Chapter 8
Making Culture Visible: Telling Small Stories in Busy Classrooms

Maryanne Theobald, Gillian Busch, Ilana Mushin, Lyndal O'Gorman, Cathy Nielson, Janet Watts, and Susan Danby

Abstract Classrooms are busy institutional settings in which conversational agendas are typically ordered by teachers due to the focus on curriculum content. Opportunities for extended storytelling, outside of focussed literacy times, may occur infrequently. This chapter investigates how children engage with each other and with curriculum concepts referred to as "culture", through telling stories. The data are video recordings of young children (aged 4–5 years) telling stories during their everyday classroom activities. The data are drawn from a study on what intercultural competence "looks like" in the everyday interactions of preschool classrooms in inner-city Queensland, Australia. An ethnomethodological approach using conversation analysis highlights three fragments where children tell something about themselves. As they tell stories about aspects of their lives outside the classroom, children make their "culture" visible to other children and co-construct a local peer culture. The implications of the study's findings point to how classrooms can be conversational spaces where children practise and build culture in action. The children share aspects of their everyday lives that are sometimes tangentially aligned with curriculum, but always available as a resource for making cultural connections. The children themselves do not name these activities as culture, but their association to

M. Theobald (✉) · L. O'Gorman · J. Watts
School of Early Childhood and Inclusive Education, Faculty of Creative Industries, Education and Social Justice, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia
e-mail: m.theobald@qut.edu.au

G. Busch
School of Education and the Arts, Central Queensland University, Rockhampton, Australia

I. Mushin
School of Languages and Cultures, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia

C. Nielson
Centre for Child and Family Studies, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia

S. Danby
Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the Digital Child, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia

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what is known about how culture is defined, shows that they are orienting to these aspects.

8.1 Introduction

Stories are a key part of everyday life. The practices of telling stories verbalise the experiences of self or others and, in so doing, make connections with others. By sharing stories, "we organise our experience and our memory of human happenings" (Bruner, 1991, p. 4). This chapter identifies how children engage with each other and with curriculum concepts known as "culture", through the telling of small stories. According to the Australian Curriculum, "students develop intercultural understandings as they learn to value their own cultures, languages and beliefs, and those of others" (ACARA, 2016b). As children tell stories about aspects of their lives outside the classroom during classroom activities when teachers (and other adults) are not present at these moments, these stories become resources for children to make their culture visible to other children.

8.1.1 Culture In Action

A broad view of "culture" is taken in this chapter, where children reveal something about themselves or their home through what they talk about when they engage in telling. Baker (2000) describes "culture in action" as dynamic and produced through describing, claiming, and organising social relations; in other words, participants accomplish "culture inside action, rather than action outside culture, already preconstituted" (p. 99). This approach is based on an understanding that knowledge displayed and used within social interactions can ultimately create a shared culture and understandings (Francis & Hester, 2004; Hester & Eglin, 1997). Understanding culture this way brings a "critical" lens to identify how culture is talked into being. In the context of this chapter, the children's stories are produced through making visible to their classroom peers, the events, people, places and relationships outside the classroom context. In this interpretation, culture inside action makes possible children hearing different ways of how culture is accomplished in contexts outside the classroom. Building culture goes *beyond* talking about country of origin, although talk is a resource for displaying and making visible culture. In examining the telling of small stories by children when given the opportunity to talk freely in classrooms settings, this chapter explicates how children make visible their culture to other children and co-construct local peer and classroom cultures.

8.1.2 Talk in Early Childhood Education

Talk in the early years is recognised as the basis for children's literacy and language development, and the ability to communicate is considered essential in the twenty-first century (Masters, 2015). Speaking is identified as an important language mode within the curriculum for the foundation years (ACARA, 2016a). According to the Australian Curriculum on English (2016a), how to "listen and respond to texts and others, how to articulate using gestures and gaze" are necessary skills for children in the early years of school. The value of children's talk is recognised through teacher-managed activities such as "show and tell" (Larson et al., 2021). Talk helps build comprehension to enhance higher thinking skills (Mills, 2009) and assists in second language learning (Flynn et al., 2021), with a growing number of studies reporting that peer talk positively influences socialisation and learning (see Cekaite et al., 2014). Prescribed curriculum activities, learning goals and student outcomes that guide classroom experiences may mean that children have fewer opportunities for extended exchanges of talk in classroom contexts.

While talk is valued in early childhood classrooms, the typical interactional pattern of teachers talking, and children listening, can dominate classroom talk. A pattern of initiation–response–evaluation (IRE) (Mehan, 1979) or initiation–response–feedback (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975) has been commonly observed. Teachers do most often take the first turn, and classroom studies identify that second turns in talk sequences are usually short with constrained opportunities for talk (Edwards-Groves & Davidson, 2017; Willemsen et al., 2020). Teachers do use strategies to encourage talk among children in classrooms, such as when teachers encourage children to share with a peer their ideas of a topic of interest on the activities at hand, referred to as "turn and talk" or "pair and share" (Edwards-Groves & Davidson, 2017). Opportunities for children to initiate talk and have control over the topics of their talk, however, may not occur as often, given the "goal-oriented" behaviours that unsurprisingly govern classrooms.

The analogy that "a classroom floats on a sea of talk" (Britton, 1970, p.164) has been used to describe the importance of talk in classrooms. When children take opportunities to talk with each other, a "noisy" classroom can be the result. A noisy classroom is sometimes considered to be disorganised or ineffective because noisy talk is sometimes taken as a sign that children are not "on task". When teachers organise their classrooms to ensure orderliness, they may inadvertently minimise opportunities for topics of talk of interest to the children. As an unintended consequence, opportunities for children to initiate their own tellings may be diminished.

