Chapter 5: Facilitating children's narratives: meanings and methods of pedagogical innovation

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Abstract

As a companion to SHARMED training presented in chapter 10, this chapter evaluates how an array of actions, such as questions, invitations to talk, minimal responses, reformulations of children's contributions and facilitators' personal initiatives can support children's voices in actual classroom practice of facilitation. Several video-recorded and transcribed examples from the three participating countries are used for this purpose.

The chapter argues that facilitation can be successful in promoting children's agency as authorship of knowledge, towards the construction of communities of dialogue in the classroom that celebrate children's active contribution to their learning.

The chapter concludes by reminding that the aim of facilitation is to extend the range of actions available for children's autonomous choices, which is the key aspect of agency and genuine dialogic pedagogy. When facilitation is successful, non-hierarchical interactions are created where facilitators waive the possibility to control interaction, because this is requested by the support of children's agency.

5.1 Introduction

Based on rich data produced though the observation of SHARMED activities, this chapter discusses how children's authorship of narratives can be facilitated in practice, towards the construction of communities of dialogue in the classroom. The chapter is instrumental to the implementation of pedagogical innovation, providing examples and elements of reflection for teachers and educators who are interested in the methodology of facilitation. As a companion to SHARMED training presented in chapter 10, this chapter evaluates how an array of actions, such as questions, invitations to talk, minimal responses, reformulations of children's contributions and facilitators' personal initiatives can support children's voices in actual classroom practice of facilitation. Several video-recorded and transcribed examples from the three participating countries are used for this purpose. Before illustrating the results of the evaluation of facilitative activities, the reader is informed that chapter 10 does not only present SHARMED training philosophy and methodology but it also directs to freely accessible SHARMED online trainings.

5.2 Promoting narratives: inviting children to talk

Inviting children to talk can be the starting point for the production of narratives and therefore it plays a crucial part in transforming the classroom to a community of dialogue. Invitations to talk are also addressed to bystanders who may want to link new narratives to an ongoing one or, more often in our data, to a just completed one. A third function of invitations is to promote questions from bystanders concerning an ongoing narrative. The common thread underpinning the three functions of invitations to talk consists in the extension of the area of active participation, making invitations to talk a pillar of facilitation.

In actual interactive practices, invitations to talk are mostly produced as questions, both open questions and focused questions. The choice of an open or a closed format for questions is associated with different intentions of the facilitators, as will be discussed in the chapter. The first type of invitation to talk to be discussed in the chapter are invitations to start a new narrative.

In our corpora of data, invitations to start a narrative are often constructed as focused yes/no questions. Focused questions invite affirmative answers (Clayman and Loeb, 2018) whilst still keeping open the opportunity for children to make choices, including rejecting the invitation.

A second form of invitations to talk to start new narratives consists in open questions. Open questions have a higher potential to enhance children's agency because, differently from focused questions, they do not put the same level of constrain on children's actions.

In excerpt 1, the facilitator invites M12 to initiate a narrative about a photograph utilising a focused yes/no question (turn 1). M12 shows that he understands the pragmatic function of the question because he does not answer the focused question which is duly understood to be meant to be an invitation to talk. In turn 4, M12 starts a narrative. In the course of the narrative, the facilitator supports M12 through a variety of actions that encourage continuation (turns 5-11). Among those supporting action it is possible to identify a focused question (turn 7).

Excerpt 1

Italy (PS1, 4A, second meeting)

1. FAC: Can you you tell us about this photo?
2. Ins: sh
3. FAC: I steal your seat
4. M12: (I took:) photo photo: ID,
5. FAC: mh
6. M12: e: for e: for the police,
7. FAC: You too for the police?

8. M12: yes and then to take: the papers,

9. FAC: The documents

10. M12: Yes,

11. FAC: ah

Invitations to expand newly completed narratives aim to extend the areas of active participation, involving more children. In particular, invitations to expand concern the production of new narratives stemming from the completed one. Excerpt 2 is connotated by a series of invitations. In turn 1, the facilitator invites children to share a new narrative that could be linked to the newly completed one. The invitation is quickly taken up by F1, who narrates the sad circumstances of her cousin's death. In the continuation of the interaction, the facilitator systematically supports F1's narrative. When F1's narrative comes to a conclusion, the facilitator produces an invitation to expand with new narratives, asking a question to the cohort of children (turn 11). This second invitation to expand invites a series of contributions from children concerning the loss of loved ones. The interlacement of children's short contributions promoted by the focused questions in turn 11 is secured by more facilitator's focused questions in turns 15, 17 and 19.

