed or the seminar procedures. Allowing the group to play around with seminar procedures and rules was productive as long as it didn’t take over the seminar (c. “Rode and Rode” and “Who will comfort Toffle?”).

The less experienced facilitator tended sometimes to “over-guard” the circle, thereby hindering the intellectual inquiry. Cutting off provocative statements or avoiding refutation seemed less effective in this sense (c. “The dandelion and the apple twig”). However, when the facilitator did not actively guard the safety of the circle by allowing abuse, overly repetitive com-

ments, and obvious disturbances the culture of the seminar and the future seminars were at risk (c. group D).

### 15.2.2 Creating a community of inquiry

Teachers can use certain strategies to increase students' higher order thinking, such as posing higher order questions, using language that refers to thinking processes, and allowing time to think after a question is posed ((Resnick, Williams Hall 1998, Ritchart 2002, Wolf, Crosson et al. 2006). Student participation and concentration increase when teachers extend time between posing a question and asking students to answer it (Lindström 1995, Swift, Gooding 1983).

Some facilitators in this study created a "community of inquiry" but not all, especially not in the early seminars. When the culture of inquiry was accomplished, visible strategies were used by the facilitator, including referring back to earlier ideas, asking for clarifications, repeating (or asking for repetition of) vital ideas, challenging by asking for other solutions, presenting an opposing idea, or pointing out the differences between different ideas. The facilitator's active coaching and questioning made up for learners' lack of knowledge and skill (c. "Jack and the beanstalk", group G). Most facilitators balanced their active coaching of learners by giving all individuals time to think, allowing thinking pauses, and also by encouraging group interaction by looking away (at the note pad or the text). In the more skilled groups, the facilitators were less active and the facilitating role was often spontaneously taken over by one or some of the participants, using the means exhibited by the facilitator in the earlier seminars (c. Ruben in "Dress code" group 2). In the skilled group, the facilitator's utterances mainly concerned asking for clarifications. Facilitators also seemed to wait longer before correcting when the group was skilled.

It's hard to say why all the facilitators did not actively promote a community of inquiry, since this is obviously considered vital to the Socratic seminar. It might have been that group or individual considerations were made, or considerations related to the age of the participants (c. Charlotte's actions in group B and C). Letting everyone's opinion be heard and talking about dilemmas might have been considered the same as having a common classroom discussion or teaching good ethics (c. "The hunchback of Notre Dame"). The more experienced facilitators seemed to manage to establish the safe circle while promoting a community of inquiry, even with young children.

### 15.2.3 Contextual factors

There were some strategies that contributed to the preconditions of the seminar. The furnishing had some impact in the studied seminars (cf. Haroutu-

nian-Gordon 1991, Robinsso 2006). When the seminar was set in a circle, a square, or rectangle, where all had eye contact with and could hear each other, the seminar interaction worked smoothly. In both seminars in group D, the furnishing was an obstacle to the seminar productivity. However, furnishing was not the sole factor making the seminar less productive: group E in their second seminar “Portrait” managed to have a productive seminar with 19 participants over a long table, with the only seeming disadvantage that they complained of not hearing each other well enough. The group sizes in the studied seminars ranged from six participants (five-year-olds) to 19 (sixth grade) and the median- and mean size was 11. Group size seemed to have no obvious effect on results of this study, but it might have been a factor, if the groups had varied more: Haroutunian-Gordon (1991) and Robinson (2006) found in their studies that group size had effects on the quality.

The rooms in the filmed seminars were closed, and there were few interruptions from the outside. When the rooms were open to the outside, seminar participants seemed to feel threatened. This was most obvious when a delicate topic was discussed (c. “Diabolo baby”). The circle was safer when the participants knew who was listening.

The older the participants were, the longer the seminars lasted. The longest seminar was about an hour (“Portrait”). The younger children seemed to have trouble sitting upright and concentrating for more than 20 minutes. An interesting topic or text made it possible to continue the discussion for a longer time, maybe in yet another seminar (c. “Let the ice bears dance”). A text or a topic of little interest or challenge to the group caused the facilitator to end the seminar sooner, and often led to disturbances from participants if it wasn’t ended (c. “All together”, “The dandelion and the apple twig”).

#### 15.2.4 Tricks of the trade

The facilitator continuously balanced between teaching the group the seminar game and fulfilling the role as facilitator. In this way, facilitating seminars with young children was a very complex task. The facilitator was balancing between actively serving as a role model, supporting the apprenticeship learning, and letting the group interact on their own to find meaning without getting into non-productive conflicts (the different strategies used by facilitators Anna in group A and Charlotte in group B and C). It was a hard task which sometimes succeeded and sometimes not. The most challenging situation seemed to occur when the individuals in the group had learned the rules well enough to question them. The facilitator then was faced with the double task of explaining and acknowledging the rules and correcting misbehavior, while at the same time showing the participants that the rules were not to be discussed during seminar (c. “Let the ice bears dance”). The dilemma was accentuated when the facilitator herself was learning. Facilitators too passed through periods of testing how to handle the rules by over-

stressing them (for example not allowing textual analysis before everyone has answered the opening question in “Let the ice bears dance”), or by resorting to the “classroom context” (for example not listening to important ideas when they are presented by someone who is not acting properly in “The dandelion and the rose twig”), (cf. Billings, Fitzgerald 2002). Some facilitators seemed unsure of how to handle rule breaking. They hesitated to stop the seminar, even to point out obvious abuse (c. group D).

There was a range of more or less conscious “tricks” exposed for handling corrections or challenging situations and still keep to the facilitator’s role: allowing the “wrong” step to be discussed some time before returning to the right step, correcting/teaching by changing wording, teaching an individual or group by questioning someone else, repeating the question to show one is not satisfied with the answer, and not responding to the wrong type of behavior. The facilitators of the groups where the seminars were most successfully “Socratic” at the end (group E and F), used more time teaching the rules outside the seminar through goal setting/evaluating, but also stopped the seminar to comment on rule-breaking or misunderstandings within the seminar when they found it necessary.

## 15.2.5 Summary and conclusions from teaching the game

Table 11. *Facilitators’ more or less productive strategies*

	<i>Less productive</i>	<i>More productive</i>
Safe seminar circle and a community of inquiry	Safe circle is “over-guarded” at the expense of intellectual inquiry, or not guarded at all.	Safe circle and a community of inquiry are created simultaneously by learning the rules before and after the seminar, and by commenting on rule-breaking when necessary.
Open atmosphere	Not promoting a playful atmosphere, or allowing any kinds of jokes and rule breaking.	Promoting a playful atmosphere, allowing jokes, laughter and playing around with seminar procedures, as long as it concerns the seminar and doesn’t take over.
Teaching the game or facilitating	Focusing on teaching and controlling the game without allowing or promoting participants to communicate, or by overstressing the rules.	Balancing between teaching the game and fulfilling the role as facilitator: being an active role model and letting the group interact freely. Handling corrections or challenging situations, keeping to the facilitator’s role.
Strategies with learners	Avoiding difficulties, and controversies.	Supporting speech and reasoning by repeating, asking for clarifications, by gestures/mimics, by allowing thinking pauses, and by supporting group interaction.
Strategies with skilled participants	Continuing to control the group interaction by active participation.	Allowing participants to take the facilitating role by waiting to correct, and only participate to ask for clarifications when needed.
<b>Contextual factors</b>	Furnishing so that some don’t have eye contact. Allowing disturbances from outside the room. Choosing a non-challenging text.	Furnishing so that everyone has eye contact, and in a closed room. Choosing a challenging text.

In the study, the facilitators were learning the game at the same time as teaching it. This affected their teaching. Some more or less effective strategies were used, the less effective were often used when the facilitator was still learning (see table 11).

## 15.3 Rule breaking

Rule breakings were critical incidents in the seminar. The participants' attention heightened after a rule was broken. Rule breaking in the analyzed seminars served different functions when learning the game. Rule breaking might have been deliberate or not, it always had certain effects on the interaction.

### 15.3.1 Not understanding the rules

In the earlier seminars, rule breaking almost entirely seemed to be the result of not understanding the rules of the game. The game was sometimes mistaken for being the "classroom game", resulting in errors like trying to please the facilitator with what one believed was the expected answer and presenting monologues directed to the facilitator and not taking any notice of fellow participants' reactions (c. "The hunchback of Notre Dame"). When the facilitator reacted contradictory to expectation (challenged, accepted divergent answers, and not accepted any kind of answer), beginners showed frustration or confusion in gestures, glances, and in speech. An example of this is sequence 3 in "Pippi Longstocking", where the girls turn to the facilitator's notes for guidance and get quiet when the facilitator changes from accepting their "classroom" correct answers without questioning, to pose more exploring questions. Inexperienced facilitators had trouble with how to act when participants acted as they normally would in an ordinary classroom interaction, or when the normal "classroom rules" were challenged or broken. They tended to use silent means to discipline behavior, probably used in their ordinary classroom practice: not giving the question to the misbehavior when he or she wants it, or giving it to him or her when he or she does not want it (c. "All together", sequence 2). Participant learners had problems with silent pauses; they invited rule breaking or mere chatting. When participants were contradicting, or not answering the facilitator, and making provocative statements (related to the text), beginners reacted as if it was a (potential) break, looking at the facilitator for how to interpret the situation (c. "Santor/Ida", sequence 1).

In the beginning of learning the seminar culture, one thing that led to confusion was that all views were not accepted without questioning. On the other hand, interrupting, pressing one's own line, making one's own line heard at others' expense, and inviting to "contests" did at length sometimes result in quarrel. Most participants hadn't yet grasped that they were to work

together in the refutation process, without individuals “winning”. When proven wrong they reacted with embarrassment, by defending their earlier view, or by denying having changed their mind. As Niclas points out in “Let the ice bears dance”, one might fail to listen to others, being afraid that some other participant might “steal” one’s idea. Breaking the rules at this point served a positive purpose in learning the game. It shed light on the implicit rules taken for granted (cf. Dascal 1985, cf. Maracondes de Souza Filho, Danilo 1985).

### 15.3.2 Testing the rules and using them for own purposes

When the rules were beginning to be understood, another kind of rule breaking appeared. Rules were now broken either to test the seminar, or the facilitator’s ability to control it, or they were broken for some personal reasons. Testing the game and the facilitator often occurred when the facilitator had broken the rules or changed the interactional game to some other game than a “Socratic” one (looking for a specific answer when asking, directly controlling the interaction by interrupting, not accepting new ideas, and not letting misbehavers speak). In some cases, a participant restored the seminar by returning to seminar protocol (c. Anita in “All together”, sequence 3), and sometimes this was done by the facilitator (c. “Pippi Longstocking”, sequence 1). There were other types of protests, directed towards the facilitator and her decisions. The attitude towards the subject matter might cause rule breaking if the question or problem was considered having a too easy answer. The five-year-old participants in “All together” seemed to object when interrupted in some activity they considered more important.

There were disturbances and rule breaks that seemed to be done as a provocation, a way to get noticed: by making noises, hitting things, and shouting out. This occurred after the disturber, or his or her idea had been ignored, after the facilitator had risked the seminar as above, or if the participant was unable to contribute (c. Rufus in “Rode and Rode”). The person acted as an outsider, not participating in the official game but deliberately and openly provoking it, making him or her seen by the others. Once having taken this role it was hard to change during the rest of seminar (c. Christian in “Ronny and Julia”). Open disturbances made the seminar unsafe judging from the other participants’ gestures and glances, and their low, hesitant, inconsistent speech. Fewer ideas were presented, especially if the rule breaking was not corrected. It seemed vital to the seminar outcome that the participants considered the seminar circle safe.

Some of the rule breaking was a result of participants acting as sub-groups or pairs to meet some mutual goal. Interlocutors in other types of conversations might act as a team, closely cooperating to present some sort of mutual meaning to the other participants (Goffman 1959). These teams act closely, performing as a unit with mutual solidarity, sharing and keeping



mutual secrets. In this study, the participants teamed up to 1.) signal mutual friendship, 2.) to feel comfort or support, 3.) to be strong, and 4.) to confront or fight a participant or another sub-group. This was done silently by looking at one another, making physical contact (putting one's hand on the other's arm) (c. "Dress codes", group 1, sequence 4), and sometimes by mimicking the other's gestures (c. Therese mimicking Idun in "There goes Alfie").

Harassment was an even stronger way of marking a distance from one or more participants. Sometimes the line between a friendly joke and harassment was thin, and the participants were not always sure of how to interpret what was happening. They looked at the abused person to check out how he or she would take it to know how to react, or they checked the facilitator or other participants to get clues. In group G discussing "Jack and the beanstalk" (sequence 1) two utterances by Jeff and Lukas directed to Jasmin are interpreted completely differently by the participants and the facilitator. Jeff uses a direct address and shows an open attitude towards Jasmin, and this is accepted as a joke. Lukas turns away from her and uses an indirect address, which is taken as an abuse. Using other participants as examples caused disturbances and anxiety in the group, and caution and hesitation, as the seminar continued. The abused person reacted by using an affected, hesitant, or low voice, reacted as if the abuse was a joke, or by taking back what he or she had said. When Lukas in "Sandor/Ida" has been used as the negative example in a fictive situation, he clears himself by strongly taking the opposite stand to "himself" in the example. There were more offensive ways of reacting: hitting the abuser, mimicking the abuser, or answering with verbal abuse (c. "Who will comfort Toffle?").

Rules sometimes were broken with personal motives: to win a debate, to flirt, or to make an impression. The other participants reacted to these disturbances the same way they reacted to other deliberate rule breaking, with anxiety and caution. They probably couldn't trust that all participants were earnest (c. "Rode and Rode", sequence 2).

Research shows that breakdowns (rule breaking) and conflicts may serve both as a stimulus for learning or as an obstruction to internalization (Koschmann, Kuutti et al. 1998, Scanlon, Issrof et al. 1999, Williams 2001, Williams, Sheridan et al. 2000). Jean Piaget meant that peers learn through conflict, being forced to take the other child's perspective (Williams 2001). In this study, this empathetic reaction seemed to be the case when rules were broken unintentionally. But when the conflicts resulted, not from disagreeing or understanding, but from someone deliberately trying to manipulate the interaction, this did not seem accurate. Attempts to manipulate the seminar threatened it, even if they didn't succeed, judging from the reactions of other participants (c. "Dress codes", group 1). The attempt itself was enough to make the seminar circle less safe. This part of the progress seemed to have a vital importance for how the group's further seminars would go. If the threats to the seminar circle were avoided or managed here in a productive

way, the seminars would continue to be productive on the whole (c. the development of group C). If not, the seminars would stop being seminars, and the group, sub-groups, or individuals would use the seminar circle as an arena for their own purposes and games. Group D's second seminar "Who will comfort Toffle?" is an example of a non-productive game.

### 15.3.3 Breaking rules to guard seminar or for a higher purpose

The third category of rule breaking seemed to be done to either guard the seminar or to guard something considered more important. One rule could be broken to teach or to guard some other rule, considered more important. This was done more or less consciously: changing the subject to avoid debate, interrupting someone using "too much" verbal space, challenging someone to be more truthful, and addressing someone abruptly to reach a personal goal. This was done by both participants and facilitators and was most often followed by signs of surprise and/or laughter from the other participants (c. "There goes Alfie the thief"). This occurred in the experienced groups as well as in the inexperienced, and didn't seem to be regarded by participants as a "threatening" rule break (c. "Dress codes", group 2, sequence 4).