Telling stories is an opportunity for children to speak and interact with others. In early childhood classrooms, children may be encouraged to practise the skills of telling a story and responding to another's story, creating recounts and writing persuasive texts during teacher organised classroom literacy activities. Literacy activities that involve storytelling enhance children's language acquisition (Stevens et al., 2014), develop understandings of others' perspectives, help children to identify social

matters that they have in common (Katz & Wilson, 2021) and develop communicative skills such as turn-taking and repair (Burdelski, 2019; Filipi, 2017). Telling stories then helps children to understand the perspectives of others and identify what they may have in common with others.

Teachers may not have time to observe closely the types of talk and storytelling that may occur between children spontaneously during classroom activities—if children are given the opportunity for *free talk*. Free talk in classrooms occurs when children are given or take opportunities to tell stories during classroom activities where teachers (and other adults) are not currently present. The aim of this chapter is to explicate examples of such talk—identify how sharing stories provides opportunities for children to make their culture visible to other children.

8.1.3 Telling and Storytelling in Conversation Analysis

Tellings have always been of interest to conversation analytic (CA) studies (see Filipi et al., current volume). Tellings may involve a recount, when the teller retells events that they have experienced, or events experienced by others (Burdelski & Evaldsson, 2019). A telling can also be about hypothetical matters (Goodwin, 1990) or about events expected to occur (Goodwin, 2015). Recounts and propositions should not be considered to be "testimony" or truth; rather they can be considered "as 'accounts' and as 'performances'" (Atkinson & Delamount, 2006, p. 166). Tellings transport us from "the here-and-now" (Filipi, 2017, p. 279) and are identified as a significant developmental milestone in childhood (Filipi, 2016). Tellings from one child to another are not always the focus of classroom studies as tellings from a child to adult and/or entire class of children tend to dominate.

Storytelling is a social practice employed to do different interactional actions that are more broadly called "tellings". Tellings can take the form of jokes (Sacks, 1974), news (Butler & Weatherall, 2009), reports (Jefferson, 2004a), updates (Searles, 2019), tattle tales (Danby, 1998; Theobald & Danby, 2017) and troubles telling (Jefferson, 1988). Such tellings are used to make complaints (Stokoe & Edwards, 2006), encourage appropriate expression of emotion (Cekaite & Björk-Willén, 2018), gain acceptance into peer interaction and groups (Theobald & Reynolds, 2015) or to develop social connections with others (Karlsson & Evaldsson, 2011). These actions produce versions, justifications and evaluations of events and people (Atkinson & Delamount, 2006). To sum up, tellings perform a range of interactional actions, and yet there are few studies in classrooms that explore how children engage in tellings to each other about their cultural experiences, including where they came from, or where and how they live. This chapter explores these kinds of tellings as stories to reveal how children make visible aspects of their lives outside of school to peers.

The emic approach of CA enables a participant perspective in recognising storytelling, although the concept of "story" is left quite open. Stories are recognisable to others as such and are typically "touched off" by a topic (Jefferson, 1978, p. 220) or arise as second stories (Arminen, 2004; Bateman & Danby, 2013; Theobald & Reynolds, 2015). Often comprised by multi-unit turns, stories also include actions that are temporally ordered (Goodwin, 2015), include a temporal switch from one situation to another (Ochs, 1997) and are recipient designed (Mandelbaum, 2012) and collaborative (Filipi, 2017). Sacks' (1995) well-known examination of a child's story, "The baby cried. The mommy picked it up" (p. 135), identified some key features that make a story a story. These eight words contain these story features: (1) event, (2) identity—members of families, a baby and a mommy, (3) an activity or climax—a baby crying; and 4) a resolution to the activity—the mommy picking it up (Sacks, 1995). The child's small story provided by Sacks brings into focus another key feature of storytelling that the teller is involved either in a direct way to, or only slightly removed from, the story being told (Quasthoff, 1997). As Sacks explains, on hearing the story, one assumes that it was the baby's own mother who picked it up. The assumption is that the mommy in the story is the mommy of the baby; although this is not explicitly stated, we *hear* this to be the case. The child's report on a baby also makes visible the cultural responsibilities of family members as the child understood them. Such stories, then, can provide insight into a child's cultural understanding of the world. Housley and Fitzgerald (2015) point out that a story is heard within the "normative parameters of culture and social relations" (p. 8). In other words, stories require knowledge of the world and social situations, which involves how stories are told by the teller and heard by the listener. Sometimes these stories are received by the hearers as mundane, but sometimes they are taken up as remarkable in some way. It is not for the analyst to identify how the story is to be heard, but to understand how the *hearer* hears the story and how they make *sense* of it within their own everyday worlds. How children tell and make sense of small story exchanges is the focus of this chapter.

8.1.4 Small Stories

Faithful to the traditions of CA (Sacks, 1995), the initial interest in small stories emerged as a "noticing" when reviewing data. Multiple views of the interactions in our classroom data highlighted select examples of talk which children shared with teachers or peers, short or abridged tellings. A first noticing was that, on first appearance, small stories are brief and perhaps considered unremarkable and easily overlooked.

Further investigation into "small stories" uncovered that the conceptualisation of a small story may depend on the methodology being used. Most commonly associated with narrative analysis, small stories may be conceptualised as stories that focus on everyday and typically transient events (e.g. Bamberg, 2003, 2004). The "ephemeral"

element is what Bamberg argued has led to small stories being overlooked in favour of "big stories" that provide more information. Considering the consensus in studies of narrative that a story is typically recognised as made up of multi-turns, a small story might be considered as a short exchange.

Despite their minimal construction, small stories can deliver much information. Small stories provide the perspective of those telling it and typically include a time and a context in which the events of the story occur (Chatman, 1978; Polkinghorne & Birren, 1996). Small stories can provide information about the teller's understandings and experiences of place (de Medeiros & Etter-Lewis, 2020) and are a way for children to "make sense of experiences in their cultural worlds" (Larson et al., 2021, p. 56). Storytelling using small stories then is a human activity.