Excerpt 2
Italy (SS1, 2A, first meeting)

1. FAC: Does it remind you some photo that you have at home?

2. F1: Yes that with my cousin that now is passed away

3. FAC: Your cousin?

4. F1: Yes

5. FAC: Did he leave you?

6. F1: e: when he was sixteen years old

7. FAC: ((nods)) did he have (.) an accident? [an illness?

8. F1: [((nods then pull head down with misty eyes))

9. FAC: ((nods)) so the the photo in this case could help you to to remember [eh?

10. F1 : [((nods with tears in her eyes))

11. FAC: To keep alive persons that that are gone do you have some photos that help you

12. M1: Like my cousin (.) also my cousin

13. FAC: That has has gone and that you remember because you see him him in photo

14. M1: ((we don't see if he nods))

15. FAC: or grandparents maybe someone grandparents (.) do you have grandparents that have passed away [because of their age:

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16. M5:   [I with my grandfather
17. FAC: And that you remember looking at photos?
18. F5:   ((nods))
19. FAC: Or that you only know because you see him/her in photo

Invitations to ask is a sub-type of invitations to talk that is addressed to create opportunities for other children to expand an ongoing narrative, rather than being used as an working as an invitation for children to ask questions to the current teller (turn 1). The invitation to talk succeeds in expanding the area of active participation, generating a series of comments and question around the ongoing narrative (turns 4, 5, 7, 10, 11 and 13).

Excerpt 3
Germany (PS5, 3B, first meeting)

1. FAC: do you have a question about the picture?
2. ((children put their hands up))
3. FAC: ((to F2)) yes?
4. F2:   here is- well I find this picture strange somehow
5. M8: it's strange because it's a screen.
6. FAC: yes?
7. M9: I wonder how he got on TV. .
8. M5: it was like this (.) there was a screen, behind it there was a dome. You could go in there and it would be transmitted automatically, but it wasn't really on TV. It was just a big TV where you go into it
9. FAC: [oh great]
10. M8: [oh cool]
11. M6: in which year was that?
12. M5: mmh umm
13. M6: two thousand and-
         (4.0)
14. M5: °°I don't know°°

In excerpt 4, the invitation to ask launched by the facilitator (turn 1) is followed by a question about an aspect of the ongoing narrative delivered by F1 (turn 2). Her question elevates F1 to the status of organiser of the interaction, as it succeeds in supporting an expansion of the ongoing narrative. The expanded narratives is

the object of a second question, this time from the facilitator, this time addressed to the current teller (turn 4) to support the continuation of the narrative.

Excerpt 4

UK (PS1, 6A, meeting 1)

1. FAC: ok, so anyone else to ask any questions on that one (points) or shall we move on onto our last (..)
    is that (..)? (..) do you want to
2. F1:   Um, what was your favourite part about the Ferrari World?
3. M2: Well, my favourite part was racing with my brother because whenever we did shared experience
    because he's older than me
4. FAC: Oh, he's older is he?
5. M2:   Yeah
6. FAC: yeah
7. M2: So once I beat him and when we went back, like after a few days (..) we had like a new house in
    Dubai so we set up everything in one week and then he kept on challenging me and we played
    outside and stuff then we had a few races

5.3 Asking questions to support narratives

Asking questions is a crucial component of any conversation. Asking questions is of course a pivotal action for any pedagogical endeavour. Questions can fulfil a range of tasks beyond seeking for information; from a pragmatist point of view, asking questions can do many different things; in the context of facilitation question can support authorship of narratives in conversations. Questions are therefore an important resource for facilitation. Section 5.2 highlights that there are different formats that questions can take; whilst all formats can successfully support active participation in conversation, there are differences of pedagogical relevance between focused questions and open questions: focused questions are effective in promoting participation, due to the pressure to provide an answer they exercise (Farini, 2011); however, a question concerns the quality of such participation that is often limited to the minimal answer invited by the focused alternative (Keevalik, 2010). Whilst still utilising the interactional power of questions, open questions open makes relevant a wider range of actions as a reply, beyond the choice of a binary alternative. This appears to be more attuned with the principles of facilitation; nevertheless, open questions do not provide the same 'safe guidance' to children as for the reaction to them; more possibilities for action entails more risk therefore a possibility that children choice to avoid the risk of a freer participation. Choosing between the two formats of question is often a delicate choice that can be supported by considering the needs of the specific

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interaction: focused questions can help to kick-off a struggling conversation, open question can work to further expand an already ongoing interactions.

However, an interest in the morphology of individual questions should not detract from the empirical reality of questioning in educational interactions, where pragmatic effects are achieved by sequences of questions rather than single questions. The support of children's narratives can be considered a possible pragmatic effect of questioning, and this section discusses how sequences of questions promote children's status as authors of narratives. In particular, the discussion will focus on two aspects related to questions in facilitation: 1) the insertion of questions in ongoing narratives; 2) the development of sequences of questions. Whilst section 5.2 discusses invitations to talk, where individual questions are used to initiate new narrative or to invite expansion of narratives, in this section the focus shifts towards sequences of questions when facilitator access the role of co-authors of narratives.