Rules were from time to time broken for something probably considered as a higher purpose. The facilitator might imply by wording and looks that there was a "right answer" to her question, when something she probably considered a central value was confronted. Values that seemed especially important to facilitators not to challenge were that "all persons are of equal value" (c. "Pippi Longstocking", "The dandelion and apple twig", "The Hunchback of Notre Dame"). Another example is that "grown-ups are trustworthy" (c. "There goes Alfie the thief", "Dress code", group 1). When the participant Ruben takes on a facilitating role, he too promotes the central value that all humans are of equal value, even if he seems to excuse himself ("Dress codes", group 2). Other social considerations might also have made the facilitator "play another game" (c. "There goes Alfie the thief"). This type of rule breaking mostly occurred when facilitators were less experienced, and was often followed by agreement from some participants and protests from others. To break a rule, even with good intentions, seemed to change the balance of power (cf. Haroutunian-Gordon, Jackson 1986, cf. Liljestrand 2002, cf. Liljestrand 2004).

### 15.3.4 Actions to restore order

There were some more or less efficient ways to cope with rule breaking, many of them similar to what is used in the ordinary classroom context (cf. Samuelsson 2008): raising the voice to call to order, ignoring or addressing misbehaviors, referring to another authority to call to order (the cameras or the microphones), using one participant's utterance to correct another, and

treating the break as if it was a joke. The outcome of these corrections in the filmed seminars depended on if the “rule-breaker” could (and wanted to) interpret them or not (c. Pia in “Diabolo baby”, sequence 1). Open correction caused more movements among the participants and seemed to be a more efficient means of correction, but participants often reacted; it is after all not according to the protocol to discuss the group interaction in the ongoing seminar. Participants tended to participate seriously after having been taken seriously intellectually, even if they were presenting an idea in a provocative way (c. Jeff in “Jack and the beanstalk”, group G). In most cases, facilitators’ and participants’ ability to handle risks grew over time. Group D is an exception.

In earlier research on seminars, two sets of student roles emerged: one helping the teacher and the other carefully and gently opposing the teacher (Billings, Fitzgerald 2002). These two roles were exposed here too. But they seemed to be somewhat more complex. The results imply that it was more a question of the facilitator and the participant(s) cooperating or not in promoting the seminar, rather than the participant merely helping the facilitator or not. In some cases, all worked together to promote the seminar (c. “Portrait”). There were cases where the facilitator did not promote the seminar, but the participants did (c. “Sandor/Ida”); there were also cases where the facilitator promoted the seminar and the participants, or sub-groups of participants, didn’t (c. “Ronny and Julia”); and there were cases where the participants and the facilitator cooperated to change the seminar to some other interactional game (c. “Who will comfort Toffle?”).

### 15.3.5 Summary and conclusions of rule breaking

Rule breaking tended to have different origins and had different effects on interaction and learning in seminar. Three categories emerged from the material:

1. The participant (and the facilitator) didn’t entirely understand the rules and broke them unintentionally, still learning the game. Breaking the rules here promoted learning the game and shed light on the implicit rules. A risk here was the facilitator allowing, or promoting, the group to relapse into “classroom” interaction.
2. The participant (and the facilitator) understood the rules and broke them intentionally to test the game, or the facilitator’s ability to control the situation, or used them for personal purposes (to control, obstruct, disturb, protest, or to harass someone or a group within the seminar). The rule-break was a result of someone deliberately trying to manipulate the interaction. How this was managed was vital to the further seminar practice. The seminar here was threatened if the facilitator didn’t guard the seminar well enough, or her actions could be interpreted as if she was going along with the rule-breakers.

3. The participant (and the facilitator) understood the rules and broke a rule to protect the seminar, a rule considered more important, or for something else considered to be a higher purpose. Guarding the seminar or a rule was considered less risky and was probably a way of learning the particulars of the game. Imposing a “right value” here threatened the balance of power.

However, as long as the facilitator actively promoted the seminar by treating verbal interruptions in an intellectual manner or, when necessary, used open corrections, the seminar was safe, even if tested. The seminar outcome was dependent on whether the participants considered the seminar to be safe.

## 15.4 Playing the game

Different communicative projects produce specific communicative genres (Goffman 1959, Goodwin, Heritage 1990, Linell 1998). Much research has been done on ordinary conversational situations, often focusing on the dyad, two individuals in conversation (Goodwin, Heritage 1990, Linell 1998). Everyday conversation and everyday classroom interaction are highly regulated as to topics, and turn-taking, and there are in fact several different genres (Goodwin, Heritage 1990, Sacks, Schegloff et al. 1978). However, the Socratic dialogue is an intentional orientation to specific norms with regard to equality and moral and intellectual considerations (Lindström 2005, Linell 1998). Socratic seminars are intended to foster a group conversation, and the group interaction makes playing the game sometimes different than when two individuals interact<sup>111</sup>. It is probably fair to suppose that communicative turns, and gestures presented in everyday conversation differ from the Socratic genre. The term “everyday” is chosen here to indicate what is common: daily, familiar, conversational modes<sup>112</sup>. I will further comment on some of the common moves in “everyday conversation” in comparison with what was seen in the seminars, with no claim on making more than a short review to understand the seminar game better. What is intended by “everyday classroom interaction” or the “classroom game” here is shortly accounted for in the “Research goals and design”.

The “moves” are a polyphony of utterances, voices, gestures, glances, and uses of artifacts to be interpreted by the interlocutors (Goodwin 2000). I will start with some reflections on the different modes analyzed, then look at

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111 Some researchers question whether it is even possible to distinguish discussion or dialogue well enough from other kinds of interactional activities (Mercer 1995, Billings, Fitzgerald 2002, Wells 2001).

112 In Oxford dictionary (2003) the term “everyday” is explained: (adjective) happening or used every day; daily; commonplace. The concept “everyday conversation” is used by Walton (1992).

modes working together to create some meaning within the seminar, and finally reflect on non-seminar games observed.

### 15.4.1 Verbal participation

A short comparison shows that communicative turns in everyday conversation don't seem to differ much from what is presented in this study<sup>113</sup>. In everyday conversation the speaker is listener-oriented, and the listener is speaker-oriented, both monitoring their activities in accordance with the responses (Holquist 2004, Sacks, Schegloff et al. 1978). There are often more listeners than the direct addressee, and interlocutors tend to shift between the different roles as speaker, first addressee, and overhearer, but the speaker tends to address one listener at a time (Goffman 1981, Goodwin 1981). (There might also be mistaken roles; the person thought of as a listener might not listen). Utterances or talk turns are situated: they are understood in a specific context; they are sequentially organized and cannot be understood in isolation from each other. This was also the case in the seminars studied here. In seminars with beginners, the verbal interaction often went from the facilitator to one participant and back (c. "Pippi Longstocking", sequence 2), as in everyday classroom interaction (cf. Billings, Fitzgerald 2002). The facilitator took almost half of the verbal turns, and talked almost half of the time (cf. Billings, Pihlgren 2007, Appendix G). In skilled seminars, more participants than one seemed to act as and be considered addressees (c. "Dress codes, group 2, sequence 2), and the facilitator talked far less than the participants (approx. 30% of the time).

In every-day conversation, interlocutors manufacture utterances and meanings on a moment-to-moment basis, and almost everything, even absence of utterances, has meaning. Turn-taking, when the talk-turn is changed from person A to person B, is roughly decided by when A's sentence comes to a recognizable completion, by speaker-selection techniques (like A asking B to answer), or by actions taken to manipulate a natural change of speaker (like A stalling his talk to delay a possible utterance from B). There are even more specific and intrinsic details in turn-taking (Goodwin, Heritage 1990). The group conversation analyzed in this study ought to have made turn-taking different, since it involved more potential speakers (and addressees). However, the conventions for turn-taking in learners' seminars seemed to have been the same as with pairs in everyday conversation. The skilled participant seemed to pay more attention to other participants, focusing on who was prepared to participate verbally. In some groups, the participants were able to recognize who was to be the next speaker, even though this was not obvious when looking at the filmed seminars (c. "All together", "Jack and

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113 In this short representation of findings I rely mainly on the summaries by Goodwin & Heritage (1990) and of Linell (1998).

the beanstalk”, group F, sequence 2). In some seminars it was obvious that a participant was moving when thinking or contemplating a verbal move (Idun in “There goes Alfie the thief sequence 3, Lukas in “Sandor/Ida, group 2, sequence 1, Mattis in “Dress code”, group 2, sequence 4). Pre-speech gestures and glances might explain how participants knew beforehand who was going to speak. Skilled participants reacted negatively (in accordance with seminar rules) when someone interrupted, or talked excessively to manipulate the turn-taking (c. “Dress codes”, group 2). Facilitators and participants seemed to speak a long time, often inconsistently, when trying to figure out how to handle a challenging situation (c. “Portrait”, “Pippi Longstocking”). Longer verbal pauses were accepted in skilled groups but not by learners (c. “The dandelion and the apple twig”, “Portrait”).

Decontextualization is a central aspect of ongoing discourse: taking an utterance or an extract from one topic and using it to start another (Säljö 2000), and then recontextualizing it in the new context (Linell 1998). In everyday conversation, this can be a way of maintaining the flow of the conversation. When decontextualization occurred in the studied seminars it was considered as rule breaking (c. Saari in “All together”, sequence 2, Kalle in “The hunchback of Notre Dame”, sequence 2).

#### 15.4.2 “Silent” participation

In the study seminars, gestures showed feelings of distress, confusion, and sympathy; they also showed support, agreement, attention, and disinterest. Participants’ postures were open or closed, they were still or moving – as in verbal interaction the gestures and glances were essentially situated, understood in the specific context and so have to be interpreted together with the other interactional modes. They too were created on a moment-to-moment basis, and the absence of gestures and glances had meaning. Verbal interaction in seminars, with some exceptions, carried the recognized interlocution and the intellectual process. Gestures and glances had a somewhat different status in the interaction - they could be handled by participants without disturbing the ongoing recognized interaction. They were either part of verbal conversation or creating their own meaning. In the studied seminars, there were few incidents where most participants talk at the same time, giving the same message. When it comes to gestures and glances, almost the entire group frequently looked or moved simultaneously.

##### 15.4.2.1 Gestures

In everyday conversation, gestures are often used by the listener to demonstrate the understanding of what is said, and the speaker will modify the talk from this. Gestures can be analyzed from their function: for instance beats (through regularity provide a structure to communicational content and might facilitate search for words), deictic gestures (pointing to actual ob-

jects), iconic gestures (a perceptual relation with concrete entities an events), and metaphoric gestures (images produced to relate to abstractions). Gestures are sometimes used to “embody” entities when learning or explaining abstract concepts (Roth, Lawless 2002). When a child is learning something new, gestures often depict new understandings; although, their utterances might not yet cope with the new understanding, especially with abstract concepts. All these types of gestures were displayed in the results.

An important role of gestures in the studied seminars was to signal affinity by common group gestures (c. “Portrait”). Different groups seemed to develop their own common posture to signal participation in the game (chin/cheek in hand(s) with elbow(s) on table, or hands under table). Participants tended to move when they supported the speaker, and from time to time, mimic the gestures of someone in support. The speaker tended to move, and moving after being active verbally “stayed on” some time after having spoken, especially if provocative or personal things were said. Provocative and affected verbal utterances increased the listeners’ gestures.

Younger participants displayed gestures in different ways than the older participants did. Some gestures were connected to expressing things when lacking words (c. Martin in “Pippi Longstocking”, sequence 2). Idun in “Pippi Longstocking” (sequence 3) seems to be trying to understand what is important in seminars; she has been “writing” down important utterances in the air earlier. The writing turns into conducting. Idun conducting Ricky Martin might be interpreted as if she is illustrating what Tom says, a “metaphoric gesture”. The youngest children used a lot of what seems to be superfluous gestures, when interpreted with the rest of the interaction (c. Saari in “Pippi Longstocking”, sequence 2). Taking Idun’s gestures when writing and conducting into account, maybe more of these seemingly superfluous gestures had a metaphoric meaning, to some extent making up for lack of verbal skill. Therefore, they were hard to interpret for a grown-up researcher, but possibly not to the participants of the same age. They may also simply have been lack of coordination due to physical immaturity.

#### **15.4.2.2 Glances and looks**

Glances and looks were used in these seminars to show interest and disinterest - looking at the speaker, close to him or her, or at the person sitting opposite if one was sitting close to the speaker, signaled interest; looking somewhere else signaled disinterest (even if one really was listening). Looking away was often used when disagreeing, when correcting, or when trying to concentrate on one’s own opinion. But glances and looks could convey more subtle messages or be used to handle difficult situations. Jon, in “Rode and Rode” (sequence 3), is coping with the risk of being harassed. He is doing this by not looking at a person of the opposite sex (Ella) when supporting her; but looking at her when disagreeing with her. Anna A, in “Dress codes”

group 2, is controlling the verbal “space” by looking around quickly, focusing on many of the participants while she’s speaking.

### 15.4.3 Moves within the recognized conversation

Many ways to catch the attention or to amplify one’s meaning were used in the seminars, probably to be heard in a game with many players. Common ways of catching attention were looking intensely at a person, making more or less impatient noises (especially when directed to the facilitator), or making hasty gestures like waving or moving a hand (c. “Diabolo baby”, sequence 1). Amplifying what is important was done by stressing words and prolonging them, raising the voice, repeating the sentence, asking someone to repeat what he or she said, or making a joke to illustrate the main point (c. “Dress codes”, group 2). It was also done by using gestures like nodding and shaking the head, using signs depicting what is meant, and by pointing at or using artifacts. More than one mode was often used at the same time: stressing some words, pointing at the text, and nodding at the same time.

#### 15.4.3.1 Showing attention and support

Participants showed attention and support as a way to maintain a safe seminar circle. In more experienced groups, the behavior of the facilitator was taken up by the participants, but the facilitator still actively signaled what was acceptable or not, especially at points when the seminar was fragile. When a delicate situation arose the facilitator intensified her supportive humming, acting as a sort of crutch (c. “Diabolo baby”, “Portrait”).

Building on and referring to, a previous statement made by someone else, repeating someone’s utterance or even speaking the same words simultaneously were ways of showing acceptance in the studied seminars. Humming and making positive sounds were other ways of affirming the speaker, as was shaking the head or nodding, imitating his or her gestures, smiling, and most commonly - looking at the speaker. The different ways were often combined and, more importantly, this type of “open posture” was used to signal acceptance and cooperation when contradicting another person’s statement (c. “Pippi Longstocking”, “Dress codes”).

In everyday conversation, agreement and disagreement are performed in markedly different ways. Agreement is performed promptly but disagreement and turning down offers are delayed and mitigated in various ways (for instance with saying “well”..., “yes...but”). Disagreement and turning down offers are often accompanied with an account, offering some sort of explanation to why something is not accepted. Accounts tend to be of a “no-fault” kind (Goodwin, Heritage 1990). In the skilled groups studied here, this verbal way of delaying and mitigating a disagreeing reply was often used, but it was not followed by a “no-fault” explanation. Instead, gestures and glances were used to signal good-will to the other (c. “Diabolo baby”, sequence 2).



