1. Introduction: Multilingualism and Early Education in Luxembourg

2. Language learning with pictures, rhymes and ITEO (C. Kirsch)

3. An ethnography of multilingualism in state-funded early childcare in Luxembourg (C. Seele)

4. Brain development and the role of experience in the early years (P. Engel de Abreu)

5. Conclusions: Implications, suggestions and some further thoughts

The Language Situation in Luxembourg

Three official languages: Luxembourgish, French, German

Many more languages spoken in daily life (notably Portuguese and English)

Total population: 549,680 inhabitants

248,900 resident foreigners (45.3%)

+ 146,900 border-crossing commuters (38.8% of the whole workforce)

Main immigrant groups:

Portuguese (16.5%), French (6.8%), Italian (3.4%), Belgian (3.3%), German (2.3%), other EU (6.7%), Non-EU (6.3%) (percentage of the whole resident population)

Languages in the education system:

Luxembourgish (nursery), German (from Year 1), French (from Year 2)

+ further foreign languages (secondary school)
Underlying pedagogical concepts

- Language learning as a social, cognitive, dynamic and emotional process (Vygotsky, Swain)
- Respecting and capitalising on children’s linguistic and cultural resources in settings where children can act (Sarason, Dewey, Rosenblatt, Greene, Dyson)
- Children as authors of their learning ("voice", "audience", "storying", responsibility, control, autonomy, consciousness) (Bakhtin, Freinet, Van Lier)
- Collaboration, cooperation, dialogue in a collective of human and non-human actors (Latour, Lantolf, Vygotsky)

Multilingual Oracies (MultOra, 2014-2015)

Using pictures, rhymes and books to further language development in non-formal and formal education settings

Mentoring; group discussions focusing on oracy practices; reflections

Professional development for teachers & educators

“Mit Versen in die Welt”

Research foci:

- Dialogue & communication of multilingual children in diverse settings

Sample:

- 3 MRE (3-5)
- 1 crèche (2-4)
- 1 C1 (4-6)

Methods:

- Video-recordings
- Survey
Nein, das ist eine Maus, eine Katze und ein Hund.
Ja, eine Maus und ein Hund.
Ja, eine Maus.
Nein, eine Maus und ein Hund und ein „Mupp“.
Nein, es ist ein Hund.
Nein, Miguel „Mupp“ ist wie ein Hund.
Nein, „Mupp“ ist wie ein Hund.
Nein, „Mupp“ ist der Hund.
Nein, „Mupp“ ist wie ein Hund.
Nein, „Mupp“ ist wie ein Hund.
Nein, „Mupp“ ist wie ein Hund.
Er ist, er ist.

### iTEO (2013 – 2016)

- Development of oral skills
- Relationship between oracy, literacy and general achievement
- iPad App to record and edit oral language
- Materialization/objectivation of language

- [https://blog.bsce.uni.lu/storying/](https://blog.bsce.uni.lu/storying/)

### Research questions:

- How do teachers and multilingual children use iTEO when learning languages?
- How does the tool change oracy practices?

#### Sample:

- 2 C1 (4-6)
- 2 C2-4 (6-8)

#### Methods:

- Observations
- Video-recordings
- Semi-structured interviews

#### Findings

**Children**

- Motivation to speak & learn
- Careful listening
- Collaboration
- Negotiation
- Imitation, transformation, elaboration
- Learning & teaching
- Reflection
- Examples of translanguaging
- Identity construction

**Teachers & Educators**

- Different understanding of
  - language learning
  - the language efforts of the children
  - the meaning of active learning
  - the role of the adult
- Unease about the use of German
- Differing use of translanguaging
- Need for professional development

**Teachers (iTEO)**

- Change of practices (towards a more natural learning environment with some guidance)

### 3. An Ethnography of Multilingualism in State-Funded Early Childcare in Luxembourg

Claudia Seele,
INSIDE, Institute for Research on Generations and Family
The Luxembourgish System of Education and Care
For children between 0 and 12 years

- **Formal education**
  - Education Prématernelle, for 3-4 year olds
  - Cycle 2 Enseignement Prématernel, for 4-6 year olds
  - Cycle 2-4 Enseignement Fondamental, for 6-10 year olds

- **Non-formal education and care**
  - Secteur conventionnel
    - For 0-4 year old children
  - Secteur non-conventionnel
    - For 0-4 year old children
    - For 4-6 year old children
    - For 6-10 year old children

The Ethnographic Research Project

- **Methodology**
  Combining an Ethnography of Multilingualism and an Ethnography of Early Childhood Education and Care, I ask how early educational realities are constituted through language practices.

- **Research Design**
  I conducted fieldwork in three contrastive state-funded day-care centres from 10/2010 to 12/2013, doing several phases of participant observation, incl. ethnographic interviews, document research, as well as photo, video and audio recordings.