Expansions of narratives can be supported by open questions (henceforth OQ) that lend themselves as a tool to promote further developments. When used to support the expansion of narratives, OQs are often followed by series of focused questions (henceforth FQ) addressed to specific aspect of the narrative. Excerpt 5 illustrate the effects of series of questions. It is presented in two parts.

In the first part (turns 1-19), an OQ in turn 1 explores the reasons for F7's choice of the photograph. F7's reply suggests some hesitation; in turn 3 the facilitator formulates a FQ addressed to a specific aspect of the ongoing narrative (presented in an earlier phase). As suggested, whilst OQs offer more opportunity for choice, FQs can be more effective in supporting action, albeit within a more limited range. Following F7's affirmative reply to the first FQ, a series of FQs is devoted to explore the child's feelings (turns 5, 9, 14). The first part of the excerpt closes with a further FQ shifting the focus of the interaction towards presents for parents.

Excerpt 5

Italy (SP1, 4C, third meeting)

1. FAC: And how was that you chose to bring us just this picture=
2. F7: e: because:
3. FAC: I mean this picture gift that your uncle did to your aunt is one thing that you too liked?
4. F7: Yes
5. FAC: Because you like flowers?
6. F7: ((nods)) and (5.0) I took the picture because it was the day of Saint Valentine
7. FAC: Which is the day of lovers

8. F7: ((nods))

9. FAC: And are you in love?

10. F7:   [no

11. Alcuni: [hh

12. 12. FAC: no?

13. F7:   no

14. FAC: Well your parents (.) you have haven't you? A feeling of love for your parents

15. F7: ((nods)) yes

16. FAC: But you did not make any gift to them

17. F7: yes [e:

18. FAC: [Did you make a gift to them?

19. F7:   ((nods))

The second part of excerpt 5 (turns 20-36) is inaugurated by a new OQ concerning presents made by F7 to her parents. However, OQs do not pose the same strict restraint on the following action as FQs, leaving F7 room to choose to talk about a present to her aunt. The facilitator follows F7's line asking a series of FQs that link to specific aspects of the ongoing narrative (turns 24, 26, 28, 30 and 35). FQs can support expansion of the conversation in terms of its extension over time (Seuren and Huiskes, 2017) with the caveat of limiting such expansion to the themes that they introduce.

20. FAC: What gift did you make to them?

21. F7:   E: we bought some dresses

22. FAC: mh

23. F7:   And we wrote a big poster with written (..) m: we love you

24. FAC: Ah but we love why? In- who did you and then?

25. F7:   e: my cousins

26. FAC   Your cousins?

27. F7:   ((nods))

28. FAC: And are they children of this uncle and of your aunt

29. F7:   Yes

30. FAC: Ah and do you live together?

31. F7:   ((nods)) yes

32. FAC: I understand

33. F7:   And I also live with my g- grandmother

34. FAC: Who lives with you?

35. F7:   Yes, and (.) ((she shakes her head)) °that's it°

Questions appear to be particularly effective in promoting children's narratives when OQs and FQs are combined: OQs offer children a wider range of options, as suggested by the sequence of turns 20-23, where F7 can choose to talk about her aunt's presents, rather than her parents' presents. FQs limits the range of choice for children but support children's action by reducing the demands of participation, as suggested by the effect of the switch from OQs to FQs in turns 1-3.

Besides the capabilities of OQs and FQs, a very important aspect for facilitation is the choice of the facilitator to follow F7 lead; this choice is particularly important from a pedagogical angle: if questions are used to control the flow of conversations and the facilitator does not follow the lead of children, a risk is to prioritise adults' agenda instead of supporting children's status as authors of narratives.

5.4 Minimal Feedback: valuing children's narratives

Minimal responses are another common action in all types of conversations, including educational interactions (House, 2013; Huq and Amir, 2015). It is necessary to clarify that minimal responses do not refer to short replies to explicit questions; rather, by 'minimal responses' this discussion means minimal actions undertaken by the facilitators as a form of feedback on children's actions. SHARMED data suggest that actions of minimal feedback can play a twofold role in facilitating children's access to the role of authors of valid knowledge: 1) supporting children's active participation and authorship of narratives; 2) acknowledging the importance of children's stories and comments

The first function, supporting children's authorship, is mainly accomplished by continuers. Continuers are very short actions that signal attention to the ongoing contribution (Gardner, 2001). Continuers are minimal actions of feedback used to invite children to continue their narrations, reinforcing their status of legitimate tellers. Continuers include interrogative confirmation, short confirmations, para-verbal signals. Support can be accomplished also by another minimal action, the repetition of words, or parts of sentences (Wong, 2000). Continuers and repetitions display active listening (Voutilainen et al., 2019) of children's turns of talk. Repetitions display listening more explicitly than continuers.