Storytelling practices are learned through interacting with others, particularly when children interact with their families. Children may begin storytelling as early as 15 months with brief tellings during pretend play (Filipi, current volume). Bateman and Carr (2017) identify that, when young children *tell*, what they understand to be *their* culture is more easily accessible. This chapter investigates how young children tell small stories during classroom activities where teachers (and other adults) are not co-located and how these stories are sites for children to make their culture visible to other children.

8.2 Data and Method

The data presented in the chapter are drawn from a larger corpus of video recordings collected as part of a study titled, *Empowering global learners*, funded by the Queensland Department of Education, Australia. The study's overall focus was to identify how elements of intercultural understanding, respect, belonging and collaboration, associated with being a global citizen (ACARA, 2016b), are achieved through local, face-to-face classroom activities.

8.2.1 Setting

Two co-educational primary schools situated in inner-city South East Queensland, Australia, participated in the study. Culturally and linguistically diverse schools were purposefully selected and invited to participate in order to align with the study's focus, i.e. how elements associated with being a global citizen, and in the context of the classroom, a "global learner" was interactionally accomplished.

8.2.2 Participants

Teachers working in the preschool year (two at each school), and approximately 25 children in each classroom, were invited to participate. In Queensland, the preschool year is the first year of compulsory schooling and is called preparatory or “Prep”. A total of four teachers and approximately 70 children across two schools were involved. As the teachers were also researching their own classrooms, the teachers were described as teachers–researchers. This role was critical to encourage active child participation where children and the teachers had built a rapport and to enhance teachers’ professional learning as researchers.

8.2.3 Ethical Consent

Ethical consent for the study was gained by the lead researcher’s university and the state education department research office. An information session was held with school principals and teachers. The teachers were invited to respond if they were interested in participating in the study. Parents and children were invited to participate via an information letter, which included a child-friendly letter. Parents provided written consent for their child’s participation. Children provided initial assent by also signing on the form. Researchers took note of children’s ongoing assent during the data collections processes (Alderson, 2005; Danby & Farrell, 2004; Dockett & Perry, 2011), by asking them if they wanted to participate; the researchers observed their gestures and actions and stopped if they displayed signs of avoidance or discomfort in participating in the study.

8.2.4 Research Design

There were four phases of the study:

- Phase 1: A focus group that explored the topic with the teachers;
- Phase 2: Video ethnography of classroom experiences conducted by researchers;
- Phase 3: Video-stimulated accounts where the children watched fragments of the collected video recordings from Phase 2 and discussed with the teacher–researchers, their views of what happened and
- Phase 4: Video-stimulated accounts where teachers were invited to comment on fragments of video recordings.

8.2.5 Data Collection

Data for this chapter were drawn from Phase 2 which was a video ethnography of classroom experiences (for video ethnography, see Danby, 2020). In this phase, two researchers visited each classroom over 2–3 days. Using a handheld camera, the researchers observed and video recorded small group activities each day, and an iPad camera on a Swivl tripod was used also to record the whole group activities. Video recordings focussed on activities based on the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2016c) such as History, Art and Social Science (HASS) and English, in which cultural aspects, the main focus for the study, might come into play. While some curriculum areas make links to the focus of this study, "being a global citizen", Intercultural Understandings (ACARA, 2016b) also guide teachers' work. In total, Phase 2 of the study collected 20 h of video recordings. On inspection, however, some video data presented challenges for transcription, due to the inaudibility of classroom talk because of the classroom noise associated with a range of concurrent activities.

8.2.6 Data Selection

Data selection focussed on examining occasions where children were talking to each other outside of the direct supervision and hearing of teachers. We became interested in how the children went about their tellings, and what they talked about during small group or independent activities, or when the teacher was occupied with other activities or engaged with other children. Selected fragments were transcribed using methods outlined by Jefferson (2004b), and outlined in the Appendix of this book. Multimodal elements were transcribed using Mondada's (2018, 2019) approach, and these are outlined in the Appendix of this chapter.

8.2.7 Analytic Method

Analysis draws upon the interactional analytic methods of ethnomethodology and CA (CA) (Sacks, 1995; Sidnell & Stivers, 2012) to examine fragments of small stories. The sociological theory of ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967) underpins CA, which provides a set of analytical tools to micro-analyse interaction. The key analytic aim was to identify, from the data, how members understand and encounter the talk and actions of others within a particular social context (Heritage, 1984). CA's interest is focussed on three major elements that underpin interaction: (1) rules regarding members' turns and actions, (2) sequential organisation and recurring features of the

talk and (3) shared meaning and intersubjectivity established through members' epistemic stances. This analytic approach considers that members of the interaction are not "cultural dopes" (Garfinkel, 1967), but rather are competent in constructing and making sense of their everyday interactions.

8.3 Analysis

8.3.1 Three Telling Examples

Emphasising the importance for children to have opportunities to talk with each other in classrooms, we present three video fragments to investigate what young children tell each other when they have an opportunity for free talk. Fragments 1, 2a and 2b were interactions that occurred during the same History, Art and Social Science (HASS) activity in Classroom 1. Fragment 3 occurred in a different classroom, Classroom 2, while children were cutting out pictures for an English literacy activity. What we found was that the fragments of video recordings highlight how children use small stories to make their culture visible to others and thus opportunities for new understandings and ways of enacting everyday life. The first two fragments (Classroom 1) pick up children's free talk by focussing on the children's stories that are shared in response to the teacher explicitly introducing the concept of "culture". The third fragment (Classroom 2) focusses on children's free talk to explicate how their stories are used to build a culture of the local social order. The children themselves do not name their talk "culture talk", but their association to what we know about the aspects of culture in action shows that they are orienting to these aspects.