Gestures and glances were used actively to promote seminar participation: to invite participants into discussion by looking at them, and/or turning out the hand towards them. They could also be used to support a hesitant participant by looking at other participants and the speaker, and by vividly mimicking and smiling (c. “Jack and the beanstalk”, group G). Using “quiet” gestures, not attracting attention by making quick or “big” movements, was (except among some of the youngest) a way to show participation (c. the “Dress codes” seminars). It seemed to be interpreted as respect and attention, even when looking down at the text, writing or drawing, as long as one looked up from the paper when something important was said or a new speaker was heard. Heightened interest intensified gestures except when the actions were delicate. Then the heightened interest in what was going on lessened the gestures (c. “Portrait”, sequence 3).

#### **15.4.3.2 Showing what is not accepted**

Some of the ways to show what was not acceptable have been referred to earlier when dealing with rule breaking and learning the game. In everyday conversation misconduct is treated either by avoiding or by correcting. The avoidance process is often a tactful blindness, looking away (also used when someone gets embarrassed). Correction is often performed by calling attention to the misconduct, giving the “offender” a chance to correct, and often ending in the “offender” conveying signs of gratitude (Goffman 1967). In this study, looking away from the offender was the most frequently used way of showing what was not acceptable. The effect of the whole (or almost whole) group looking away, however, seemed more powerful than merely “avoiding” (c. “Dress codes”, group 2, sequence 3). Most of the time “silent” correction was used to control “silent” disturbing – putting a hand on someone’s arm to stop him or her from playing with the text, or taking away the object played with (c. “Ronny and Julia”). Verbal protests or comments were more common in the earlier seminars, but less obvious verbal corrections were used in skilled groups: humming to hurry someone along, humming and making a pause to tell someone off, raising the voice when about to be interrupted, or making other sounds to comment. In most cases the offender corrected his or her behavior, and also conveyed signs of understanding the break (if not gratitude at least confusion or embarrassment). There were cases where the corrected person was more offensive: refusing to answer (Jon in “Jack and the beanstalk), using irony to get back on the “corrector” (Saari in “All together”), and sliding under the table to pinch the other participants’ toes (Christian in “The dandelion and the apple twig”).

#### **15.4.4 Unrecognized conversations**

All seminars showed some unrecognized conversations going on at the same time as the recognized interaction. Michael Tholander (2002) showed that in

classroom teaching informal desk-talk like teasing, gossiping, and subteaching between the students also taught them to manage themselves in moral arenas. This was probably true here too, at least to some extent. The unrecognized conversations here were mostly “silent”, carried out by looks and gestures. When the “silent” communication was complicated it became verbal (for example by furnishing in “Who will comfort Toffle?”). Most of the time, participants used unrecognized conversations to connect, team up with someone, make friends or take actions towards another group in seminar. The “subject” of these unrecognized conversations was often (but not always) connected to the recognized: commenting, protesting, disturbing, or testing the rules. The unrecognized conversations disturbed or not, depending on whether the persons involved wanted to be noticed or not. Even the youngest children were aware of the difference between catching the group’s or facilitator’s attention or not (c. Saari in “All together”).

Some participants used gestures as if silently “thinking aloud”, probably as a way of conveying messages to the rest of the group (or to the facilitator), a sort of “silent exclamation”. Some were consequences of the participant being bored (Martin hitting his head on the table in “All together”); others were meant to protest, provoke, or to get attention (Christian hitting his eraser in “Ronny and Julia”), or maybe as ways to understand what was important (Idun writing and conducting in “Pippi Longstocking”).

#### 15.4.5 Playing some other game

In groups of learners and with inexperienced facilitators, the “classroom game” from time to time took over (cf. Billings 1999, cf. Liljestränd 2002) the conversation (c. “The hunchback of Notre Dame”), by gestures (raising hands) and by glances (looking away from misbehavers). Skilled participants sometimes also chose to play another game, but without really risking a breakdown of the seminar culture (c. Lukas in “Dress codes”, group 2). The interplay in group D was different. Their later seminar “Who will comfort Toffle?” is a “classroom” discussion on literature but without the teacher stopping abuses, resulting in rather vicious personal attacks. The participant Victoria is cautiously trying to carry out the seminar game on her own, but has no chance of succeeding, even if some participants don’t partake in the abuses. It turns into a different game, at length probably with negative social effects (cf. Wortham 2003).

#### 15.4.6 Saving the game

When the seminar game was at risk, the participants and/or the facilitator often took actions to save it; some described above in “Rule breaking”. In “Ronny and Julia” some participants and the facilitator continue the seminar as if Christian’s rule-breaking hasn’t happened, focusing on verbal interac-

tion (sequence 2). At the same time as ignoring Christian verbally, they try to correct him by gestures. This proves less effective. Later (sequence 3), his provocations are met by the facilitator correcting him openly. The group then ignores him, cooperating silently by “binding” the rest of the group together, looking at each other. They encourage someone to speak by looking at him or her, and don’t let Christian verbally into the seminar. The speech is disrupted but continuous, and carried on by many participants. This gives them time to find a productive way to continue the dialogue.

The most productive way to save the game, presented in these seminars, was to stick to seminar procedures and rules. The facilitator Maria in “Portrait” skillfully treats Oscar’s very personal remark that he hates his father, without risking either Oscar’s integrity or the seminar. She treats it as an intellectual rather than an emotional statement. Effective actions seemed to be to pose an inquiring seminar question after a rule break or a disruption, to treat a provocative statement as if it was a serious seminar suggestion, and to ask for definitions.

#### 15.4.7 Summary and conclusions of playing the game

An anecdote tells, that in the seminar circles of the Swedish philosopher Hans Larsson, “Wise Hans”, all participants tipped their head slightly to the right; a way considered looking thoughtful and philosophizing. Hans Larsson, holding his head slightly tipped, was the ideal that to resemble – but his posture was actually due to an accident where he had fallen off a horse! Whatever the origin: gestures in the analyzed seminars served a role in signaling affinity and cooperation. In the ultimate situation, the whole group was playing the seminar game together. This was from time to time accomplished in the skilled groups, and the quality of group interaction improved if the seminar continued productively.

The communicative turns, common in everyday conversation, were represented in the seminar interaction. Playing the skilled seminar game, however, presupposed a somewhat different approach. Less skilled participants took turns as pairs, rather than as a group; and the verbal interaction often went from the facilitator to one participant and back, comparable to the I-R-E pattern and other “classroom” interactional conventions. In skilled seminars, more participants than one acted as, and were considered, addressees; and participants were able to cooperate to involve many participants, focusing on who was prepared to participate verbally. Promoting and carrying out the mutuality of the game in the skilled groups were to a high extent done by “silent” interaction, using gestures and glances to actively promote participation, to support and handle difficult situations, and to save the game. When the group acted the same way, the “silent” message was amplified to show what was acceptable or not, what was interesting, or provocative. Gestures and glances were used consciously to send messages. An important use

was to signal acceptance and cooperation when contradicting another person's statement. Not using extensive gestures was a way to show respect and attention.

The intellectual process was to a great extent carried out by the verbal seminar participation, to differing extent accompanied by glances and gestures. The younger the participants, the more gestures were used, often expressing things when lacking words (maybe to a higher extent than was possible to interpret here). The intended intellectual dialogue was different from everyday conventions. Skilled participants accepted longer verbal pauses and were not as occupied with "keeping the conversation going" as were the beginners, and they were less accepting of manipulative turn-taking. Threats to the game were directly corrected or avoided by using seminar procedures.

The non-verbal, unofficial interactions were harder to control than the verbal, within the seminar. They were, when desired, carried out without disturbing the ongoing official interplay, and often had as purpose to construct a sub-group. This risked the important group cooperation, and only had positive effects when used for limited periods within the seminar to scaffold or support a participant or to save the seminar. Allowing sub-group interaction eventually turned the seminar into a completely different game, with negative effects for the individuals participating.

## 15.5 Intellectual habits

When it came to exposing "intellectual habits", the participants went from stating personal ideas (maybe picking some lines of thought up from others), to building ideas on the previous ideas of other participants. Daniels et al. (2002) found the same with children practicing "Philosophy in the Classroom". The children went from a monological, egocentric, and relativistic thinking to intersubjective thinking, using the group interplay. Malmhøst and Ohlsson (1999) found that the primary school children tended to stay "relativistic", accepting all views without refutation. This didn't seem to be the case in this study. The skilled participants in this study acted as a cooperative group, where individuals deliberately took on different "roles", even the role as facilitator, advocating different views to come to a better understanding, as shown in several of the recorded evaluations (c. "Portrait", "Dress codes"). The group was trying to find when different hypotheses or ideas were not compatible with the ones presented earlier (c. "Portrait"). The "demand for consistency" within a person (made by Socrates) was here treated as a demand on the group, and carried out by the group (c. "Dress codes", group 2). The convention of the Socratic seminars differs from that of the everyday convention, where there is a sort of "moral" aspect to dialogue in the way that speakers are "held accountable" for their utterances (Gar-

finkel 1967, Linell 1998, Sacks 1987, Sacks, Schegloff et al. 1978), and where the individual might alter his or her character and how this is perceived by others (Goffman 1967, Shotter 1994, Säljö 2000). In the seminars studied here, it was possible to try out a new role in seminar, but only as long as this role was productive to the seminar inquiry (cf. “Dress codes”, group 1). This might be one explanation for the hesitation or pauses for reflection often exposed: it is a different game to play and the individual participation is on different terms, contributing to the mutual intellectual game. In some groups, the feeling of game was apparent. When the seminar closed, the individuals visibly moved out of the group, breaking their mutual “contract” and the game was over (c. “Rode and Rode”, “Dress codes”).

Eriksson and Aronsson (2002) showed that children participating in “booktalks” as a classroom activity resisted text-to-life probing. This was not the case here. The skilled participants (c. “Portrait”, “Dress codes”) were able to use several intellectual “techniques” to probe into the ideas of the textual material: checking the “text” for evidence or referring to the text (verbally or with gestures), using personal experience to show the complexity of an idea, finding out what is meant by trying its advantages and disadvantages, reintroducing someone else’s idea when it suddenly proves useful in a new context, dropping one’s own line in favor of someone else’s, and changing one’s mind for the sake of the better argument (cf. Lipman, Sharp et al. 1980, cf. Malmhether, Ohlsson 1999). Even if the skilled participants were able to show these skills in this study, they still hesitated when they presented arguments and ideas that they apparently feared might be refuted or considered insincere: they were checking other participants out, spoke hesitatingly, and laughed to make the statement less “serious” even if it was meant seriously (Ruben in “Dress code”, group 2, sequence 1). Hesitant speech, or pausing, also seemed to signal trying out new ideas, or formulating new, complex thoughts (c. “Portrait”, sequence 1).

Looking closer at how the groups went about critical investigation reveals strong resemblances to Karl Popper’s idea of scientific problem solving, but here performed by the whole group (Walton 1992, cf. Lindström 1994). When a new idea was presented in the seminar there were often several other, different ideas presented by different participants building on the original idea (c. after Anders’ idea is presented in “Diabolo baby”, sequence 1). The more skilled the group, the quicker this “brainstorming” became. The ideas, or at least some of the ones regarded as more interesting, were then elaborated and developed, and later refuted or accepted (Anders’ idea is refuted in favor of another idea). The refuted ideas might still have affected the ongoing investigation and might return later in the dialogue (often picked up by some other participant), when the process had gone further and the idea was more appropriate. The group or the facilitator then tried to find consensus, or some mutual understanding (by for instance uniting two seemingly opposite ideas), to continue the investigation (c. “Dress codes”, group 1, sequence 1).

It is a way of building the seminar in steps: divergent ideas> elaboration/development and refutation/acceptance> consensus> new divergent ideas> elaboration/development and so on. During the process of elaboration and development, the group often discussed in a cumulative way, building one idea on the other, or presenting pro- and counter arguments (c. “Let the ice bears dance”, sequence 3). When completely new and adjusting ideas were presented, the group often reacted simultaneously, moving and/or exclaiming (c. “Diabolo baby”, sequence 1, “Portrait”, sequence 1). Sophie Haroutunian-Gordon (1998) presents a similar and more elaborate way to analyze the process in a reflective dialogue. There is a “cluster” pattern of related questions that evolve as the thinking moves along, starting with a basic question, and followed by a series of follow-up questions that the discussants seem to use when choosing freely<sup>114</sup>. Donna Robinson (2006) presents an analysis of how reading comprehension moves through the Paideia seminar, suggesting steps of interpersonal conflict and reconstruction, resulting in intrapersonal modified or solidified synthesis.

### 15.5.1 Methodology to foster intellectual habits

Some facilitators carried out all the methodological steps suggested in the literature and some just a few, presumably the ones they considered important, or could see the point of introducing. In some groups the steps after the opening question were introduced by participants, rather than by the facilitator, probably because they were familiar with the proceedings.

#### 15.5.1.1 Step 1: Individual reading/interpreting

In most seminars, the literature had been read beforehand; these groups were familiar with the textual content and were able to refer to it and use it in the intellectual inquiry (c. “Let the ice bears dance”). This was also the case when a work of art was presented in the beginning of the seminar; it was grasped more quickly than a literary text (c. “Diabolo baby”). When literature was read at the seminar it hindered the intellectual development, partly because it took time and made participants tired, partly because the participants hadn’t got time to grasp the content (c. “Ronny and Julia”). When the “text” was lacking diversity in ideas or intellectual content, or when it was considered too childish by the participants, it resulted in disturbances and lack of intellectual progress (c. “Who will comfort Toffle?”).

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<sup>114</sup> Haroutunian-Gordon’s cluster pattern (1998, p. 57): (1) Starting a new sequence where a previous one left off and returning to about the same starting point; (2) Repeating a sequence in a different context; (3) Reversing the direction of a sequence or one of its elements; (4) Drawing out the elements of a sequence and (5) Filling in the outline of a sequence so that its patterns becomes clearer.

### **15.5.1.2 Step 2 and 4: Personal and group goals**

In the groups where the facilitator helped to set, evaluate, and coach goals, the groups at the later seminars were able to “play the game” without much rule breaking (c. group E and F). This step seemed to strengthen the dialogic awareness. The goal-setting was considered important by the participants, both when learning (c. “Rode and Rode”), and when fully understanding its function (c. “Dress codes” seminars). However, during the period where the group was focusing on learning the rules, the intellectual development was often weak (c. “Ronny and Julia”).

### **15.5.1.3 Step 3 a: Opening question**

The choice of the opening question affected the intellectual content in the studied seminars. It seemed to be important that the opening question concerned what one thought about the text. When the opening question merely asked about what the participants thought about the actual dilemma or the idea presented in the text, but without relating it to the text, there was a risk that the seminar got off track, and it was harder to return to textual analysis (c. “Ronny and Julia”, “Dress codes” seminars). Asking “opening questions” throughout seminar, merely asking the participants to state their opinions, led to participants getting stuck in prejudgment and “right answers”, and there was no or little inquiry and a tendency toward consensus (c. “There goes Alfie the thief”). When no reflection pause was offered, fewer ideas were presented in the beginning and there was a risk for premature consensus (c. “Ronny and Julia”). Step 3 a. seemed to function as a personal starting point for the discussion.