The second function of minimal feedback, acknowledging the importance of children's stories and comments, is accomplished by acknowledgement tokens that display the understanding of the previous turn of talk, at the same time conveying interest, surprise, empathy (McCarthy, 2003). Acknowledgement tokens provide a more explicit positive and supportive feedback than continuers but also a clearer feedback than repetitions. As for questions (5.3) minimal responses will presented in this chapter as part of longer sequences rather than abstracting them from their context. This choice is motivated by the intention to show how they fit into real, naturally occurring, educational interactions. In excerpt 6, a series of continuers support the ongoing

narratives by confirming the status of F1 as legitimate narrator (turns 2, 4 and 6). In turn 6, the facilitator's continuer is expanded by a sentence that distils the meaning of F2's narrative (see section 5.5).

Excerpt 6
UK (PS2, 5A, second meeting)

1. F2:   My sister video'd me on her phone when I was little and I was in her room and I was in my mum's (?) and my mum video'd it (..) so I went down the (cannot understand) and the lift went down and then she asked where I was and then I came up and they made me laugh so much (..) and er (..) I've got another memory (..) when my cousin, when she was three years old and I was in nursery (..) she wanted her mum but she called my mum mum so she wanted her mum but her mum was at work (..) she called my mum her mum
2. FAC: ah ah
3. F2:   so my mum she wouldn't so she started crying for her mum
4. FAC: aww
5. F2:   and I gave her a cuddle and there's a really cute picture of me like hugging her and now we're like best friends after that
6. FAC: aww so she was a bit lonesome, she missed her mum
7. F2:   yeah

Repetitions are a very simple type of minimal turn, echoing the previous turn, or at least part of it. Repetitions can be employed to display attention (active listening), as well as to encourage further talk.

Excerpt 7
UK (PS3, 5A, first meeting)

1. M1:   How long did it take to draw this?
2. F1:   I don't know. Five minutes. 10 minutes.
3. F1:   It takes me about an hour to draw.
4. FAC: About a hour.
5. M1:   How old are you?
6. F1:   Ten.

SHARMED data suggest that repetitions can be followed by questions in the same turn; with these more complex turn working as an interactional device to promote children's contributions. Children's reaction may range from minimal answers which is the most common situation illustrated by excerpt 8, to longer narratives.

Excerpt 8

UK (PS1, 6A, second meeting)

1. FAC: Oh wow (..) was it a nice surprise?
2. M2:   Yup
3. FAC: and what were you chatting about, if you don't mind me asking
4. M2:   Stuff
5. FAC: Stuff ((laughs)) was it easy to chat to him when you hadn't seen him for so long?
6. M2:   Yeah

Acknowledgement tokens are a type of minimal feedback displaying recognition of the children's role as legitimate authors of valid knowledge. Whilst continuers and repetitions invite further talk, acknowledgement tokens are designed to display engagement in the conversation. In excerpt 9, the acknowledgement token "wow" is followed by a second acknowledgment token ("ahi") to signal both engagement in the narrative and emotional alignment with the narrator stance on the memory of his grandmother's death. Acknowledgement tokens are minimal action but they can play an important role because displaying attention and emotional involvement creates favourable conditions for personal expression.

Excerpt 9

Italy (SS1, 2A, second meeting)

1. M2:   And he sank with the whole submarine
2. FAC: Wow! And so the grandmothers remained alone
3. M2:   Yes
4. FAC: That however you didn't know
5. M2:   No no these ones are still there well my grandmother that of the one who died in the submarine died this year
6. FAC: ahi
7. M2: And instead the other one is d- I mean the other one is still alive

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In the reality of pedagogical interactions, continuers and acknowledgements can be combined to display active listening and engagement in important passages of a narrative, as shown by excerpt 10 that includes a continuer ("uh uh") and an acknowledgement token ("aaaah").