8.3.2 Telling About My Country

The first fragment, *Telling about my country,* highlights the interaction between two children during a HASS activity in Classroom 1. The activity was introduced by the teacher by saying "Today we are talking about a new word…C-U-L–T-U-R-E *(Teacher spells out the word).* Culture means the different celebrations you have, the different foods you have, the different music and dances you have if you come from another country.". After the teacher's brief introduction about what culture is, the children were instructed to identify the country in which they were born on a map of the world. Fragment 1 begins with two children waiting for access to the map of the world (see Fig. 8.1, 8.2, 8.3 and 8.4).

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Key:
* CH1 —   Child 1
+ CH2 —   Child 2
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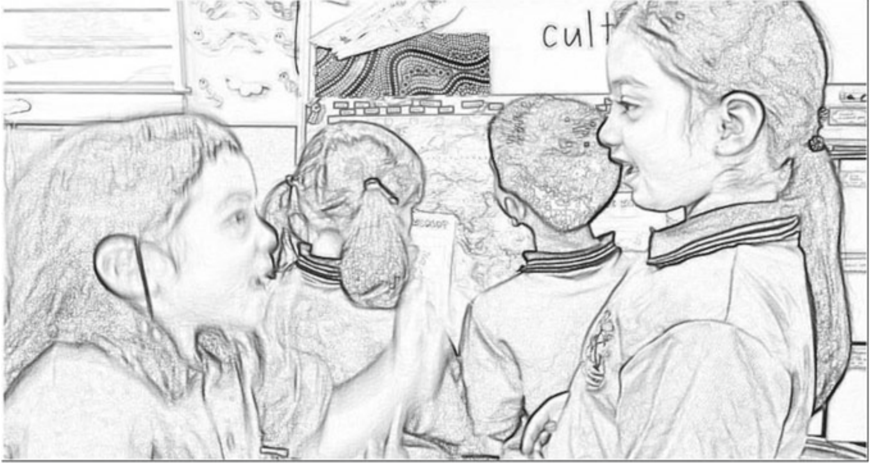

Fig. 8.1 "which one were you born in"

Fig. 8.2 "what's Nepal"

Fig. 8.3 "go to dancing"

Fig. 8.4 “go e:verywhe:re”

Fragment 1 Telling about my country (Classroom 1)

```
1.  CH1:   I- which one were you: born in.
2.         I w- I was born in Austra:lia. ((fig.8.1))
3.         (0.6)
4.  CH2:   I was bo:rn °in Nepa:l.°
5.  CH1:   Ne:pal? (0.7) what's Ne:pals, (0.3) I don know
6.         +what's Nepa::l.
    ch2:   +...-----------> fig.8.2
               lifts hand, palm facing up
7.         (1.0)
8.  CH1:   *in +Nepa::+:l,* ((sung))
    ch1:   *---dances-----*
    ch2:   >---+      +takes a step towards CH1->
9.         (1.0)+ (1.3)
    ch2:   >----+
10. CH1:   (             ) in my: cou:ntry, was <so:. mu:ch. fu:n.>
           (.)
11.         * I   had   to  go *   to   da:ncing  *I have to h- go:
            *turns to face CH2 *raises arms, fig.8.3*
12.         to [a (ho:liday) I have to go =
13. CH2:       [(but I didn't have,)
14. CH1:    = to a muse:um, I have to *go e:verywhe:re;*
    ch1:                              *---------fig.8.4--*
                                      large gesture, arms outstretched
```

This fragment shows the talk between two children as they wait to look at a map of the world, part of the current activity. The interaction begins with Child 1 (C1) asking Child 2 (C2) in which country she was born (line 1). This question relates to the activity at hand, to identify the country in which they were born on the map. In this case, the elicitation of information from C2 by C1 is “touched off” (Jefferson, 1978, p. 220) by the task of the HASS activity, regarding country of origin. C1’s first turn here is structured grammatically as an interrogative, which would normally be understood as a question projecting an answer. Rather than providing space for C2 to answer, however, C1 takes the next turn by immediately answering her own question.

A number of small stories presented as brief “tellings” are evident in the interaction that follows. The first telling is in line 2, when C1 launches the interaction with, “I

w– I was born in Austra:lia.”(Fig. 8.1). This telling is an elicitation of information from C2 and works as an informing that furthers the tellings about country of origin, launched by the teacher at the beginning of the classroom task.

The second telling, “I was bo:rn °in Nepa:l.°” (line 4) is C2’s reply to C1’s elicitation. After repeating the country name “Ne:pal?”, C1 displays a lack of knowledge of this word as the name of a country, saying “what’s Ne:pals” (line 5/6). C2 does not respond verbally but rather lifts her hands up in a shrugging action, suggesting confusion about what the question is asking—is the answer “a country”? and has difficulty in formulating an answer. C1 repeats the country name in a singsong, to which both children smile and laugh in a display of enjoyment and increasing affiliation.

C1’s next turns are produced quickly, which may be due to the time constraints of the task, aligned with an orientation to hold the conversational floor. In line 10, C1 quickly shifts from asking about C2’s country to immediately producing a telling about her own country. Having established “countries” as a topic of talk, and ensuring that C2 is engaged, in line 10, C1 provides an assessment of her own country as “ < so:. mu:ch. fu:n. > ” (line 10). The delivery of this assessment is slower with accents on each of the words “so”, “much” and “fun”. C1 is now talking not just about the geography where she lives, but also about how she understands this experience—this is “culture in action”. In line 10, C1 expands her assessment of her country as “fun” by listing the “fun” things she gets to do. Her continuing intonation makes it hearable to C2 that more is to come. The small story ends with an all-encompassing description of all activities in her country, “I have to go e:verywhe:re” (line 14), using what Jefferson (1990) described as a “list completer” (p.71). This information about her country, where she can go dancing, go on a holiday and go to the museum, highlight the local activities and places that are important to her, making visible her understanding of what counts as the activities more commonly described as “culture”. The prosody and pause at the end of her turn also indicate to the recipient, C2, that the story is complete.