### **15.5.1.4 Step 3 b: “Textual” analysis**

Not asking the participants to analyze the “text” caused lack of intellectual progress (c. “All together”) (cf. Robinsso 2006). However, too many ideas, or more than one major dilemma introduced at the same time, hindered intellectual depth (c. “Rode and Rode”). The “textual” analysis in skilled groups had a markedly slower pace with shorter utterances and more pauses than the other steps. This was probably an effect of thinking and adapting ones thoughts to new thoughts (c. “Portrait”). The facilitator’s encouraging the group to probe into the ideas during this part seemed vital: when the group was intensely trying to explore an idea, new ideas might not be heard if the facilitator didn’t interfere (c. “Diabolo baby”, sequence 1). It was of great importance that the facilitator was open to divergent ideas, without censoring those she didn’t expect, or accepted (c. “Dress codes”, group 1).

### **15.5.1.5 Step 3 c: Relating ideas to self**

The intention of this step in the literature is reconnecting what is discovered in the discussion to one’s own experience. In the filmed seminars, this

seemed to happen, even when the facilitator didn't introduce the step explicitly. It rather seemed to be a consequence of the discussion itself, and maybe of asking participants to relate personally to the text in step 3 a. When participants lacked the skill to connect the text to personal experience, it seemed to hinder intellectual development (c. "Let the ice bears dance", sequence 4). There were some areas of caution. Asking for personal experience or strong values with no connection to the text too early in the seminar made the seminar circle unsafe, judging from participants' reactions (c. "Who will comfort Toffle?"). Relating to personal experience too soon led to "storytelling" rather than intellectual inquiry (c. "Diabolo baby"). Remarks that were too personal risked turning the seminar into therapy, concentrating on the participant's problem, or to a shallow conversation, avoiding the problem, if not treated as a philosophical problem rather than a personal (c. "Portrait", "Who will comfort Toffle?"). When the group used cases too similar to individual participants' lives, the result might become a violation, even when this was not intended ("Dress codes", group 1).

#### **15.5.1.6 Effects of the steps**

One of the hard things to grasp as a learner was the difference between the Socratic seminar interaction, and "classroom", or everyday, interaction. Considering Burbules' (1993) different types of pedagogical dialogues, together with the results of the literature review, the Socratic seminar intends both the inclusive-divergent dialogue ("conversation"), directed towards cooperation and mutual understanding, AND an inclusive-convergent dialogue, aiming at answering a specific question, solving a specific problem or a specific dispute ("inquiry"). It is possible to exclude the critical-convergent dialogue ("instruction") as a "Socratic" ideal, since that postulates a given "right" answer if the instruction is to be effective. It's also possible to exclude the critical-divergent dialogue ("debate"), since the dialogic relation is critical and does not aim at the group cooperating in trying to create understanding. The opening question (3a) and when ideas are related to self (3c) are intended as inclusive-divergent (conversation), and textual analysis (3b) and individual reading (1) are intended as inclusive-convergent (inquiry). Setting and evaluating goals are inclusive-convergent (2, 4). Their pair relationship was assumed earlier in the literature analysis (figure 1).

In the seminars here analyzed, the participants and some facilitators, while leaning the seminar "game", tended in the first stage to use and promote "conversation", with some lapses into "debate" and "instruction". During this phase, "inquiry" was often mistaken for "debate". After having had seminars for a while, all four types were used, but "conversation" was still the dominant type. "Debate" and "instruction" were here used to test the "rules" and the facilitator. The skilled group seemed to use "inquiry" as the prevailing mode, and was able to use a debating technique without risking



the seminar within inclusive and convergent relations. They continued probing into the personal statements and analyzing the experiences.

Table 12. *Types of dialogues intended in Socratic seminar*

		<i>Relation to knowledge</i>	
		<i>Divergent</i>	<i>Convergent</i>
Dialogic inclusive relation	Learners	3a and 3c	1, 2, 3b, 4
	Skilled	1-4	

Successful patterns of interaction within the rules of a game are particularly important when fostering higher order thinking (Collins, Stevens 1982, Burbules 1993, 1983). Other patterns might not have any relevancy to the discussion, but can be beneficial in maintaining the dialogical relation (Dillon 1988, Tannen 1989). In the literature on seminars, each step is supposed to focus on either of these patterns. The filmed seminars showed that carrying out all the intended steps had positive effects on the seminar outcome. The facilitator’s good planning in itself was however not a success factor, if the facilitator was not open to different lines of arguing (c. “Dress codes”, group 1, the group D seminars). Goal-setting and evaluating seemed to have positive effects on the “dialogical virtues”, and the seminar (3a-c) supported the intellectual process. In skilled groups, the facilitator was more active in goal-setting and -evaluation and in “textual” analysis, probably because these steps were vital to a positive outcome. The more familiar the seminar game was to the participants, the more the steps were mixed without negative effects, the participants realized how to make use of the methodology effectively to develop and explore the ideas (c. “Let the ice bears dance”).

However, it seemed important to pass through the different steps in each seminar (cf. Robinsson 2006). If some were not addressed, the discussion was less fruitful, and it tended to slip into the “classroom game” (c. “The hunchback of Notre Dame”). This risk seemed acute in the groups of learners. Passing through the steps was important to the skilled groups as well as to learners. The participants in experienced groups were more cautious in the beginning of the seminar, not looking long at addressees, using more hesitant speech, and addressing the facilitator and not other participants (c. group E and F). As the seminar continues, they looked for longer times at the person they were addressing. The skilled group quickly passed through the steps, as if they were checking that the circle was safe for further investigation, and all steps tended to result in inquiry.

#### **15.5.1.7 Off balance in the intellectual inquiry**

The “dialogical virtues”, or the rules of the game, seemed to be understood before the “intellectual virtues” and they also seemed to take over when

there was a conflict; if there was contradictory “disturbing” body language and mimicry, this took over the verbal message, even when an interesting idea was presented (c. “Diabolo baby, sequence 1), and rule disturbances overpowered the intellectual process (c. “Ronny and Julia”, sequence 2). Intentional misuse of the intellectual tools got other participants off balance (c. Lukas asking for proof as provocation in “Let the ice bears dance”) (cf. Keefer, Zeitz et al. 2000). In the seminars, a debating technique in experienced groups also was used to promote an intellectual inquiry. It was done in a spirit of cooperation instead of self-interest. There was, however, still confusion, making the intellectual process slow, when the debating technique was used for “good” and “bad” purposes at the same time (“Dress codes”, group 1). There seemed to be a fine balance, between guarding the seminar and challenging participants to express “bold” ideas.

### 15.5.2 Summary and conclusions of intellectual habits

The methodology suggested in the literature, when performed in a right way, filled the intended purpose; but not all facilitators carried out all the steps, presumably because they couldn't see the point of introducing them. The introduction of teachers to seminar practice would probably benefit from explaining the function of each step. The different steps seemed to work as intended in the literature. Reading a well-chosen text seemed to activate the prejudgment of the individual and also start the analysis of the ideas; an unchallenging text, with few dilemmas, made the seminar non-productive. The good opening question seemed to get different ideas into discussion, but also seemed to work as a personal starting point of the discussion; participants stated their own mind before entering into an inquiry of the text. A less constructive opening question, or merely asking opening questions throughout the seminar, threatened the intellectual content of the seminar. Textual analysis seemed of vital importance to the intellectual progress in a seminar, and the facilitator had an important role in supporting the development there, even in skilled groups. Using a critical problem solving strategy as a group was vital. Relating the ideas to personal experience tended to be done spontaneously during the seminar. However, self-relating too early in seminar seemed to threaten the seminar. A productive seminar culture was enhanced by goal-setting and evaluating, and they strengthened the dialogic awareness. There were no signs of the participants staying relativists when they had passed the first period as learners. An explanation for this might be the construction of the methodology, where “textual” analysis trained participants to inquire into the ideas, not merely as individuals (as in the rest of the steps), but as a group. The skilled group tended to use this technique of “inquiry” throughout the seminar, while the learners “conversed” to a higher degree, with lapses into “instruction” and “debate”.

Intellectual habits relied heavily on dialogical virtues. The safe seminar seemed to ensure a context where “bold” ideas might be tested, as long as they were allowed to be probed into and may be refuted. The ritualized structure of the seminar probably supported this. It was essential to grasp that the individual should not be held personally responsible (or rewarded) for ideas, and that all should take a responsibility for the entire group’s ideas. This relationship was built anew in every seminar, partly by following the seminar methodology as intended. The skilled group handled this more quickly, and all steps tended to have an inquiring dialogue. Skilled participants used this group interaction to explore various ways of inquiring into ideas by using intellectual techniques, and by taking on different roles in the seminar. As concluded in the literature analysis, the participants were gradually supposed to internalize the dialogue as a habit of mind, a thinking disposition. The group sharing and dividing the roles during the seminar was probably an effective way of learning to see the different arguments, and what they will lead to. The individual participants were not held personally responsible for what they said, but they “personified” a value, one way to look at the idea explored in the seminar (cf. Alf Ahlberg’s (1986) way of assigning one idea to each participant). Learning to sort out the different values and their arguments, probably taught a strategy when thinking on one’s own. The “dialogical virtues” were also dependent on the “intellectual virtues”. When the dialogue was at risk, the remedy was treating the conflicts, manipulations, or provocations as if they were part of the intellectual inquiry. Learning to cope with differing views and ideas, and with Socratic perplexity, probably taught the ability to adapt one’s thinking to new ideas.

The seminar dialogue was built in stages, similar to Karl Popper’s (Popper 2007) scientific problem solving. Starting with a problem/question, different participants presented different ideas. Some of these were dropped without being noticed or explored, but reappeared later in the discussion (Idea C in figure 3). Some ideas were elaborated and developed, and this resulted in refutation or acceptance. During this part of the process, the group often discussed “cumulatively”, building one idea on the other or presenting pro- and counter arguments in response to the idea.

The group then accepted a consensus (sometimes with the facilitator’s help), a new platform to start off from, when continuing to probe into the questions, and the process started again (problem 2). A participant may have presented an adjusting idea, that challenged the consensus, and this would be refuted or accepted, changing consensus or not, but affecting the rest of the seminar (the *italicized* part in figure 3). The cumulative ideas tended to overrule the adjusting ideas. Furthermore, if the facilitator didn’t actively promote the intellectual process a new or challenging idea might not be heard.

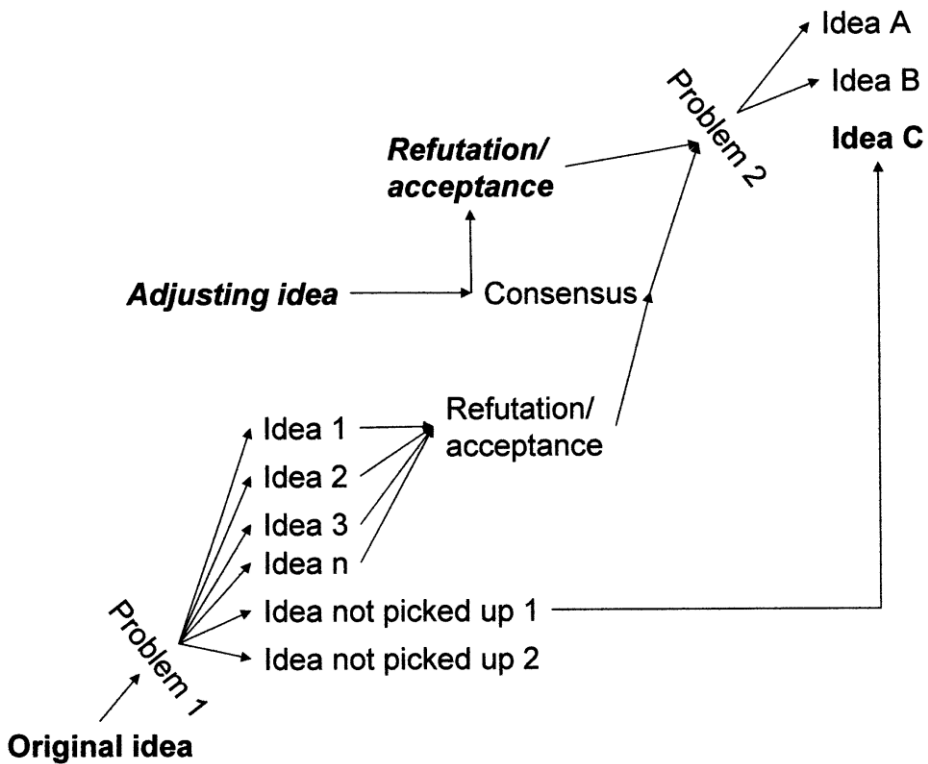


Figure 3. Advanced intellectual process in seminar

## 15.6 Distribution of power

As the above presented themes have shown, the distribution of power in the studied seminars changed over time and revealed differences from everyday classroom conversation (cf. Billings, Pihlgren 2007). When seminar practice developed as intended, the role of the facilitator was markedly different with learners than in a skilled group. The facilitator's role started as a deliberate role model, teaching her apprentices the game by her actions and moves (c. Anna in group A), and ended up as being a "first among equals", only interfering to promote the process when it was necessary (c. Sandra in group F). Here was yet another transition – the shift from teacher to facilitator. This change of roles seemed to cause some trouble when the facilitator was inexperienced (cf. Bender 1994, cf. Billings, Fitzgerald 2002). It might be explained by the somewhat contradictory tasks of acting as a teacher leading students to embrace certain values, and of acting as a seminar facilitator allowing values to be examined critically (cf. Liljestrand 2004). The metaphor of participants as apprentices, when learning the virtues, is useful when explaining the facilitator's function as role-model, but doesn't entirely ex-

plain the role. Apprenticeship in a professional learning context is becoming part of a specialized practice, where the apprentice learns the specific techniques and the values of the profession; he or she will carry these on when becoming a “master” (Jernström 2000, Lave, Wenger 1991, Nielsen, Kvale 2002). In the Socratic seminar the apprentices are invited to contradict the master if necessary to the intellectual progress, and if the master breaks the rules. On the other hand the seminar has to be guarded if the seminar practice is to be productive. The facilitator therefore might have to use her authority. Billings and Fitzgerald (2002) identify three distinct characteristics when looking at dialogic discussion in Paideia seminars.

1. Decisions about what is important to discuss are shared among the members and the dialogue reflects this
2. Understanding is created by the group, not found by students or given to the students by the teacher
3. The teacher gives up some, or all, of her authority to control the content and form of the discussion

This is a picture of what is intended, an ideal compared to what is shown in this study. To be able to reach this ideal the facilitator had to have authority, and had to exercise it when necessary, not when it came to talk time or to controlling ideas, but when it came to making the seminar circle safe, and when promoting the rules and the seminar steps (c. group D and E seminars). Nicolas Burbules (1993) comments that the dialogical relationships aim at making authority superfluous, but authority can be a helpful tool in attaining this end. As Johan Liljestränd (2002) concludes, it is making the distinction between treating the student as a “citizen-to-be” or an “already-citizen”.