Excerpt 10

UK (PS1, 6A, first meeting)

1. M1:   So basically, this is my brother when he was younger
2. FAC: Uh huh
3. M1:   as like a seven month year old baby (..) yeah and his favourite colour's orange
4. FAC: Aaaah

5.5 Making the point: formulations

Formulations is a type of communicative action that distil the gist of previous turns of talk and present it to their authors (Heritage and Watson, 1979). Research suggests that tormulations play an important role in educational conversations to check mutual understanding (Skarbø Solem & Skovholt, 2019), to manage conflicts (Baraldi, 2019) and also to promote dialogue in the classroom (Baraldi, 2014). Formulations are a more complex action than minimal feedback and can display facilitators' attention and engagement in children's narratives more emphatically. However, differently from minimal feedback, formulation are more intrusive actions that entail an interruption of the conversational flow therefore they should be utilised carefully. The analysis of empirical facilitation during SHARMED activities suggests that in the practice of interaction with children, facilitators used two variants of formulations: 1) explications to clarify the meaning of previous turns of talk (Chernyshova, 2018); 2) developments of previous turns to present some possible implications (Peräkylä, 2019).

Developments involve a more creative work from the facilitator; developments take a risk of expanding the conversation in directions that were not foreseen by the author of the summarised turns. The risk consists in the rejection of the formulation. However, such risk is not necessarily a problem from facilitation. This statement can be justified by reminding that, pedagogically, facilitation aims to support children's active participation, children's trust in the interaction as well as children's access to the role of authors of valid knowledge. If the facilitator's gist of previous turns is not accepted, still this provides children with opportunities for active participation, in the form of rejection, or correction, of the formulation.

In the practice of facilitation as observed in SHARMED activities, formulations more often refer to short individual turns, rather than summarising longer turns or series of turn, although the latter situation could be observed in a minority of cases. In particular, SHARMED data suggest that in empirical interactions working with children formulations take place as the third turn that follows a facilitator's question, children's answer dyad. As the third turn after a question/answer dyad, formulations distil the gist of children's answers, triggered by facilitators' questions. Formulations can be standalone turns as well as part of longer turns, for instance as the middle part of a tripartite complex turn of the type: 'acknowledgement token, formulation of the acknowledged turn, facilitator's question', the latter to expand conversation.

With regard to the reception of formulations, children's turns of talk following formulations consist in minimal confirmations in most cases. However minimal, for instance nodding, children's confirmations are pivotal because they display that the gist presented by the facilitator has been accepted. Other possible children's reactions to facilitators' formulations may include longer expansions as well as rejections of the formulation, albeit this is a very rare instance in our data.

In excerpt 11, turn 7, the facilitator presents a possible gist of F7's previous turn of talk (turn 6); the formulation infers a possible meaning of sartorial choices at wedding celebrations. The formulation distils the gist of turn 6 by suggesting that F7 wanted to convey that the choice if identical dresses is a symbolic representation of familiar unity. As several formulations in our corpora of data, the formulation in turn 7 is anticipated in the turn by an acknowledgement token to suggest engagement in the ongoing narrative and receipt of F7's narrative. It may be noticed, with reference to sections 5.3 and 5.4, that F7's narrative is supported across the sequence by questions and continuers.

Chapter 1 offers the theoretical tools to appreciate how formulations in excerpt 11 not only contribute to the co-construction of a narrative; they also contribute to the co- construction of the meanings of cultural identities through the narrative. F7 and the facilitator cooperate to contextualise the story F7's family, transforming the interaction in a living, localised small culture (Holliday, 1999). Cultural meanings of narrated experiences are not traced back to predefined cultural identities; rather, they are (co) constructed interactively (Baraldi, 2015).

Excerpt 11
Italy (SP2, 5A, second meeting)

1. FAC: But: for what reason was the photo taken? Because I see that you have the same special dresses what tell us what does it mean
2. F7: eh that: we are united, which is not true because that is not my father but my uncle,
3. FAC: yes

4. F7:   e: (.) wearing dresses made of the same   tissue,

5. FAC: Yes

6. F7:   It seems that we are one

7. FAC: Ah the idea that you have the same dress the same: tissue it's union

8. F7:   ((nods))

In excerpt 12, formulations work as developments. They are anticipated by display of active listening via acknowledgement token (turns 2 and 4). In turns 6 and 8, two formulations develop the narrative by distilling a gist of the previous turn and presenting possible implications of it towards further expansion. Both formulations as developments are confirmed with minimal actions by F2, the author of the narrative.

Excerpt 12

UK (PS2, 5A, second meeting)

1. F2: My sister video'd me on her phone when I was little and I was in her room and I was in my mum's (?) and my mum video'd it (..) so I went down the (?) and the lift went down and then she asked where I was and then I came up and they made me laugh so much (..) and er (..) I've got another memory (..) when my cousin, when she was three years old and I was in nursery (..) she wanted her mum but she called my mum mum so she wanted her mum but her mum was at work (..) she called my mum her mum

2. FAC: ah

3. F2:   so my mum she wouldn't so she started crying for her mum

4. FAC: aww

5. F2:   and I gave her a cuddle and there's a really cute picture of me like hugging her and now we're like best friends after that

6. FAC: aww so she was a bit lonesome, she missed her mum

7. F2:   yeah

8. FAC: and she saw your mum and your mum kind of looked like her mum and then she looked like she kind of need a hug and you gave her a hug (..) so you kind of had a feeling that she needed a hug

9. F2:   ((nods))

In some instances, formulations are a way for facilitators to support the interactional production of narratives, accessing the role of co-tellers. This is a very important function of formulations. The co-construction of narratives based on formulations is particularly common with regard to explications rather than developments.