Body positioning and physicality play a key part in C1’s hold on the conversational floor. C1 steps forward so they are now facing each other directly. C1 uses her arms to surround and encapsulate C2, in a move described by Cekaite (2010) as “shepherding” (p. 2) and which Busch (2018) asserts enables the “monitoring and coordination” of another’s action (p. 82). By shepherding C2, C1 ensures that C2 is directly in her gaze and their bodies are in line. This action is maintained for the story delivery, and so C1 commands the story recipient’s attention.

C1’s quick delivery of the story is carefully designed. While C2 attempts to input in a brief pause in talk (line 13), this is not taken up. At any time, the teacher may come over and direct the children to their work tables to complete the worksheet related to the task, or another child could join the dyad. The telling is produced as a performance, featuring embodied actions, animated facial features and emphasised talk. C1 captured the attention of C2.

The talk highlights the children’s enactment of culture by telling small stories to each other. This talk occurs while there is no teacher present. For C1, the lack of teacher presence meant that she could take full direction of the interaction and share cultural aspects of her life in her country. From an educator perspective, C2 may have

more successfully been able to take the conversational floor as storyteller with the communicative support that a more competent storyteller can provide, in the form of asking questions, prompting and assessments (see Burdelski, 2019; Filipi, 2019; Theobald, 2019). A teacher or a more competent storyteller may have supported C2's announcement about her country and supported her to expand upon with additional details of character, events and temporal dimensions.

8.3.3 Telling About Where We Live

The talk in the next fragment, Fragment 2a, occurs also in Classroom 1 and in the same HASS activity as the interaction in Fragment 1. The topic of "where we live" continues with the children completing a follow-up activity on a prepared worksheet, now at their work tables. The teacher provides the next instructions about the task: "Today we're going to do some work with each other. You're going to talk to the people next to you at your table, and you're going to talk to the people who are opposite you at the table about the culture that you follow.". While the fragment of talk is located within a HASS activity, the children are seated facing each other around a large table. They are working on their worksheets, chatting with their peers, and there is no teacher close by. The children's gaze is mostly focussed on looking down at their worksheets on which they are locating their country of birth on the printed map of the world (Fig. 8.5).

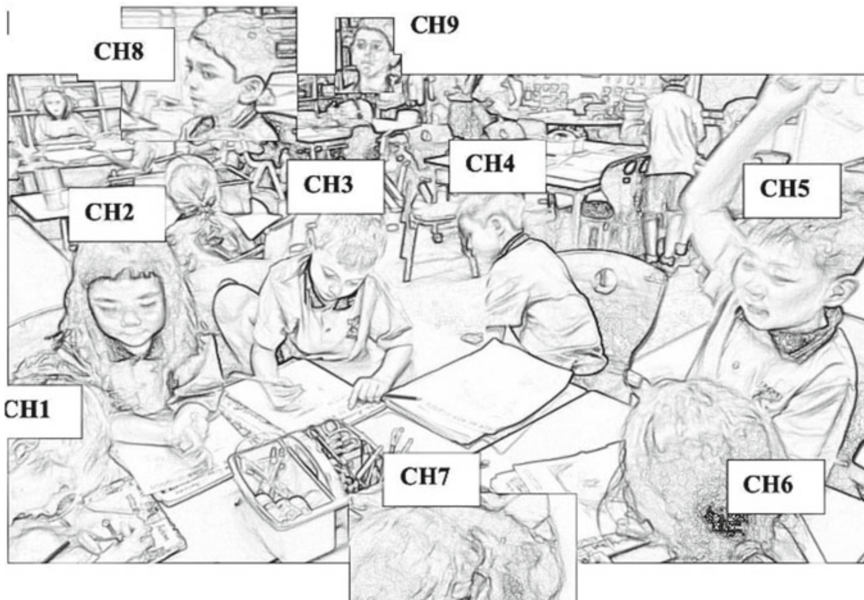

Fig. 8.5 "there are big toys"

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Key:
CH1 —   Child 1
CH2 —   Child 2
× CH3 —   Child 3
Δ CH4 —   Child 4
+ CH5 —   Child 5
* CH6 —   Child 6
CH7 —   Child 7
```

Fragment 2a Telling about where we live: Do you like Australia? (Classroom 1)