The facilitator, however, had few means to guard the seminar circle if someone wanted to disturb it (c. “Ronny and Julia”, sequence 3). She was dependent on the participants cooperating to guard the seminar, and on their willingness to carry out the intellectual game. The game could only be played if the chief part of the group wanted to play it (c. “All together”). The participants quickly realized that the teachers’ ordinary means of power didn’t exist, or could be ignored (c. “The hunchback of Notre Dame”). The power balance was different than in the classroom. Most of the facilitators and the participants learned how to cope with, and benefit from, the new distribution of power in productive ways, as we have seen. In group D, the discovery led to a completely different game, where the participants and the facilitator were lost in anarchy. One might speculate if a strict discipline focused on the teacher’s direct authority in the ordinary classroom situation, made keeping to seminar protocol harder; participants made use of the facilitator’s lack of ordinary tools of power; groups or individuals took over the interaction and used it for the purposes they wished, good or bad.

### 15.6.1 Cameras and microphones in focus

The cameras and the microphones used to record the seminars were noticed and used by participants during all the seminars. There were few artifacts and other sources of interruption at the seminar table, and the cameras and microphones were seen by most participants. The glances were often quick and would probably not have been noticed if using other methods for collecting data. The interest might have been caused by me as researcher. However, I was not present at the filming and there were patterns regardless of where the seminar was filmed. From time to time the participants performed for the cameras when they were displaying “school behaviors”, or when these were challenged (c. “Pippi Longstocking”, sequence 3). Some looked at the cameras when the school was criticized, analyzed, or defended (c. “Dress codes”, group 1). The cameras and the microphones were checked when making provocative statements, or when rules were broken (c. “Ronny and Julia”, sequence 2). The cameras and microphones seemed to be considered a part of the authority exercised by school, and were therefore also seen as interlocutors when this authority was tested. The authority was sometimes promoted by the facilitator, using cameras/microphones as means to keep order (c. “Ronny and Julia, sequence 2); and they were sometimes diminished by the facilitator, trying to get the participants to forget them (“Let the ice bears dance, sequence 1).

### 15.6.2 Power distribution among students

Students in the seminars had access to more talking time than in similar classroom activities. Some students were more active verbally, a natural consequence of the sizes of the groups. All participants in the studied seminars spoke, mainly due to the opening question being put to everyone. The silent participation was very high. There were unrecognized conversations, most of them silent, but almost no participant was unaware of, or didn't participate in the recognized conversation (c. “All together”). The sub-groups sometimes changed the distribution of power among students (c. “Who will comfort Toffle?”). Individual participants taking up much space were often supported by an inexperienced facilitator (c. “The hunchback of Notre Dame”), and neglected, questioned, or interrupted in the skilled group (c. “Portrait”).

#### 15.6.2.1 Boys and girls

This study has not focused on a gender perspective, and hence, systematic findings cannot be presented. When it comes to distribution of power, however, some comments can be made. There are generally gender differences in interactional patterns (Fitzpatrick, Hardman 2000, Howe, Tolmie 1999, Tannen 1994, Underwood, Undwood 1999, Williams 2001). Charlotta Einarsson

(2003) suggests some changes in interactional gender patterns. The domination of boys has lessened. The number of contacts with the teacher by those who have most contact, and those who have less contact, are the same within the group of boys and the group of girls. On the other hand, Marcus Samuelsson (2008) found that teachers in an ordinary classroom considered boys more disturbing and corrected them more often than the girls. In this study, girls and boys appeared to be equally active, and in most groups they addressed each other (an exception is group G in “Sandor/Ida”). The differences within the gender groups seem to confirm Einarsson’s (2003). When looking at the actions they take, more girls in groups of learners tended to listen closely to what the teacher “wanted”, or what they thought she wanted, trying to find the “right” answer (c. Anita in “There goes Alfie the thief”). More boys tended to provoke, but they also tended to stick to the seminar rules more consistently (c. Tom in “Pippi Longstocking”) (cf. Samuelsson 2008). All facilitators were women. In what way this have affected the result is hard to say from this material. Boys vs. girls were the most common sub-groups, occurring in about half of the seminars.

### 15.6.3 Summary and conclusions of distribution of power

The distribution of power in the studied seminars changed in favor of a more polyphonic interplay if:

- The facilitator realized how the role as facilitator differed from being a teacher or a “master”.
- The facilitator realized that the role must be different in a group of learners than when the group is skilled, and acted accordingly.
- The facilitator refrained from controlling what values were explored AND, at the same time, actively exerted the rules of the game.
- The participants, or most of them, agreed to participate in the game.
- Sub-groups were not allowed to change the distribution of power.

In some ways the seminar observations seem to say as much about the everyday classroom practice as they do about the seminar practice. The distribution of power in the everyday classroom context was obviously considered by participants and facilitators to be more controlled by the teacher, than in the seminars. This became obvious in their use of the cameras as artifacts, representing the authority of school, but also in their learning to participate.

## 15.7 Summary of seminar study results

The seminar study has shown that it was possible to teach the intended Socratic seminar by using the methods suggested in literature. The distribution of power changed compared to everyday classroom conversation in favor of a more polyphonic communication, if the facilitator and the participants

realized and accepted the essentials of the game and how it is learned. Three stages of learning emerged: 1) understanding what the seminar game is about, 2) testing the game by focusing on the rules, and 3) focusing on the intellectual content. How stage 2 was handled was of vital importance if the group's further seminars were to be successful. The facilitator acted as a role model in the beginning, creating a safe circle and a community of inquiry, balancing between teaching the game and fulfilling the role as facilitator.

Groups of learners often confused the inquiring seminar dialogue with other classroom conversations. Confusing the seminar game with the classroom game was one of the actions threatening the seminar. The seminar rules were broken for three reasons: They were A) not understood, B) broken intentionally to manipulate or to test, and C) broken for something considered a higher purpose. In A) the rule break was a way to learn the game, but B) and C) essentially threatened the seminar. The facilitator and the participants cooperated or not, in promoting the seminar. The non-verbal, unrecognized interactions often were intended to construct a sub-group, threatening the game. As long as the facilitator treated verbal actions intellectually or, when necessary, used open corrections, the seminar was safe.

Promoting the mutuality of the game in skilled groups was done primarily by "silent" interaction: actively promoting and protecting the game, and signaling acceptance and cooperation when contradicting another person's statement. The intellectual process was carried out primarily by the verbal participation. The younger participants used more gestures, often expressing things when lacking words. The dialogue showed few differences from everyday conventions. Skilled participants accepted longer verbal pauses, and were not as occupied with "keeping the conversation going" as were the beginners; they were less accepting of manipulative turn-taking, and included several interlocutors at a time.

The methodology suggested in the literature was, when carried out as intended, effective in the anticipated way. The participants went from stating personal ideas (maybe picking some lines of thought up from others), to building ideas on the previous ideas of other participants. It was essential to grasp that all participants should take responsibility for the entire group's ideas. This relation was built anew in every seminar by following the seminar steps. The group spontaneously shared the roles, "personifying" different values during the seminar, as an effective way of learning to see the different arguments. At length, this probably teaches a strategy when thinking on one's own. The seminar dialogue was built in stages (see figure 3).



## SECTION III

### Conclusions and Discussion



# 16 Overall Conclusions and Discussion

Individuals who have constructed their own characters proactively are capable of resisting the power of corrupt taught values in such a way that they not only know the difference between right or wrong; they also have the self-discipline and courage to act on that knowledge.

Terry Roberts<sup>115</sup>

The two sections of this study, the literature review and the seminar study itself are complete. The results from the seminar study confirm many of the assumptions and experiences made by advocates of the Socratic seminar in the literature study, but not all. The rationales of Socratic literature present in some aspects an ideal. When put into practice, the outcome shows partly other features than the anticipated, especially during periods of learning. The empirical seminar study shows the importance of “silent” interaction for the outcome of the dialogue, something not commented on in literature.

## 16.1 Answers to the research questions

### 16.1.1 How are goals and effects of the Socratic dialogues described in literature?

The literature review shows that the Socratic traditions independently describe a similar, fairly simple, methodology to reach the same goals and effects. The rationales are that learning to think by cooperating and using language in this specific practice will result in intellectual and ethical growth. This growth is assumed to lead to a more democratic society where individuals will have the ability to live a good life by personal *bildning*. The complexity of real life makes it necessary to foster the ability to access “practical wisdom”: finding ways to act when confronted with a multiplicity of ideas and incongruent values.

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115 Roberts (1997), p. 26. The quote was revised by Roberts for this text in November 2007.

### 16.1.2 How are Socratic seminars described as a method in literature?

The methodology of Socratic seminars presupposes that learning is interactive: seminar culture is taught by role models. By practice, intellectual and dialogical habits of mind are to be internalized as virtues and “practical wisdom”. The individual will test and elaborate interpersonally in cooperative interaction, but will also, by using personal experience, test the findings intrapersonally; the methodology is constructed to train this. The seminars should train analysis of ideas by connecting them to each other and being open to adjustment to new ideas. The literature analysis found that the methodological steps intend to train the habits, and that the steps are constructed to serve different purposes in this learning process: some steps intend to train the open seminar culture, some to promote investigation by taking a distance from everyday pre-judgments, and some to connect the topics being discussed to personal experiences. The ideal dialogical relations are complex:

- The contextual construction presupposes a group process and an individual process going on at the same time and these are interdependent.
- There is a twofold cognitive focus: promoting dialogical habits of mind and promoting intellectual habits of mind, also interdependent.
- There is a “process” dimension of the seminar stressing how dialogue is carried out and a “product” dimension, stressing choices and these dimensions are also interdependent.
- To acquire knowledge the rational critical problem solving strategy and the intuitive creative element are equally important and interdependent.

The Socratic literature describes some differences from everyday classroom culture: the facilitator should not manipulate the ideas discussed, and the group should work as a cooperative, investigating team instead of merely answering the teacher’s questions.

### 16.1.3 How do the seminars differ from other types of classroom dialogue?

The seminar study shows that the skilled participants shifted their interaction from “conversation” to an “inquiring” dialogue, and that the distribution of power changed compared to classroom conversation in favor of a more polyphonic and cooperative interaction. There were some differences from everyday conventions: skilled participants accepted longer verbal pauses, and were not as occupied with “keeping the conversation going” as were the beginners; they were less accepting of manipulative turn-taking, and included several interlocutors at a time. The findings show that when the seminar was mistaken for the “classroom game”, the students and the teacher asked for, looked for, and wished to exhibit a “right” answer, and that discip-

lining was then done in a concealed fashion. A vital finding is that leaving the rules of the “classroom game”, but not actively promoting the seminar rules, left the interaction open to manipulation with negative consequences.

#### 16.1.4 How are the effects of the Socratic dialogue achieved?

The seminar study shows that it was possible to teach the seminar process by using the methods suggested in the literature, and that it was learnt while practicing. The learning period can be described as a series of developmental stages, partly different from the anticipated ideal Socratic seminar. In the beginning of the seminar training, the facilitator had to be more active than intended in the literature, if the training was to succeed. The results show that there were differences between the good intentions of some teachers, trying to change to seminar interaction, and their performance, continuing to use “classroom” strategies, which often caused negative reactions from the participants. This implies that behavior has to be uncovered, visualized, and discussed when training teachers.

The seminar study shows that it was vital to seminar teaching that the seminar was interpreted as a closed arena, a safe circle for intellectual experiments. This was marked by the seating, a closed room, and by the ritualized structure. The construction of the methodological steps had consequences when teaching and playing the “game”. The different steps had the anticipated effect and it proved important to a positive progress to present them in the suggested order and not leave any out. Contrary to some previous research, this study shows that the students developed their thinking skills over time, evolving from relativism to critical examination in the skilled groups. An explanation is that “textual” analysis helped the participants to take a distance to the personal self, and to look at ideas in new ways.

#### 16.1.5 What critical events or actions threaten the seminar?

Not introducing all seminar steps, or introducing them at another time than what is intended, was shown to threaten the outcome of the seminar, if not the seminar itself. Confusing the seminar game with the classroom game was one of the actions shown to threaten the seminar culture. When learning the seminar process, rule breaking shed light on the anticipated culture and was productive; when rule breaking was used to manipulate, it threatened the seminar. The study shows that it was essential that the facilitator learned to see this difference and how to handle rule breaking productively. Effective strategies were treating verbal actions intellectually or, when necessary, using open correction. The study reveals an interesting paradox: the rules of the game were in ways both the cause and the effect when learning; they were revealed by the facilitator and at the same time constructed by the participants in interaction.

### 16.1.6 How do participants develop and protect the seminar culture?

The seminar study shows that there were differences in how the learners and the skilled participants coped with new ideas. The learners stated their personal ideas, maybe picked some lines of thought up from others, and accepted the ideas or protested. The skilled participants built their ideas on the previous ideas of other participants and reacted to new ideas by examining them together. The group gradually learned to cooperate and to use each other when investigating, building the dialogue in stages (see figure 3). A fruitful distance was accomplished by the participants building a mutual “silent” contract, using gestures and glances. This relationship was built anew in every seminar. The group spontaneously “personified” different values or roles during the seminar as an effective way of learning to see the different arguments. At length, this probably taught a strategy when investigating a problem or a dilemma from different angles.

Promoting and carrying out this mutuality of the game, or showing what is not acceptable in the groups almost entirely was done by “silent” interaction. The study exposes intricate “silent” moves made by individuals to communicate, cooperate, or oppose. The skilled participants cooperated silently to protect the game when it was threatened. Younger participants used more gestures, often to support speech. The intellectual process was mostly carried out by verbal participation. The results, however, show that verbally silent participants were actively participating in the dialogue. This calls for an extended interpretation of the concept of “participation”; it’s not a question of talking but of being interactively engaged.

## 16.2 Discussion

Before starting the study, I had some concerns: How could I describe the important elements in a successful seminar in order to improve the seminar training? Can Socratic seminars as a method contribute to how ethics, values and democracy should be taught in school? How can multimodal group interaction be studied? From my own experiences with Socratic seminars, I was interested in whether it was possible to teach thinking in seminar and how it was done – was it individual or “group-thinking”? The research questions I decided on had to be more specific, but answering the questions in the literature and in the seminar study has also helped me to come to some understandings of my basic concerns and I will shortly discuss them here.

### 16.2.1 How DO we think?

Susan Pass (2004) attempts to merge Jean Piaget's and Lev Vygotsky's theories in a comprehensive theory of constructivism. Although she does not completely succeed with that mission, one of her theses is interesting. Pass suggests that the differences between Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories: whether learning to think is an innate or a contextual process, emerged from their own social experiences when growing up, resulting in different personal strategies for learning and understanding. Because they experienced different conditions, they reached different conclusions as to how we learn and think. Taking this line of thought further, what they describe isn't really the process with which we think, but rather, as John Dewey puts it, HOW we think, the strategies we use to think productively. As such they are teachable. Saying this, I'm not attempting to challenge either of the theories here referred to. I'm merely using some of the theories to illuminate how teaching to think is staged in Socratic seminars. It is the Aristotelian idea of learning habits of mind through role models and internalizing these to "practical wisdom" at length. The methodological steps in Socratic seminars are constructed so that the group's actions will teach the individual different thinking strategies and these will gradually be internalized by the individual.