If compared with formulations as explications, formulations as developments can support more complex forms of children's participation. In turn 5 of excerpt 13, the facilitator distils the gist a series of turns advancing a possible implication of it. Based on F7's contributions, the facilitator infers that her parents' wedding was a proxy wedding. F7 confirms the development by nodding before further expanding the narrative by adding the information that that someone else took the place of her father (turn 6). In turn 7, the facilitator summarises the previous turns asking F7 to confirm that the uncle took the place of the father as a proxy. After F7's confirmation, the facilitator produces another development, suggesting a cultural meaning of the use of a proxy (turn 9). F7's further confirmation in turn 10 closes the development of the narrative, which was thoroughly prompted by formulations. It is important to notice that, as in excerpt 11, formulations contribute to the co-construction of the cultural meaning of narrated experiences.

Excerpt 13

Italy (SP2, 5A, second meeting)

1. FAC: And why did he came here? To search a job?
2. F7: Yes
3. FAC: And do you know where did he live?
4. F7: In ((city))
5. FAC: in ((city)) ok and the wedding between you dad and you mum took place without you dad,
6. F7: ((nods)) but there was someone who took his place
7. FAC: So ((points at the photo)) e he took your father's place she didn't marry your uncle
8. F7: no
9. FAC: They needed a male figure
10. F7: ((nods))

SHARMED data finds formulations as often embedded in more complex turns that they cohabit with other conversational components, mostly questions. The turns of talk that include a formulation and a question are designed to promote a quick reaction from the child, based on the interactive power of the question that prompts a reaction from its recipient (5.3). Interestingly, in this complex turns is the question, rather than the formulation, that discriminates the recipient's reaction. For instance, questions can facilitate children's expansions of narratives. In excerpt 154, turn 5, the facilitator produces a formulation as an explication to distil the gist of F1's narrative; the formulation is followed in the same turn by a question to explore F1's feelings. The combination formulation, followed by a question, succeeds in supporting the expansion of the narrative.

Excerpt 14

UK (PS2, 4A, third meeting)

1. FAC: Do you want to tell us about the picture?
2. F1:   So this one is when I was going to meet a meerkat
3. FAC: Uh huh
4. F1:   and there was a man who was telling us about them and he said if you put your back against the wall of the cage, they'll climb up you and use you (?) to look out (..) so that's one of them on my shoulders and
5. FAC: So he climbed up you (..) a meerkat climbed up your back like this ((indicates to the back of the students and makes an upwards hand motion)) and how did you feel about that?
6. F1: Um (..) well actually I had to take my jumper off because it was wool and they kept on going behind it and inside it

5.6 Making it real: facilitators' personal contributions

SHARMED data include several types of facilitators' personal contributions; in this section the focus of attention is placed on two types of personal contributions that proved to be effective in promoting children's narratives in the context of empirical educational interactions: stories and displacements. The first type, stories, are produced to display facilitators' closeness to children as well as their interest in the narratives that children author. It is true that by telling personal stories, facilitators upgrade their role in the interaction, accessing the status of authors; however, this can be functional for facilitation when facilitators' stories are connected with the ongoing narrative. By telling their personal stories, facilitators join the interaction expressing their persons and the contexts fo their experiences (Mandelbaum, 2012), display trust in children (Farini, 2014) and suggest their commitment to the relationship. By sharing their own stories, facilitator promote expectations of personal expressions rather than role performances.

Personal stories can have the function of enhancing children's participation. In excerpt 15, the facilitator shares a personal story concerning a swimming trip to the seaside; the story includes references to her father's behaviour, to her lack of risk awareness and to her happiness when on her father's shoulders. Although this facilitator's personal story is loosely coupled to M3's one, still it successfully promotes the engagement of another child, M4, who shares a similar narrative concerning fear, swimming and relationship with the father.

Excerpt 15

UK (PS3, 5A, first meeting)

1. M3:   I have a memory. So, I went to Dubai this waterpark is called (?) and there is like KFC and McDonald's, and they have this surfing place (?) over there. So, I just put my tummy on the ground. I didn't learn how to swim, and then there were trees like this and then I ate McDonald's.