```
15.   CH6?:  Did you like Austra:lia?
16.          (0.9)
17.   CH5:   No.
18.          (0.4)
19.   CH6?:  (Why:.)
20.          (0.5)
21.   CH5:   Because that's, (0.8) b- I don kno:w.
22.          (1.9)
23.   CH6?:  Did you like (.) M- Mongo:lia?
24.          (0.5)
25.   CH5:   Yes. because there are .hh (ma) +↑bi*:::g (to::+ys),
      ch5:                                   +.....---,,,,,,+
                                           raises right arm high, fig 5
      ch6:                                      *gaze to CH5-->
26.          (0.3)
27.   CH5:   =+With fi:re trucks+ and ca:::rs, big ca::rs, (0.5) and
             +---gaze to CH6---+
28.          And ja-big-very gia:nt*e:st,(0.3)ra:cing [ca::r,
29.   CH6:                                             [I like my =
      ch6:   >-----------------------*
30.   CH6:   = Ja:pan.
31.          (0.6)
32.   CH4:   [(I like- I like) Austra:lia.
33.   CH6:   [Because it's (         )
34.          (1.5)
35.   CH6:   Wh[↑y::,
36.   CH5:     [We- (0.3) (my [Mongo:lia).
37.   CH4:                    [Δan- (I like- like)Δ Japane:se as we:ll.
                               Δ--looks up--------Δ
38.          (0.7)
39.   CH6:   I like my: Japa:n.
40.          (0.6)
41.   CH4:   I've bee:n the:re,
42.          (0.3)
43.   (?):   J[apa:n?
44.   CH6:     [Because I- (0.5) beca:use it's- (.) I have my ↑hou::se,
```

This fragment shows how the children follow the teacher's instruction to talk with their peers about the culture of their country, the focus of the prescribed classroom activity in which they are engaged (following on from Fragment 1). Child 6 (C6) asks two questions about liking Australia. These receive quite brief responses from Child 5 (C5) (lines 15 and 19). Following a pause, C5 answers C6's third question (line 23) about what he likes in Mongolia with an extended telling. C5 uses elongation and gestures to emphasise the lexical descriptions of "big" and "very giantest" (lines 25 and 28). C5 here presents the fire trucks and racing cars as large, impressive, and noteworthy, and in so doing, identifies local cultural aspects about his country.

The turns in lines 25–30 show C5 and C6 becoming more engaged in the conversation. C6 looks up from colouring on "bi:::g", and her gaze remains fixed on C5, while C5 stops colouring and moves his gaze around as he speaks and gestures. In overlap with the end of C5's telling, C6 gives her own perspective on the same topic, "I like my Ja:pan" (lines 29–30). The topic of "country" is now clearly established.

Affiliation is evident in the children's next turns. Child 4 (C4) echoes the structure of C5's telling. C4 displays affiliation to C6's telling, by saying "an- (I like–like) Japane:se as we:ll.", providing first-hand knowledge ("I've bee:n the:re") as justification for his opinion of Japan. C6 gives a reason for why she likes Japan and her own personal connection/experiences—"Because I (0.5) beca:use it's (.) I have my ↑hou::se," (line 44).

In this fragment, the children take the opportunity to talk to each other in the conversational space provided by the teacher. The seating arrangements enable the children to work closely together, while still being "on task". The children follow the initial instructions and talk to each other about their "cultures". The structure of the questions and tellings used by the children is quite formulaic, with the use of sentence starters including, "Did you like ___","I like ___","I like ___ because ____". This structure presents here, however, as a highly accessible way for children to share their stories or experiences with each other and elicit similar stories from other children. The talk highlights these children's understanding of the concept of "culture" which, in this fragment, is very closely linked to their own immediate environments including toys, houses and actions of family members. In the next interaction, Fragment 2b, the children continue to share stories about aspects of their lives out of the classroom, reinforcing and co-constructing "culture".

Fragment 2b Telling about where we live: My baby brother

```
45.   CH5:   Bu:t my ba:by brother, .hh +got a pen an  +scri:bbled in the
                                        +pencil in fist+-moves fist side->
46.          wa:ll[s.+
47.   CH4:        [heheh
      ch5:   >to side+
48.          (0.4)
49.   CH2:   I do: th[at too:.
50.   CH1:           [Well that wou[ld still be,
51.   CH2:                         [I do: tha:t,
52.          (0.2)
53.   CH1:   [goo:d,
54.   CH4:   [ΔI: (do) th[a:t,Δ
55.   CH1:               [an (beau:tiful).=
      ch4:   Δ---------------Δ
             turns towards CH5, pointing towards himself
56.   CH4:   =I- I: I: [scribble (on         ) with p- pe:rmanent ma:rker.
57.   CH2:             [(I like              )
58.          (0.8)
59.   CH5:   S:i::lly ba:by bro:ther.
((The teacher joins the children at the table, CH5 repeats his story.))
```

This fragment occurs one minute after Fragment 2a. Here, Child 5 (C5) builds on earlier talk about houses, with each child characterising their own homes as "clean" or "dirty"(not shown here). Responding to the teacher's initial instructions to "talk…

about the culture you follow", C5 extends the discussion of "culture" with a small story about the activities of a member of his family saying, "Bu:t my ba:by brother,.hh got a pen an scri:bbled in the wa:lls" (line 45). A number of children respond. Child 4 (C4) laughs affiliatively, receiving the story as an amusing contribution. C4 here displays an understanding that the storyteller meant the story to be amusing. Child 1 (C1) responds with an assessment, "Well that would still be, goo:d, an beautiful." (lines 50–55). While C1's statement presents a counter example that may appear to disagree with C5's characterisation of his house as dirty, it also puts forward that the scribbling may not be altogether bad. C2 announces an affiliation to the activity outlined in the story saying, "I do: that too:.", finding commonalities with the storyteller and the content of the story. As Theobald and Reynolds (2015) explain, children use both "competition and collaboration" to achieve group membership (p. 407). The children in this interaction both disagree and are affiliated with the storyteller's story about his family.

C1 and C2 may be sanctioning C5's earlier actions of being overly persistent in his attempts to contribute his stories and hold the conversational floor (not shown here), by not affiliating with C5's stance or receiving the small story as amusing or unusual. However, C4 laughs in response to the story, turns his whole body towards C5 and points to himself, smiling as he also says "I: (do) tha:t," (line 54) and upgrades his own description of his actions saying, "I– I: I: scribble (on) with p- pe:rmanent ma:rker.". While C5 does not engage with C4's telling, he closes his story at this point with an assessment saying, "S:i::lly ba:by bro:ther.", before repeating his story to the teacher who joins the children at the table (interaction omitted).

Returning to the teacher's initial instructions, "You're going to talk to the people who are opposite you at the table about the culture that you follow", different conceptions of "culture" are displayed here. For the teacher, culture is something "you follow", while for the children themselves, culture is talked into being. Analysis identified how the children's talk focussed on the physical objects such as houses and family members such as the baby brother. Although the children do not name their talk "culture talk", the talk occurs directly as the teacher gives the instruction, indicating they are orienting to aspects of the task. The analysis has shown how culture is created in situ and identified as within the children's immediate worlds, those activities, interactions and places that they know and experience first hand.

8.3.4 Telling About My Mum

The next fragment focusses on an interaction from a different activity, this time in Classroom 2. The fragment picks up a small story that occurs towards the end of a round of stories. A small group of children are sitting around a large table while doing a classroom activity of cutting out resources to do with English literacy activity. The previous talk of the group members was focussed on the topic of money and family members (Fig. 8.6).