But are the students learning to think well? Previous research shows that the methods have positive effects on critical thinking skills. This study shows that the students could learn the "game", which is not the same thing as thinking well. However, in the skilled groups the "game" seemed to help the students to gradually grasp the thinking strategies: they spontaneously cooperated to explore ways to look at the ideas examined in the seminar, and they found and investigated new ideas. The context provided an arena where the students at least learned critical thinking strategies.

### 16.2.2 The open society and its friends

Securing and enhancing democracy is the ultimate goal anticipated by the initiators of the Socratic traditions. But what kind of democracy? It is hard to really tell whether the same rationales are aimed at by the different promoters, even if the Socratic concept of democracy basically aims at preparing citizens to participate in democracy by promoting critical thinking and an open dialogue – it is essentially a pedagogic activity. The seminars that were filmed slowly changed the classroom dialogue to a more polyphonic and, if you will, democratic dialogue. But this happened with a didactic approach and not by using the idealized interaction that is supposed to dominate the seminar. This interaction was in fact eventually reached in the successful groups, but all groups went through a series of learning stages, where other types of interactions were exposed. One of the problems of teaching the seminar was that the teachers themselves had to adapt to other ways of acting,

ways which they normally didn't use in the classroom. They also had to deal with other ways of teaching ethics.

In "The open society and its enemies" Karl Popper (1971) pleads for every individual's responsibility to use his or her intellect, and not to be seduced by any ideas without examination, as the only way to form an open democratic society. But is it at all possible for the individual to attain such autonomy? From an extreme social constructivist point of view this should not be possible; values and moral norms are seen as social constructions and the autonomous individual is a chimera. Understanding the same process from the extreme opposite (phenomenological) perspective, the individual actively creates his or her own personality and the personal understanding of the context and there is no real contextual learning. Maybe learning democracy has to promote both, the contextual learning providing the opportunity to construct social practices to foster the individual to relative autonomy. If this is to take place in school we probably will have to realize that the way to reach the goal may look different than the goal itself. In the seminar practice studied here, this was what seemed to happen in the successful groups: the productive and egalitarian culture was an effect of following the methodology. It also seemed a difficult thing to learn: not letting the teacher's or a dominant participant's view to become the final answer.

### 16.2.3 Should Socrates apologize?

Navigating a society where few norms are considered general, static, or predictable, and where natural fundamental values are hard to define, presupposes the ability to assess different alternatives, critically examine them, and to make choices and act on these, in short - "practical wisdom". The Socratic seminar offers a fairly easy methodology to teach not only strategies of critical thinking, but important interactive skills to children as well as to adults. It has the potential power to change the distribution of power in the classroom, without threatening the discipline. Teachers and students have no role models when learning this different game. The training takes time, but the effects ought to make it worthwhile.

One thing that I will continue to carry with me from this study is the ability that children have to make meaning out of the turmoil of the group interaction. Hundreds of subtle messages sent and interpreted in a couple of seconds, resulting in responses of different kinds, give witness to an extraordinary human talent. The craving to make meaning out of context is probably one of our human marks of nobility. On the other hand, if this was our sole ability, progress would not be possible. Cooperation in making meaning out of the complexity of life must be combined with the necessary autonomy to think bold new thoughts. And as for thinking the "right" thoughts: like Socrates and the *bildning* tradition, probably we can but put our faith in our



mutual bond as humans and train the virtues of the young so that they are able to appreciate the human community.

#### 16.2.4 Implications for teachers' education

This study shows that the Socratic dialogue is more polyphonic than everyday classroom practice and that it nurtures cooperation and critical thinking skills. It also fosters the ability to examine and understand the central ideas of each school subject. The biggest challenge when teaching dialogue is changing the codes and the common distribution of power of the classroom. This change can only occur over time and with patience – the groups and teachers which are most successful at the end of the project have had seminars on a regular basis for two years at least. Practice is essential, as was the teacher's understanding of the unique structure and culture of the seminar. The Socratic seminar offers a vital piece of the puzzle when reforming education. It also offers a way for teacher trainees to probe into the questions and dilemmas that their own education might raise. While working with the study I have had the opportunity to work with teacher trainees and with practitioners, staging seminars, using manuscripts from the filmed sequences as well as other material presented in this study, to discuss the outcomes and which strategies to use. This study could lead to a set of training materials which uncover and teach successful facilitation.

#### 16.2.5 Further research

The working order I used in this study was time consuming but has uncovered vital information about group interaction. There is more to be found in the filmed material in this study which was not addressed here. Individual development and individual actions over the entire seminars have not been the focus here but could be used as a means to see how the individual's "dialogical" and "intellectual" learning is accomplished. Comparing individual differences in intellectual ability within age/actual groups would be another project that might enrich our understanding of how thinking skills are developed. Gender and cultural differences are other areas of interest. Making use of the extensive material that originally was collected when starting the study –interviews, facilitators' diaries, and questionnaires – would make it possible to enrich this material with the opinions and experiences of the participants and facilitators. There are two areas which seem to me most intriguing for further investigation. One concerns a closer investigation of the use of the gestures of younger children in intellectual dialogues. The multi-modal interplay of verbal communication, gestures, and glances in the everyday classroom is another area where using a close-up methodology such as used in this study might shed more light on how that game is learned and played and at how incidents that threaten the game are dealt with.

# Svensk sammanfattning

Skulle icke de frågor, som filosofin handskas med, också kräva för sin lösning denna ytterliga ansträngning av tanken, som ligger i intuitionen, reflexionens höjande till en så ovanlig grad, att den icke är sig lik utan får annat namn? Ty vad är intuitionen annat än reflexionen, när denna lyckas i sin ansats?

Hans Larsson<sup>116</sup>

Sokratiska seminarier och liknande aktiviteter har praktiserats av filosofer och utbildare i olika länder som ett komplement till klassundervisning. Vilka effekter samtalen har och hur dessa effekter uppnås har inte genomlysts. De grundläggande antaganden som seminariemetodiken bygger på har inte heller undersökts systematiskt och de olika traditionerna har inte relaterats till varandra.

I Sverige, liksom i resten av västvärlden, har på senare tid utbildningssystemets förmåga att undervisa i etik, värden och demokrati diskuterats. En förklaring till det ökade intresset tycks vara de förändringar där samhället går från statiska, förutsägbara normer som anses allmängiltiga (Bäckström, Edgardh Beckman et al. 2004, Hareide 2002). När samhället blir mindre homogent förändras värdena från konventioner inom gruppen till relativism eller heterogena värden inom flera grupper. I den svenska skolans nuvarande läroplan betonas den pedagogiska vikten av att arbeta med elevernas ”värdegrund” (*Läroplaner för det obligatoriska skolväsendet och de frivilliga skolornerna, Lpo 94, Lpf 94*. 1994, Tham 2000). Problemet är att det är mycket svårt att definiera vad som är en gemensam ”värdegrund” (Hedin, Ladenperä 2002) Det är också svårt att hitta metoder för arbetet. Det Sokratiska seminariet erbjuder ett möjligt sätt att närma sig dessa frågor (Frånberg, Kallós 2002, Hansen 2002, Villa 2001)

Genom rikhaltig forskning känner vi till att lärarens röst dominerar klassrummet (Bellack, Kliebard et al. 1966, Dysthe 1996, Gustafson 1977, Hilllocks Jr. 1989, Nystrand 1997, Liljestränd 2002). När individuellt arbete eller grupparbete förekommer ändras mönstret till mer ”bänkprat”, eleverna pratar med varandra medan läraren leder lektionen (Lindblad, Sahlström 2001, Lindström, Arnegård et al. 2003, Tholander 2002, Sahlström 1999).

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116 Larsson (1904), sid. 59.

Konversationsmönstret i klassrummet är ofta begränsat till I-R-E: läraren initierar (Initiates) en fråga; eleven svarar (Responds), mer än hälften av svaren är på förhand givna (Goodlad 1983, Wolf, Crosson et al. 2006), läraren utvärderar svaret (Evaluates) (Lundgren 1981, Liljestrand 2002). Lektionen följer vissa "regler", där läraren dominerar och där eleverna söker avkoda vad läraren önskar (Edwards, Mercer 1987, Lemke 1990). Vissa elever dominerar deltagandet (Dysthe 1996, Sahlström 1999, Sahlström, Lindblad 1998).

Det Sokratiska seminariet syftar till att förändra klassrumskommunikationen till en mer polyfon och demokratisk dialog, där elevens kritiska tänkande gynnas. Seminarierna genomförs i grupp kring ett specifikt ämne och avser en öppen och utforskande dialog. Den begränsade tidigare forskningen rörande Sokratiska seminarier visar att samtalen delvis uppnår de avsedda positiva effekterna (Bird 1984, Cashman 1977, Feiertag, Chernoff 1987, Graup 1985, Billings 1999, Billings, Fitzgerald 2002, Haroutunian-Gordon 1991, Robinsson 2006, Wortham 2003, Tarkington 1989). Merparten av denna forskning har genomförts under förhållandevis kort tid (ca ett år) i nybörjargrupper och har koncentrerat sig på lärarens roll och samspel med individuella elever. Genom att studera grupper som har deltagit i samtal under en längre tid tillför denna studie en bredare kunskap om Sokratiska seminarier.

## Forskningsfrågor och design

Följande forskningsfrågor ställdes:

I. Den teoretiska litteraturstudien

*Hur beskrivs den Sokratiska dialogens mål och effekter i litteraturen?*

*Hur beskrivs det Sokratiska seminariet som metod i litteraturen?*

II. Den empiriska seminariestudien

*Hur skiljer sig seminarierna från andra typer av klassrumsdialoger?*

*Hur uppnås den Sokratiska dialogens effekter?*

*Vilka kritiska händelser och handlingar hotar seminariet?*

*Hur utvecklar och skyddar deltagarna seminarietkulturen?*

Forskningsdesignen resulterade i två olika delar, var och en med eget fokus. Sektion I består av en teoretisk litteraturgenomgång som utforskar och analyserar de grundantaganden som görs i de Sokratiska traditionernas metodologi. Ingen sådan övergripande genomgång har tidigare genomförts. Litteratur med anknytning till Sokratiske dialog eller lärande i seminarium gicks igenom och traditioner och metoder sorterades utifrån likhet och relevans. Sektion II är en studie av 16 Sokratiska seminarier i grupper med barn i åldern fem till sexton år, genomförda under tre år. Seminarierna videofilmades och transkriberades. Kroppsspråk, blickriktning och gruppinteraktion analyserades noga genom en fenomenologisk ansats. Analysen fokuserade på hur

seminariekulturen lärdes ut, hur den förstods och om den avsedda metodologin hade betydelse. Utförliga utdrag av seminarierna redogör för de händelser som skedde i seminariet efter det att en ny idé presenterats eller någon brutit mot seminarieregler. De ursprungliga transkriptionerna gjordes i matrisform, där tal, gester och blickar hos samtliga deltagare transkriberades (se Appendix A).

## Litteratur om Sokratis dialog

I litteraturgenomgången presenteras ett antal traditioner som beskriver Sokratis eller liknande dialoger som en pedagogisk metod. Sokrates är den huvudsakliga inspirationskällan till de moderna försöken att introducera seminarier med återkommande metodiska inslag. Genomgången visar att det av metodologiska skäl är viktigt att skilja ”Sokrates röst” (så som den representeras i Platons tidigare verk) från Platons (representerad i Platons senare verk). De Sokratisiska traditionerna omfattar Aristoteles idé att tänkande och etik lärs som vanor, som senare integreras som dygder och ”praktisk visdom”. Två samtida rörelser har bidragit med relevanta idéer kring lärande och tänkande med delvis samma målsättning: den progressiva pedagogiken i Europa och USA samt bildningsrörelsen i Tyskland och Skandinavien. John Deweys (1997) och Celestin Freinets (1988) idéer om dialog i undervisningen representerar här den progressiva rörelsen. De deliberativa dialogerna kan ses som en modern efterföljare. Här används dialogen till största del som ett sätt att finna gemensamma överenskommelser i gruppens kooperativa arbete. Inom bildningstraditionen finns en rad olika inriktningar. En av dessa, en gren av den svenska folkbildningsrörelsen, utarbetade metodologiska anvisningar för Sokratisiska seminarier som studiecirkel inom Godtemplarrörelsen och arbetarrörelsen, främst genom Hans Larssons (1925), Oscar Olssons (1911) och Alf Ahlbergs (1986) arbete. Motsvarande metodologi användes också av Leonard Nelson (1965) vid tyska universitet i början av 1900-talet, hos Great Books och i Paideia seminarier främst genom Mortimer J. Adlers (1990) arbete i USA, samt i Lars Lindströms (2000) arbete med Sokratisiska samtal i Sverige. En rad olika traditioner som arbetar pedagogiskt med barn representerar liknande arbetssätt: Gareth B Matthews (1992) och Matthew Lipman (1980), P4C och PWC.

Genom att styra vissa kontextuella och metodologiska faktorer tänker man sig att det avsedda lärandet ska ske. Samtalen ska helst hållas på en regelbunden basis. Deltagarna ska vara placerade så att de ser varandra och gruppen bör inte vara för stor (ca 10-15 deltagare). Samtliga deltagare ska ha en kopia av det underlag som diskuteras och ska ha förberett sig före samtalet. Som underlag kan såväl litteratur som konst, musik, grafer mm användas och underlaget bör väcka frågor och funderingar. Seminarieledarens roll skiljer sig från den deltagandes. Även om han eller hon bör vara en med-

människa i den demokratiska dialogen så bör seminarieledaren därutöver kontrollera de metodiska stegen, så att samtalet går framåt. Däremot bör seminarieledaren avstå från att kontrollera innehållet i det som sägs eller de värderingar och idéer som kommer fram i samtalet.

## Resultat av litteraturanalysen

Litteraturanalysen visar att de Sokratiska traditionerna oberoende av varandra beskriver en uppsättning liknande, relativt enkla metodologiska steg för att nå samma mål och effekter. De centrala idéerna är att man lär sig att tänka genom att samarbeta och använda språk i denna specifika praktik och att detta kommer att resultera i intellektuell och moralisk utveckling. Denna utveckling förväntas leda till ett mer demokratiskt samhälle där individer har förmåga att leva ett gott liv genom personlig bildning. Det är svårt att avgöra i vilken grad de olika traditionerna verkligen avser samma sak med begrepp som demokrati och bildning eller om deras höga målsättningar verkligen genomfördes i praktiken. I denna studie är den frågan av underordnad betydelse, eftersom det här handlar om att söka efter den avsedda metodologin. I samtliga traditioner anser man att värden och idéer måste förhandlas, testas och tolkas. Det finns dock en motsättning mellan de pragmatiska traditionerna med bl.a. John Dewey och deliberativa samtal och de andra, Sokratiska traditionerna. De pragmatiska traditionerna anser att idéer alltid måste förändras när tiderna förändras. De Sokratiska traditionerna menar att det finns en uppsättning idéer som ständigt återkommer i mänskligt tänkande. Till skillnad från de progressiva och deliberativa traditionerna söker de Sokratiska ingen gemensam konsensus i sina dialoger, snarare motsatsen, eftersom fler idéer uppmuntrar till fortsatt utredande. Det verkliga livets komplexitet gör det nödvändigt att fostra förmågan att använda ”praktisk visdom”: att hitta vägar att agera när man konfronteras med många idéer och inkongruenta värden, menar man.