2. FAC: You know when you put your belly on the ground, was it so that you could pretend to be swimming?

3. M3:   Yeah.

4. FAC: Do you know what - you really remind me when I was a little girl, which was a really, really long time ago, my dad took me swimming to Brighton which is a seaside

5. ((Class all talk – talking about also visiting the same seaside as FAC))

6. FAC: And my dad, he couldn't swim but I didn't know he couldn't swim. And he put me on his shoulders when I was a little girl, probably about your size, and I was on his shoulders and he took me up. And I was wondering why my mum was getting really cross. She was standing on the side of the sea and she was going like this come in, like this. And my dad was laughing. And I think he was laughing because he was kind of joking with my mum because she knew he couldn't swim. And he took me out a little bit. And I thought my dad was the best swimmer in the whole wide world and I was safe, but really he was taking me out and he couldn't swim either. And I was on his back and then he had to come back in because my mum told him off, and you've really made me remember that.

7. M4: And my dad he took me to the deep end like 2 m and (?) and those boys over there (?) sometimes the wave comes, so what happened my dad said come here and then I went there, he picked me up and then he's like jump and I will catch you, and I was no - I'm scared and then he'd take me back.

The second type of facilitators' personal contributions, displacements, is a unique way of upgrading facilitators' contributions. Displacements enrich an ongoing narrative with side-stories or comments that aim to surprise and entertain children. Pedagogically, displacements have a double function: 1) creating a positive relationship between facilitators and children; 2) sustaining expectations of unpredictability and surprise, which represent a favourable context for personal expressions.

A unique feature of SHARMED activities, displacements have been overwhelmingly used by an Italian facilitator. In excerpt 16, the connection between displacement and unpredictability is made explicit by the facilitator. The sequence starts with a question about photographs taken at parents' weddings. F3 narrates about a photograph taken at parents' wedding. In turn 13, the facilitator asks what F3 was doing when the photograph was taken. This is an example of displacement that initially generates some disorientation in F3,

who hesitates to answer. In turn 15, the facilitator provides the answer to his own question (turn 15: "you were not there"), immediately followed by F3's confirmation. Although some children are laughing about the facilitator's displacing question, the displacement sequence is not over, as the facilitator suggests that maybe F3 was not at her parents' wedding because she was at another party (turn 19). The child rejects facilitator's hypothesis and protests that she was not born at that time (turn 22); at the same time, however, another child seems to join the facilitator's line by suggesting that F3 was not at the wedding because she was at a discotheque.

In response to F3's rejection, the facilitator acknowledges it but still continues in his displacing strategy by displaying surprise about the fact the f3 was not born when her parents got married (turn 24: "a Ah: you were not yet born I see"). In turn 26, the facilitator asks the rest of the classroom if anyone was at her or his parents' wedding. M5 replies that this would be an impossible scenario. However, the facilitator rejects this statement, keeping open opportunities for the widest range of children's contributions: F4 takes this opportunity to share that she indeed was at her parents' wedding as she was born by then (turn 33). Connecting to F4, who is therefore valued as author of valid knowledge, the facilitator concludes the sequence by sharing his idea that many different scenarios and realities can be true at the same time, in this way also making a pleas for the need to be prepared to unpredictability.

Excerpt 16
Italy (SP1, 4C, first meeting)

1. FAC: Some of you ((question to the whole class) (..) has seen the pictures of you parents during the their wedding?
2. ((Some raise their hands))
3. FAC: ah
   Ah ah there are others (.) and what what what pictures are they? Who who who wants to tell the parents' pictures?
4. ((some lower their hands))
5. FAC: Try to tell
6. F3: A picture about when dad and mum were were entering the car
   (.)
7. FAC: The day of their wedding or another day?
8. F3: No, the day of their wedding
9. FAC:Ah so (.) you don't have a picture (.) of of the ceremony but of the following moment
10. F3: yes

11. FAC: When the ceremony was done and they were were greeting everywhere and leaving for the honeymoon

12. F3: yes

13. FAC: And what were you doing?

14. F3:   I:

15. FAC: You were not there

16. F3:   I was not there

17. FAC: eh hh

18. Some: hhh

19. FAC: Because that day you were at a party elsewhere, weren't you?

20. ?:   h

21. ?:   no

22. F3:   No, because I was not yet [born

23. ?:   [(??) to the disco

24. FAC: a Ah: you were not yet born I see

25. ?:   h

26. FAC: And is there someone who was there (.) at their parents' wedding instead?

27. M5:   It's impossible

28. FAC: No, it's not impossible [because [it can happen it can happen

29. M3:   [((says something to M5))

30. F4:   [((raises her hand))

31. M5:   [ah!

32. FAC: Were you there?

33. F4:   yes

34. FAC: And why were you there?

35. F4:   Eh because I was already born

36. FAC: You see ((to M5)) it is possible because things are possible in many ways (.) and and do you have a good impression of those pictures? I mean, did your parents talk of them to you ((he gesticulates)) showing emotions, enthusiasm, or did you find them (.) while looking for (.) family albums?