```
Key:
+ CH1 —   Storyteller (Child 1)
* CH2 —   Recipient (Child 2)
  CH3 —   Recipient (Child 3)
```

Fig. 8.6 "My mum never stops buying clothes"

Fragment 3 Telling about my mum (Classroom 2)

```
60.    CH1:    You know my mum never stops buying clo:thes¿
61.            (0.4)
62.    CH2:    +WHA:::T!+
               +...-----+
               Extends neck, looks at CH3
63.            (0.2)
64.    CH2:    She keeps buying clo:::thes?=
65.    CH1:    =(Yes),
66.            (1.1)
67.    CH1:    [(       ) gonna be like a *clo:thes la:dy.
68.    CH2:    [(                )
       ch1:                                *moves gaze to CH2->
69.            (0.3)
70.    CH2:    O:::h;* maybe a [sty:lish gi:rl,+=
71.    CH1:                    [heheheheh
       ch2:                    +----------------+
                           tilts head to the side
       ch1:    >-----*         *----------------*
                          retracts head, looking forwards
72.    CH1:    =*Ha : :  no:;*
               *gaze to CH2 *
73.            (1.1)
74.    CH2:    +She * c a: n' t * sto:p¿
       ch2:         *shakes head*
       ch1:    +looking at CH2->
75.            (0.6)
76.    CH1:    She can't stop #bu:ying clo::thes,
```

The fragment comes as a second story (Arminen, 2004), triggered by another child in the group who announces that they had money in their pocket. The story here was part of a round of stories (not shown here), with the topic of "mums and money". This fragment picks up with a "telling" by Child 1 (C1) who says, "You know my mum never stops buying clo:thes¿" (line 60). This telling contains a key character, an action and a climax, features that identify it as a small story.

Identifying how affiliation between the members is developed in the next turns makes visible a local social order and shared culture of group members. Child 2's (C2) response to the story saying, "WHA:::T!" (line 62), is delivered in an elongated and emphasised manner for affect. This response reinforces the tellability of the story and indicates that this story is of interest. Theobald and Reynolds (2015) identified how even young children design their story for assessment, as well as to "fit" in with the group membership. They assert that children's stories can be designed as second stories to provide shock and astonishment. A preferred response to a storytelling is displaying a stance that mirrors the stance that the teller portrays as preferred (often in the story preface), whether that is as funny, sad, fabulous or strange. In the same way, the story is designed for shock, and a preferred response to this story is astonishment and delight. After her response, C2 gazes to Child 3 (C3) and leaves a turn relevant place in which C1 can take the conversational floor and move forward with the story.

With nothing further from C1, C2 poses an interrogative to illicit more information. C1 simply replies “Yes” (line 65). The pauses indicate that the recipient is waiting for more to come. The recipient then self-selects as next speaker and does repair initiation, prompting further information, “She keeps buying clo:::thes? = ” (line 64).

Assessments reinforce the establishment of a shared social order in the next lines. First, the storyteller, C1, provides an assessment in the form of a formulation to describe her mum as a “clo:thes la:dy.” (line 67). This is quickly upgraded in line 70 when C2 says, “O:::h; maybe a sty:lish gi:rl.”. This assessment (formulation) creates a new cultural category that has status in the local culture of this group. This description is delivered with affect, with C2 changing her tone and using elongation. C2’s head tilt here is coordinated with her description, “stylish girl”. In response, C1 pulls back her head and laughs (line 71).

The formulation of her mother as a “stylish girl” highlights the recipient’s affiliation with the teller’s stance. In recasting the mother’s identity from “my mum” (line 60) to “clothes lady” (line 67) and finally a “stylish girl” (line 70), the storyteller and recipient co-construct positive assessments of the activity. As a social action, a story elicits responses, with assessments a key way for recipients to provide feedback to tellers (Goodwin, 1990; Lerner, 1992).

Through the formulations, C2, the recipient, shows affiliation with C1, the storyteller. As Stivers (2008) explains, affiliation occurs when recipients display “support of and endorse the teller’s conveyed stance” (p. 35). There is no laughter in the initial telling of the story, instead, C1 presents the story as a matter of fact that may be in line with the previous stories about mums and money (not shown here). As C2 gives the shocked response “WHA::::T”, C1 looks up to gaze at C2. C2’s response reinforces the tellability of the story that it is newsworthy. It is possible that C2’s characterisation of “stylish girl”, not how a mum would usually be described by their children, delivered with marked prosody and head tilt, brings in a “humorous” interpretation of the story alongside an understanding that this story is “shocking”. The recipients, C2 and C3, use facial expression, laughter and characterisation to show their appreciation that this story is funny. Further alignment and shared cultural understandings are evident in the next turns. C2 proffers an account for the excessive clothes buying, “She ca:n’t sto:p¿” (line 74), which is picked up by C1, the storyteller, “She can’t stop #bu:ying clo::thes,#” (line 76). This statement seems to wrap up the topic, and there is no further information proffered about the mother.

In this interaction, C1 does not seem to be oriented towards a more expanded story about her mother, unlike the first fragment, she does not expand on her initial telling. Nonetheless, this small story opened opportunities for the children to make visible their culture; that is, what is “normal” to their lives outside of the classroom and for them to co-construct this into what is acceptable to the local peer culture. This affiliation and shared cultural understanding have the potential to positively influence connection between children in the classroom.

8.4 Discussion

This chapter has explored how children and teachers engage with curriculum concepts known as "culture". For the teacher, "culture" is displayed through references to abstract concepts and ideas that are about the "culture you follow", which includes identifying where you were born. For children, however, culture is displayed through stories about their house, activities and family members. At the same time, another culture is operating within the classroom. As the children are engaging in discussion of culture as instructed by the teacher, they are also constructing their own cultures, moment-by-moment. This is the culture of the classroom: how children interact with each other, how they share aspects of their everyday lives and how they orient to the teacher-led and peer-engaged activities. This is "culture in action" (Baker, 2000). This kind of culture in action is not explicitly named as culture, but it is made visible through the children's interactions with each other. The use of tellings of small stories is the interactional device used to share their experiences.