Metodologin i de Sokratiska samtalen förutsätter att lärandet är interaktivt: seminariekulturen lärs ut interaktivt genom rollförebilder. Genom övning internaliseras intellektuella och kommunikativa vanor (habits of mind) till dygder (förhållningssätt) och ”praktisk visdom” (gott omdöme). Individen kommer att testa och utforska interpersonellt i samarbetande interaktion men kommer också att testa sina interaktiva erfarenheter intrapersonellt, i en intern, kognitiv process. Den intellektuella processen i seminarierna antas ske genom två sätt att hantera tolkning: tolka assimilerande (cf. Gadamer 1994, cf. Piaget 1971) och tolka ackommoderande, justerande, när nya idéer väcks (cf. Piaget 1971, cf. Vygotsky 1978). Båda sätten startar i en förförståelse som gör det möjligt för oss att fatta det som ska tolkas i ett slags första skede. Det ackommoderande sättet är ett resultat av en kreativ, intuitiv process, där nya, djärva idéer testas. Detta avses gälla både gruppen och indivi-

den. Dessa interpersonella och intrapersonella processer är beroende av varandra. Gruppens handlingar kommer efter hand att internaliseras av individen: de interpersonella tankesätten kommer att lära individen ett sätt att tänka, en vana som blir en dygd och senare ”praktisk visdom” eller karaktär. Det antyder att gruppen fungerar som ”mästare” till individen, ”lärlingen”. Dialogen ska fungera som ett stöd för att denna internalisering sker genom att en öppen atmosfär skapas, en arena som gör det möjligt att ta intellektuella risker. Seminariet blir ett ”spel” som ska spelas, med särskilda regler att lära sig och behärska. Metodens olika steg är konstruerade så att de ska ha olika funktion för att stödja lärandeprocessen och de är också avsedda att aktivera olika psykologiska och intellektuella processer:

1. Före seminariet: Individuell läsning/tolkning:

*Funktion:* Aktivera individens förståelse genom tänkande och analys.

*Psykologisk process:* Ta distans till det egna jaget.

*Intellektuell process:* Intrapersonell-kreativ ackommodation.

2. & 4. Pre- and post-seminarium: Personliga mål och gruppmål formuleras och utvärderas:

*Funktion:* Fokus på seminariets ”regler” och de kommunikativa dygderna.

*Psykologisk process:* Utvärdering av personligt och grupp beteende.

*Intellektuell process:* Intrapersonell och interpersonell-kumulativ.

3a. Första seminariesteget: Inledande fråga:

*Funktion:* Relatera idéer till deltagarens nuvarande förståelse, visa på idéerna i underlaget.

*Psykologisk process:* Deltagaren är här ansvarig för den förståelse som han/hon har vid starten, innan deltagandet i grupptänkandet.

*Intellektuell process:* Intrapersonell-kumulativ.

3b. Andra seminariesteget: Analys av underlaget:

*Funktion:* Göra det möjligt att distansera sig från den vardagliga erfarenheten genom att i samarbete i grupp kritiskt analysera underlaget (använda Sokratiske elenchus).

*Psykologisk process:* Vara fri att prova annorlunda tankar utan att hållas personligen ansvarig.

*Intellektuell process:* Interpersonell-kreativ ackommodering.

3c. Tredje seminariesteget: Relatera idéerna till sig själv:

*Funktion:* Att relatera de nya idéerna till deltagarens vardagsliv.

*Psykologisk process:* Personligen integrera nya kunskaper och insikter.

*Intellektuell process:* Interpersonell-kumulativ.

Det finns en parvis relation mellan de olika stegen (se figur 1). En mediering avses ske mellan stegen utanför och innanför själva det Sokratiske samtalet och lärandet avses påverka seminariet praktiken över tid och även kommunikativa praktiker utanför seminarierna. Detta avses påverka förmågan till kritiskt tänkande, självförtroendet och förmågan att utöva medborgarskap.

## Resultat av seminariestudien

Seminariestudien visar att de skickliga deltagarna ändrade sin interaktion från konversation till en utforskande dialog, och att klassrummets maktfördelning förändrades till förmån för en mer polyfon och samarbetade interaktion om seminarieledaren och deltagarna insåg och accepterade de viktiga elementen i spelet och hur det lärs. Resultaten visar att när seminariet miss-togs för att vara ”klassrumsspel” letade både lärare och elever efter (och försökte uppvisa) ett ”rätt” svar. Disciplinering skedde då mer dolt. Ett viktigt resultat är att om gruppen lämnar reglerna för ”klassrumsspelet” utan att aktivt använda seminariereglererna, lämnas interaktionen öppen för manipulation med negativa konsekvenser.

Seminariestudien visar att det var möjligt att lära sig det avsedda Sokratiska seminariet genom att använda de metoder som föreslås i litteraturen, och att lärandet skedde medan man praktiserade. Lärandeperioden var en serie utvecklingssteg, delvis annorlunda än det avsedda idealet. Tre stadier i lärandet utkristalliserades: 1) att förstå vad seminariespelet handlade om, 2) att testa spelet genom att fokusera på dess regler och 3) att fokusera på det intellektuella innehållet. I början av lärandet var seminarieledaren tvungen att vara mer aktiv än vad som förutsetts i litteraturen om träningen skulle lyckas. Seminarieledaren fungerade som en förebild genom att skapa en trygg seminariecirkel och stimulera till ett utforskande samarbete, och balanserade mellan att lära gruppen seminariespelet och samtidigt leva upp till rollen som seminarieledare. Hur steg 2 hanterades visade sig vara av stor betydelse för om gruppens fortsatta seminarier skulle bli framgångsrika. Resultatet visar att det fanns skillnader mellan de goda intentioner som flera lärare visade att vilja förändra sig mot seminariemetodik och deras faktiska prestation, eftersom de fortsatte att använda ”klassrumsstrategier”, vilket ofta ledde till negativa reaktioner hos deltagarna. Detta antyder att beteendet måste tydliggöras, visualiseras och diskuteras i lärarutbildningen.

Studien visar att det är väsentligt att seminariet tolkas som en sluten arena, trygg för att genomföra intellektuella experiment. Detta markerades genom placering, ett avgränsat rum och av den ritualiserade strukturen. De metodologiska stegen konstruktion hade betydelse när det gällde att lära sig att spela ”spelet”. De olika stegen hade de avsedda effekterna och det visade sig vara väsentligt för en positiv utveckling att de presenterades i den föreslagna ordningen och att inga steg utelämnades. Tvärtemot vad som visats i en del tidigare studier visar denna studie att eleverna utvecklade sitt tänkande över tid. De skickliga grupperna utvecklades från relativism till kritisk undersökning. En förklaring är att analysen av textunderlaget hjälpte deltagarna att skapa en distans till det egna jaget och att se på idéer på nya sätt. Ett annat sätt att erhålla en fruktbar distans i denna studie kunde åstadkommas genom att deltagarna ingick ett gemensamt ”tyst” kontrakt genom gester och blickar. I skickliga grupper stöddes det gemensamma spelet främst ge-

nom ”tyst” interaktion: genom aktivt stöd och försvar av spelet och genom att signalera acceptering och samverkan när man motsade en annan persons uttalande. Det visade sig nödvändigt att deltagarna förstod att alla måste ta ansvar för hela gruppens idéer. Denna relation byggdes upp på nytt i varje seminarium genom att man följde seminariestegen. Gruppen ”personifierade” ofta spontant olika värden genom att fördela roller, troligen som ett effektivt sätt att lära sig att se de olika argumenten. I längden tränade detta troligen en strategi för att undersöka ett problems eller ett dilemmas olika sidor. Gruppen lärde sig gradvis att samarbeta och använda varandra vid utforskandet, genom att bygga dialogen i steg liknande de som Karl Popper (2007) anger för kritiskt, vetenskapligt tänkande (se figur 3). Dialogen visade få avvikelser från konventionerna i vardagskonversation. Skickliga deltagare accepterade längre pauser i talet och de var inte så upptagna med att ”hålla igång diskussionen” som nybörjare var. De visade mindre acceptans mot manipulation vid turtagning och inkluderade fler samtalspartners i taget.

Att inte introducera alla seminariesteg eller att introducera dem vid en annan tidpunkt än den avsedda visade sig hota seminariets resultat, om än inte själva seminariet. Att blanda ihop seminariespelet med klassrumsspel var en av de handlingar som visade sig hota seminariekulturen. Regelbrott under själva inlärningsperioden visade sig dock vara produktiva, eftersom de synliggjorde den eftersträfvade kulturen. Seminariereglerna bröts av tre olika skäl: A) för att de inte förstods B) avsiktligt för att manipulera eller testa och C) för något som ansågs vara ett högre ändamål. Regelbrotten i A var ett sätt att lära sig spelet, men B och C hotade i huvudsak seminariet. Seminarieleddaren och deltagarna samarbetade eller inte, för att stödja seminariet. Den ickeverbala, inofficiella interaktionen tjänade ofta till att konstruera subgrupper som hotade spelet. Studien visade att det var viktigt att seminarieleddaren lärde sig att se skillnad på de olika typerna av regelbrott och hur dessa skulle hanteras på ett produktivt sätt. Effektiva strategier var att behandla verbal interaktion intellektuellt eller, när det var nödvändigt, använda sig av öppen korrigerande. Studien avslöjar en intressant paradox: spelets regler synliggjordes av seminarieleddaren och konstruerades samtidigt i interaktionen av deltagarna. Seminariestudien visar att ”tyst” interaktion främst användes när det gällde att stödja och genomföra det gemensamma spelet, eller att visa vad som inte accepterades i gruppen. Individerna genomförde ett avancerat ”tyst” samspel för att kommunicera med varandra, för att samarbeta med eller motarbeta varandra. Yngre deltagare använde fler gester, ofta för att stödja sitt tal. Den intellektuella processen utvecklades främst genom verbalt deltagande. Resultaten visar dock att många verbalt tysta deltagare aktivt deltog i dialogen. Det skulle tala för ett utvidgande av begreppet ”deltagande”. Det är inte en fråga om att tala, utan en fråga om att vara engagerad i ett socialt samspel.



## Resumen en Español

La liberación auténtica es la humanización en el proceso, no es cosa que se deposite en los hombres.

Paulo Freire<sup>117</sup>

Los seminarios Socráticos y actividades similares, han sido utilizados por filósofos y educadores en diferentes países como un complemento a la enseñanza en la sala de clase. Ni los efectos de las conversaciones, ni los principios del método Socrático han sido estudiados en forma sistemática.

En Suecia, como en el resto del mundo Occidental, se ha discutido la capacidad del sistema de educación para enseñar valores éticos y democráticos. Una explicación de este interés acumulado, pueden ser los cambios de la sociedad que se apartan de las normas estáticas y predecibles que se consideran universales (Bäckström et al. 2004, Hareide 2002). Cuando la sociedad deja de ser homogénea se transforman los valores de convenciones hacia el relativismo y valores heterogéneos. En el plan de educación Sueco actual, se acentúa la importancia pedagógica de trabajar con el “fundamento de valores” (“värdegrund”) de los alumnos (*Curriculum for the Compulsory School System, Lpo 94*. 2006, Tham 2000). El problema es que un “fundamento de valores” común es muy difícil para definir (Hedin & Lahdenperä, 2002). También es difícil encontrar métodos para hacer este trabajo. El seminario Socrático ofrece una posibilidad de acercarse a estas preguntas (Frånberg, Kallós 2002, Hansen 2002, Villa 2001).

Gracias a investigaciones sabemos que la voz del profesor domina en la sala de clases (Bellack et al. 1966, Dysthe 1996, Gustafsson 1977, Hillocks Jr 1989, Nystrand 1997, Liljestrand 2002). Cuando el trabajo es individual o en grupo se cambia más a “conversación de banco”, los alumnos hablan entre ellos mientras el profesor dirige la clase (Lindblad, Sahlström 2001, Lindström et al. 2003, Tholander 2002, Sahlström 1999). El sistema de conversación por lo general se limita a I-R-E: el profesor inicia (Initiates) una pregunta; el alumno responde (Responds), más de la mitad de las respuestas han sido dadas de antemano (Goodlad 1983, Wolf et al. 2006), el profesor evalúa la respuesta (Evaluates) (Lundgren, 1981, Liljestrand, 2002). La clase

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<sup>117</sup> Freire (1970), página 84.

sigue ciertas “reglas”, donde el profesor domina y los alumnos tratan de descifrar lo que el profesor desea (Edwards, Mercer 1987, Lemke 1990). Ciertos alumnos dominan la participación. (Dysthe 1996, Sahlström 1999, Sahlström, Lindblad 1998).

El seminario Socrático intenta cambiar la comunicación de la sala de clase a un diálogo más polifónico y democrático, donde el pensamiento crítico del alumno se beneficia. Los seminarios se realizan en grupo acerca de un tema específico y se refieren a un diálogo abierto y explorativo. Las limitadas investigaciones científicas sobre el seminario Socrático muestran que las conversaciones en parte logran las metas propuestas Bird 1984, Cashman 1977, Feiertag, Chernoff 1987, Graup 1985, Billings 1999, Billings & Fitzgerald 2002, Haroutunian-Gordon 1991, Robinson 2006, Wortham 2003, Tarkington 1989). La mayoría de las investigaciones se han hecho en un período relativamente breve de tiempo (ca 1 año) en grupos de principiantes, y se han concentrado en el rol del profesor e interacción con alumnos individuales. Este estudio contribuye al conocimiento general de los seminarios Socráticos al estudiar grupos que han participado en conversaciones durante un período mayor de tiempo.

## Las siguientes preguntas se hicieron:

### I. El estudio de literatura teórica

*¿Cómo se describen las metas del diálogo Socrático en la literatura?*

*¿Cómo se describe el seminario Socrático como método en la literatura?*

### II. El estudio empírico del seminario

*¿Cuál es la diferencia entre el seminario y otros tipos de diálogos en la sala de clase?*

*¿Cómo se adquieren los efectos del diálogo Socrático?*

*¿Qué acciones y acontecimientos amenazan el seminario?*

*¿Cómo desarrollan y protegen los participantes la cultura del seminario?*

El diseño científico resultó en dos partes, cada cual con su propio centro. La primera sección contiene un estudio de la literatura teórica que explora y analiza las suposiciones de la metodología Socrática. Nunca se ha hecho un estudio similar antes. Tradiciones y métodos que aparecían en la literatura se ordenaban por relevancia o semejanza. La segunda sección es un estudio de 16 seminarios Socráticos en grupos de niños en las edades de cinco a dieciséis, durante un período de trece años. Los seminarios se filmaron y transcribieron. Expresión corporal, mirada e interacción del grupo, se analizaron cuidadosamente con una perspectiva fenomenológica. El análisis se concentró en cómo se enseñaba la cultura del seminario, como se entendía, y si la metodología tenía importancia. Extractos de los seminarios muestran los acontecimientos en los seminarios después que se haya presentado una idea nueva o alguien haya roto con alguna regla. Las transcripciones originales se

hicieron en una matriz, donde discursos, gestos y miradas se transcribieron (ver Apéndice A).