5.7 Conclusion

The promotion of children's agency sits at the very foundation of the transformation of the classroom in a community of dialogue. Facilitation can create favourable conditions for children's agency. Throughout this chapter different types of facilitative actions that proved successful in promote children's agency as

authorship of knowledge have been discussed. The discussion was organised around the different functions that each type of facilitative action fulfils in the context of real, empirical exchanges in education al settings. Some actions are particularly apt to initiate conversations as well as to expand the area of active participation to an ongoing conversation. We have grouped such action in the category 'invitations to talk'. Invitations to talk can take several forms although in the practice of facilitation, the most common way to invite talk consists in questions. Whilst focused questions seem to be more effective in promoting participation, the kind of participation they promote can be sometimes limited, in form of a minimal response. Open questions allow for a wider range of actions from children; nevertheless, they do not have the same power of generating a reaction from the recipient of the question. A fine balance needs to be struck, and invitations to talk should be neither too generic nor too specific.

In actual facilitative practices questions are not used to invite children's contributions only; they can also be utilised to support an ongoing narrative, thus displaying recognition of the narrating child's status as author of valid knowledge. The implications of the use of open question and closed questions are similar to the ones related to initiation, with open questions offering children a wider range of options and focused questions reducing the demands of participation, facilitating a more diffused, albeit often more limited, participation. When questions are used to support ongoing narratives a note of caution is needed: questions have the power to orientate the flow of conversation, therefore the risk for facilitators can be to exert an excessive control, diminishing the status of children as authors of narratives.

A third type of facilitative actions that proved to be effective is a varied one: actions of feedback that aim to display acceptance and support of the role of children as authors of valid of knowledge. In the chapter a distinction was drawn between minimal actions of feedback and formulations. Minimal actions work well with the narrative is fluent and the important task of acknowledging the right of the child to present his or her stories is fulfilled with minimal, non-disruptive actions. However, in some instances, more complex actions of feedback are required. Formulations are actions of feedback that not only recognise the narrator's role but also have the power to support and advance the narrative. It is very important in terms of pedagogical practice to highlight that facilitators should monitor children's reactions to formulation, because it is not to be taken for granted that children will have a genuine interest in further expanding the narrative after a formulation that has either summarised the gist of it or proposed possible implications of the ongoing narrative. In SHARMED data formulations are often combined with question in the same turn; whilst it is acknowledged that questions are important to monitor children's reaction to the formulation, it is also true that the questions, particularly if focused, can restraint children's action, with the effect of limiting the scope of their agency.

The last type of facilitative action examined in the chapter relates to facilitators' personal expressions, in the form of stories and displacements. Personal expressions are a powerful action to display engagement in the interaction as well as the facilitator's availability to participating in the interaction as a person, rather than

as standardised role, therefore promoting mutual closeness, surprise, sense of unpredictability. However, personal expressions are pervasive action that can effectively alter the course of an interaction; particular attention is needed in order to make sure that facilitator's personal expressions are always relevant and connected to the ongoing narrative, in this way confirming children's status as be primary authors of knowledge. If such attention is not translated in facilitative practice, the consequence could be prioritising facilitators' agenda and belittling the status of children as legitimate authors of valid knowledge and equal participants in the interaction. In other words, a less than careful and measured use of personal stories or displacement can hinder the foundation of a community of dialogue.

This latter point advanced with regard to the risk of facilitator's personal expressions can be extended, of course in a more nuanced fashion, to all the facilitative actions discussed in this chapter: facilitation needs children to accept facilitators' actions, otherwise facilitation is ineffective. However, children's alignment to facilitators' action should be based on their autonomous choices, rather than forced upon them by heavy-handed facilitative styles that abuse the power of actions such as questions, formulations and comments. It is pivotal to remind that the aim of facilitation is to extend the range of actions available for children's autonomous choices, which is the key aspect of agency and genuine dialogic pedagogy. When facilitation is successful, non-hierarchical interactions are created where facilitators waive the possibility to control interaction, because this is requested by the support of children's agency. Facilitation transforms the classroom in an environment that enables children's autonomous decision making upgrading their status as legitimate authors of valid knowledge (Allen et al., 2019; Scollan & Farini, 2021). In these situations, children's personal initiatives become more probable, and their management becomes an important aspect of facilitation. Chapter 6 is dedicated to the discussion of that scenario.