This chapter explicated children's telling of small stories to reveal how and what children told each other when they were given an opportunity to talk with each other. Analysis identified that having time to talk with each other about the concepts of the activity at hand made it possible for children to contextualise what they were learning and make it relevant to their own lives. Analysis identified three common elements about the small stories that have important implications for pedagogy.

First, the small stories were about self. The children brought to the local interactions what they saw and what they did from their standpoint, and highlighted in their stories their favourite activities, houses, toys or their family members. Through sharing about self, children were able to develop connections and highlight common interests or affiliation, such as a similar sense of humour. Sharing these small stories made the children's culture visible to teachers and peers, and for Fragments 1 and 2, showed how they interpreted the curriculum content of the classroom activity.

Building culture goes beyond simply talking about country of origin, although talk is a resource for displaying and making visible culture. The co-construction of these small stories also built a local peer culture, and occurred within a broader classroom culture, which can be understood as "arenas-of-action" (Hutchby & Moran-Ellis, 1998, p. 16). As children shared and constructed small stories, they traversed and made sense of differing social arenas of actions, making the task of the activity relevant to their personal culture, creating a co-constructed peer culture; this occurred inside a classroom culture that provided children with an opportunity to talk about the concept of the activity or while undertaking mundane tasks of cutting out. These opportunities to share stories enabled children to make "connections between their own worlds and the worlds of others, to build on shared interests and commonalities" (ACARA, 2016b), fostering intercultural understandings.

Second, each story had been "touched off" (Jefferson, 1978, p. 220) by previous talk, instructions or artefacts within the immediate context. Fragments 1 and 2 were tellings, and small stories touched off by the curriculum content in the HASS activity and the teacher's instructions. Fragment 3 was a second story that came in a round of

stories emerging after one of the group members announced they had money in their pocket. The significance of the stories all launching from the classroom activities goes to dispel a prevailing view that a noisy classroom may be an unproductive classroom. Where the story is prompted or comes out of the curriculum content itself, it provides teachers with a glimpse into how children make sense of and locate themselves in the focus or task of the activity or ongoing talk in their own ways.

Third, analysis identified that the small stories told by the children contain the structural elements of a story as identified by Sacks (1995). Each story included information about key characters, events or an activity and dimensions of time and/or place. The stories packed much of this information into minimal turns, identified as small stories. They were designed in response to the context, specifically the constraints of a busy classroom setting. For this reason, elements that may otherwise be prioritised in longer multi-turn storytelling are abridged. These findings suggest that children's meaning making can occur spontaneously and are being practised during and after curriculum tasks—*if* children are given the opportunity for *free talk*.

This chapter explicated children's tellings of small stories in two classrooms and in so doing does not seek to make generalisations about children in all classrooms. Employing video ethnography and analysing collected fragments from a data-driven approach such as CA, however, enabled close interrogation of interactional sequences occurring between children and within busy everyday activities of the classroom. Teachers are not at liberty to give such close attention to children's interaction due to their teaching responsibilities. This chapter has offered insights into the value of telling small stories for children's social and cultural development.

8.5 Conclusion and Recommendation

Drawing on the findings, we offer the following pedagogical recommendations:

- Encourage opportunities for free talk where children can initiate and share tellings and stories with peers that are meaningful and relevant to themselves. These interactions enable children to make visible their culture with peers and can help children create a classroom culture of belonging. Such elements foster intercultural competence and establish effective classrooms.
- Provide occasions for children to tell each other a story that relates to the activity or curriculum content during classroom activities. Such opportunities for sharing stories help children make connections with their peers and learn about another's life and culture beyond the classroom, supporting the enactment of culture in action.
- Use teaching strategies that facilitate the opportunity for peer–peer interaction and peer tutoring, such as "pair and share".

- Organise the classroom environment so that children have the opportunity to tell stories to each other, for example, large tables for small group discussion about the curriculum content or to work together.
- Select teaching resources that promote and launch opportunities for talk, for example, a book, a toy or other artefact that might provoke a story.

Fleeting moments of talk can become opportunities to share stories. This chapter has identified how allowing conversational space for children to tell small stories about curriculum topics and self can help children to make meaning from classroom topics, giving relevance to their own lives and commonalities with their peers.

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Appendix: Transcription Notations

In addition to Jefferson (2004b), transcription notations followed Mondada's "Multimodal transcription conventions (short version)" (2019), with descriptions (mostly) from Mondada (2018):

+ +	Descriptions of embodied actions are delimited between two identical symbols (one symbol per participant). Descriptions are synchronised with correspondent stretches of talk or time indications.
>	The action continues from a previous line
->	The action described continues across subsequent lines
>>	The action begins before the fragment's beginning
->>	The action continues after the fragment's end
….	Action's preparation
----	Action's apex is reached and maintained
,,,,	Action's retraction
fig	Moment where a screenshot has been taken

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