## Literatura sobre el diálogo Socrático

En la literatura se presentan unas cuantas tradiciones que describen diálogos Socráticos o semejantes como método pedagógico. Sócrates es la inspiración central a los intentos modernos de introducir seminarios con componentes metodológicos. Es importante distinguir “la voz de Sócrates” (como se presenta en las obras de Platon). Las tradiciones Socráticas incluyen las ideas de Aristóteles en que el pensamiento y la ética se enseña como costumbres, que después se integran como virtudes y “sabiduría práctica”. Dos movimientos contemporáneos han contribuido con ideas relevantes acerca del aprendizaje y pensamiento y en parte con las mismas metas: la pedagogía progresiva en Europa y los Estados Unidos, y además el movimiento de formación en Alemania y Escandinavia. Las ideas de John Dewey (1997) y Celestin Freinet (1988) sobre el diálogo en la educación representan aquí el movimiento progresivo. Los diálogos deliberativos se pueden considerar un sucesor moderno. Aquí se usa el diálogo como una forma para encontrar acuerdos comunes para el trabajo cooperativo. Dentro de la tradición de formación hay una serie de orientaciones. Una de esas, una rama del movimiento de formación Sueco popular, trabajo directivos metodológicos para seminarios Socráticos dentro del movimiento de Godtemplar y el movimiento de los trabajadores, sobre todo con los trabajos de Hans Larsson (1925), Oscar Olsson (1911) y Alf Alhberg (1986). La misma metodología se usó también por Leonard Nelson (1965) en las universidades alemanas a principio del siglo 20, en los seminarios de Great Books y Paideia sobre todo con el trabajo de Mortimer J Adler (1990) en los Estados Unidos, y con el trabajo de Lars Lindström (2000) en Suecia. Una serie de tradiciones que trabaja pedagógicamente con niños también representan formas de trabajo similares: Gareth B Matthews (1992) y Matthew Lipman (1980), P4C och PWC.

Manejando ciertos factores contextuales y metodológicos, se piensa que el aprendizaje va a ocurrir. Las conversaciones tienen que ocurrir regularmente. Cada participante debe tener una copia del material que se va a discutir y estar preparado para la conversación. Como material se puede utilizar arte, música, grafos etc y debe estimular preguntas. El rol del líder del seminario es diferente al de los participantes. Aunque él o ella debe ser un prójimo en el diálogo democrático, la persona en cargo debe controlar los pasos metódicos para que el diálogo avance. Sin embargo, no debe controlar el contenido de lo que se dice, ni los valores y ideas que salen de las conversaciones.

## Resultados del análisis de la literatura

El análisis muestra que las tradiciones socráticas independientemente contienen una serie de pasos simples metodológicos para llegar a objetivos y efectos similares. Las ideas centrales son que uno aprende a pensar utilizando el lenguaje y cooperando, y que de esta práctica va a resultar un desarrollo intelectual y moral. Este método se supone que va a llevar a una sociedad más democrática, donde cada individuo tiene la capacidad de vivir una vida rica con formación personal. Es difícil saber si las diferentes tradiciones realmente se refieren a lo mismo usando términos como democracia o formación, o si los objetivos se realizaron en la práctica. En este estudio esta pregunta resulta ser secundaria, ya que el objetivo primario fue buscar la metodología. En todas las tradiciones se piensa que valores e ideas se deben negociar, probar e interpretar. Hay una contradicción entre las tradiciones pragmáticas como las de John Dewey y los diálogos deliberativos, y las otras tradiciones Socráticas. Las tradiciones pragmáticas dicen que las ideas siempre deben ser cambiadas cuando el mundo cambia. Las tradiciones socráticas dicen que hay ciertas ideas que siempre van a estar presentes en el pensamiento humano. Al contrario de las tradiciones pragmáticas y deliberativas, no buscan las Socráticas un consenso en sus diálogos, si no que todo lo contrario, porque más ideas fomentan la continuación de la investigación. La complejidad de la vida real hace necesario enseñar la capacidad de la "sabiduría práctica": encontrar caminos para actuar cuando se confronta con muchas ideas y valores incongruentes.

La metodología Socrática propone que el aprendizaje es interactivo: la cultura del seminario se aprende con modelos. Con la práctica se internalizan hábitos intelectuales y comunicativos (habits of mind) hacia virtudes y "sabiduría práctica" (buen criterio). El individuo practica y explora interactivamente, pero también prueba sus experiencias en forma intrapersonal en un proceso interno y cognitivo. El proceso intelectual de los seminarios supuestamente ocurre gracias a dos formas de interpretación: asimilación (cf. Gadamer 1994, Piaget 1971) y acomodación, donde nuevas ideas se despiertan (cf. Vigosky 1978, Piaget 1971). Las dos formas empiezan dentro de unas presuposiciones que hacen posible interpretar en un primer paso. La acomodación es el resultado de un proceso creativo e intuitivo, en el cual nuevas ideas audaces se prueban. Esto pasa en el grupo como en el individuo. Estos procesos interpersonales e intrapersonales son mutuamente dependientes. Las acciones del grupo se internalizan en el individuo: las formas interpersonales forman un hábito de pensar que se transforma en una virtud y después a la "sabiduría práctica" o carácter. Esto implica que el grupo funciona como "maestro" para el individuo, el aprendiz. El diálogo que funciona como un apoyo para esta internalización, debe ocurrir en un ambiente abierto, un lugar que hace posible tomar riesgos intelectuales. El seminario se convierte en un "juego" con reglas específicas para aprender y aplicar. Los diferentes

pasos del método son construidos para que tengan diferentes funciones de apoyar el proceso de aprendizaje, y tienen también la intención de activar diferentes procesos intelectuales y psicológicos:

1. Antes del seminario: Lectura individual e interpretación.

*Función:* Activar las presuposiciones del individuo por medio del pensamiento y análisis.

*Proceso psicológico:* Distancia al ego propio.

*Proceso intelectual:* Acomodación creativa intrapersonal.

2 & 4. Pre- y post seminario: Objetivos personales y del grupo se formulan y evalúan.

*Función:* Foco en las “reglas” del seminario y las virtudes comunicativas.

*Proceso psicológico:* Evaluación y mejorar la conducta personal y del grupo.

*Proceso intelectual:* Acumulativo intrapersonal.

3a. Primer paso del seminario. Introducción

*Función:* Relacionar ideas con los conocimientos de los participantes, mostrar las ideas del material.

*Proceso psicológico:* El participante es responsable de sus presuposiciones al comienzo, antes de la participación en el pensamiento cooperativo del grupo.

*Proceso intelectual:* Acumulativo intrapersonal

3b. Segundo paso del seminario: Análisis del material.

*Función:* Hacer posible distanciarse de la experiencia diaria analizando el material en grupo (utilizar el *elenchus* Socrático).

*Proceso psicológico:* Estar libre para probar formas diferentes de pensar sin tomar responsabilidad personal.

*Proceso intelectual:* Interpersonal- creativo acomodativo.

3c. Tercer paso del seminario: Conectar las ideas con la experiencia propia

*Función:* Conectar las nuevas ideas a la vida diaria de los participantes.

*Proceso psicológico:* Integrar nuevos conocimientos al pensamiento personal.

*Proceso intelectual:* Interpersonal – acumulativo

También existe una relación recíproca entre los diferentes pasos (ver figura 1). Una mediación ocurre afuera y dentro del diálogo Socrático y el aprendizaje influye en la práctica del seminario y las prácticas comunicativas afuera del seminario. Esto influye en la capacidad del pensamiento crítico, el autoestima y la capacidad de practicar la ciudadanía.

## Resultado del estudio de seminario

El estudio de seminario muestra que los participantes eran capaces de cambiar su interacción de conversación a un diálogo explorativo. La distribución de poder en la sala de clase se transforma en una interacción más polifónica y cooperativa si los participantes y la persona a cargo ven y aceptan los importantes elementos del juego y la manera en que se aprenden. Los resulta-

dos muestran que cuando el seminario se confundía por un “juego de sala de clase” los participantes y el profesor buscaban (y trataban de demostrar) una respuesta “correcta”. La disciplina era en esos casos más explícita. Un resultado importante demuestra que si el grupo dejaba las reglas del “juego de sala de clase” sin activamente utilizar las reglas de seminario, se dejaba la interacción abierta para manipular con consecuencias negativas.

El estudio de seminario muestra que era posible aprender el seminario Socrático utilizando los métodos que propone la literatura, y que el aprendizaje ocurría mientras se practicaba. El periodo de aprendizaje era una serie de pasos de desarrollo, por parte diferente al ideal propuesto. Tres estadios se cristalizaron: 1) comprender de que se trataba el juego de seminario, 2) probar el juego concentrándose en las reglas y 3) concentrarse en el contenido intelectual. Al inicio de la capacitación el profesor debía ser más activo de lo que se espera en la literatura, para que la capacitación fuera exitosa. El líder del seminario funcionaba como modelo creando un círculo de seminario seguro, al mismo tiempo que funcionaba como responsable. La forma en que se llevó a cabo el paso 2 demostró ser importante para el éxito futuro de los seminarios del grupo. El resultado muestra que había una diferencia entre las buenas intenciones de los profesores que tenían que cambiar a un método de seminario, y las prestaciones reales, porque seguían utilizando “estrategias de sala de clase”, que muchas veces resultaban en reacciones negativas entre los participantes. Esto implica que el comportamiento debe hacerse claro, visualizarse y ser discutido dentro de la educación de profesores.

El estudio muestra que es esencial que el seminario se interprete como un espacio cerrado, seguro para conducir experimentos intelectuales. Esto se marcaba con la ubicación, un espacio cerrado y la estructura ritualizada. La construcción de los pasos metodológicos tenían importancia cuando se trataba de aprender a jugar “el juego”. Los diferentes pasos tenían los efectos propuestos, y eran esenciales para un desarrollo positivo si se presentaban en el orden propuesto y sin dejar ningún paso. Al contrario de lo que se había visto en algunos otros estudios, muestra este estudio que los alumnos desarrollaban su pensamiento por tiempo. Los grupos capaces se desarrollaban del relativismo a la exploración crítica. Una explicación es que el análisis del material ayudaba a los participantes a formar una distancia al propio ego y ver ideas de diferentes puntos de vista. Otra forma de obtener una distancia fértil era si los participantes formaban parte de un contrato “silencioso” por medio de gestos y miradas. En los grupos capaces se sostenía la interacción el juego en común por interacción “silenciosa”: con apoyo y defensa activa del juego y señalando participación y aceptación cuando se iba en contra de algún discurso de otra persona. Era necesario que los participantes se hicieran responsables de las ideas de todo el grupo. Esta relación se formaba de nuevo en cada seminario al seguir sus pasos. El grupo “personificaba” espontáneamente diferentes valores por la distribución de diferentes roles, probablemente como una forma eficiente de ver los diferentes argumentos.

Esto a largo plazo puede ser un ejercicio para ver los diferentes aspectos de un problema o dilema. Gradualmente aprendía el grupo a cooperar y a utilizarse en la exploración, formando el diálogo de acuerdo al pensamiento crítico científico de Karl Popper (2007) (ve figura 3). El diálogo mostraba pocas desviaciones de las convenciones de la conversación diaria. Los participantes capaces aceptaban pausas más largas y no estaban tan ocupados de “mantener la discusión” como los principiantes. Mostraban menos aceptación contra la manipulación de los turnos e incluían a más compañeros a la vez.

El no introducir todo los pasos o introducirlos en desorden, amenazaba el resultado del seminario, no el seminario en sí. Confundir el juego de seminario con el juego de sala de clase amenazaba la cultura de seminario totalmente. El romper con las reglas durante el proceso de aprendizaje se mostraba sin embargo productivo, porque enfocaba la cultura deseada. Las reglas se rompían por tres razones: A) por que no se entendían B) manipular intencionalmente o evaluar y C) por algo que se consideraba mas importante. Las violaciones de tipo A eran una forma de aprender el juego, pero las B y C amenazaban el seminario. La persona a cargo y los participantes cooperaban o no, para mantener el seminario. La interacción no verbal ni oficial servía para formar subgrupos que amenazaban el juego. El estudio demuestra que es importante que el líder sepa la diferencia entre los diferentes tipos de violaciones a las reglas y como manejarlas productivamente. Estrategias efectivas resultaron ser el tratar la interacción verbal intelectualmente, o cuando era necesario, corregir abiertamente. El estudio demuestra una paradoja interesante: las reglas eran revelados por el lider y a la vez se construían por la interacción de los participantes.

El estudio de seminario demuestra que la interacción ”silenciosa” generalmente se utilizaba cuando se trataba de apoyar y realizar el juego común, o para mostrar lo que no se aceptaba en el grupo. Los individuos ejecutaban una avanzada interacción “en silencio” para comunicarse entre ellos, para cooperar o para sabotearse. Participantes menores utilizaban más gestos, muchas veces para apoyar sus palabras. El proceso intelectual se desarrollaba sobre todo por participación verbal. El resultado muestra, sin embargo, que muchos de los participantes callados verbalmente participaban activamente en el diálogo. Esto indica una expansión del concepto “participar”. No es cuestion de hablar, si no que de estar dedicado en una interacción social.

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The Close

Thus thou hast seen in short, all things that can be shewed, and hast learned the chief Words of the English and Latin Tongue.

Go on now and read other good Books diligently, and thou shalt become learned, wise and godly.

Remember these things; fear God and call upon him, that he may bestow upon thee the Spirit of Wisdom.

Farewell.

Johan Amos Comenius<sup>118</sup>

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# Appendix

People underestimate the extent to which play enters into any serious intellectual endeavour. Doing something for the what-if fun of it frees one from the shackles of goal-directed plodding and sometimes leads to otherwise unlikely new insights. (And if it doesn't, so what?)

John Allen Paulos<sup>119</sup>

The appendixes are included in the DVDdisc attached to the book cover.

- A. Matrix transcription.
- B. Manuscript transcriptions in English.
- C. Seating and position of equipment.
- D. Description of the textual material.
- E. Socratic seminar rubrics.
- F. Film clips.
- G. Transcript summary matrix.

## List of tables

- 1. Sections and chapter relations (p. 7).
- 2. Example of rough transcript of complete seminar (p. 14).
- 3. Manuscript transcription of sequence (p. 15).
- 4. Matrix transcription of sequence (p. 16).
- 5. Chapter relations in literature review and analysis section (p. 26).
- 6. The Three Paideia Columns (p. 60).
- 7. Chapter relations in seminar study section (p. 88).
- 8. List of transcribed seminars (p. 90).
- 9. Types of dialogues in teaching (p. 95).
- 10. Participant differences from age and experience in seminar (p.198).
- 11. Facilitators' more or less productive strategies (p. 202).
- 12. Types of dialogues intended in Socratic seminar (p. 221).

## List of figures

- 1. Pair-relations in functions (p. 82).
- 2. Karl Popper's idea of scientific problem solving (p. 97).
- 3. Advanced intellectual process in seminar (p.224).

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<sup>119</sup> Paulos (2000) p. 23