Constructing a monolingual pedagogical space

Alexander and Jonas (both 3;6) who both speak German at home, invent a little "language game" during breakfast time. They call the grapes (in German) "apple" and the apple "grape"; then they say "eye" for a grape and "pear" for an apple. They seem to have a lot of fun playing with the words. Finn, who is a bit younger (2;6) and who speaks Luxembourgish at home, does not engage with the game. As he takes a slice of apple and Alexander says (in Luxembourgish) "grape", Finn replies: "No, apple!" […]

Some findings

Language practices in the day-care centre contribute to processes of institutionalisation in several respects:

1. Language serves to constitute institutional boundaries and to differentiate the pedagogical social space from the "outside" or "everyday" world.
2. Language serves to create an institutional order within this pedagogical space and helps to position actors within this order.
4. Brain Development and the Role of Experience in the Early Years

Pascale Engel de Abreu, ECCS, Institute for Research on Multilingualism

Between conception and age three, a child’s brain undergoes an impressive amount of change.

1. Early experiences shape brain architecture

2. Responsive caregiving builds healthy brain architecture

Unresponsive or unreliable caregiving can lead to impaired brain development
Persistent stress disrupts healthy brain development

At birth, a baby knows her mother’s voice and may be able to recognize the sounds of stories her mother read to her while she was still in the womb.

Language and the brain

Infants are sensitive to most language sounds in the first half-year of life but during the second half they begin to specialize in their native tongue at the expense of the broad sensitivity to nonnative language sounds.
Language and the brain

Year 2 involves dramatic changes in the brain’s language areas - more synapses and becoming more interconnected. These changes correspond to the sudden spike in children’s language abilities – sometimes called the vocabulary explosion.

Learning changes the brain

We have the responsibility to make this happen each day in the most efficient way possible. Improve our attempts at intervention in the early years.

Multilinguaalt Léierpotenzial Fërderen

Stimulate Multilingual Potential

Stimuler le Potentiel de l’Enfant Multilingue

The first few years of life are a particularly important period for the development of the brain.

The Luxembourgish System of Education and Care

For children between 0 and 12 years

Formal education

Non-formal education and care

Secteur conventionné

For 4-12 year old children

Sector non-conventionné

For 0-12 year old children

Secteur conventionné

For 0-4 year old children

Secteur non-conventionné

For 0-4 year old children

Secteur conventionné

For 4-12 year old children

Secteur non-conventionné

For 4-12 year old children

Cycle 1 Enseignement Précoce

• Compulsory, for 4-6 year olds

Cycle 2 Enseignement Fondamental

• For 4-6 year olds

Cycle 2-4 Enseignement Fondamental

• For 4-6 year olds

Éducation Précoce

• Voluntary, for 4-6 year olds

MOLLY

Mother Tongue Oral Language and Literacy for Young

MALLY

Mathematical Learning for Young

Stimulate multilingual potential
Foster development of pre-literacy skills in young children in Luxembourg to build a strong foundation for their subsequent reading development.

- Trains: phonological awareness, letter-sound knowledge, broader oral language skills
- Luxembourgish
- Multisensory (e.g. songs, stories, touch, gestures...)

Early brain development is the foundation for future learning.

Because experiences have such a great potential to affect brain development, children are especially vulnerable to persistent negative influences during this period.

On the other hand, these early years are a window of opportunity for parents, caregivers, and communities: positive early experiences have a huge effect on children's chances for achievement, success, and happiness.
5. Conclusion

How can caregivers foster children’s healthy development and enhance their language learning?

Implications for a reflexive professional development

- The promotion of Luxembourgish does not necessarily mean the exclusion of multilingual resources; rather, one can design an integrated approach.
- The topic of language promotion is not ‘only’ about teaching and learning particular languages but it involves many other issues (e.g. identity, participation, family involvement).
- It also transcends the sphere of prearranged and didactically planned pedagogical activities, permeating the whole institutional practice.
- Raising expectations and changing programmatic standards are not enough to change practices; instead change is based upon reflection and understanding of the intrinsic logic of the local practice itself.

Suggestions from quantitative and qualitative research studies

- Establish a safe, meaningful and predictable environment;
- Respond warmly and quickly to children’s cues;
- Design environments that build on the children’s needs and interests;
- Observe children carefully;
- Give just the right amount of help;
- Help children to develop concentration skills; e.g. avoid interrupting them when they are doing something interesting;
- Repeat meaningful activities;
- Beware of stress and overstimulation;
- Make good use of activities built on rhythm, rhyme, and repetition because they stimulate multiple aspects of cognition;

Some suggestions

- Create a language-rich environment, valorizing the children’s multilingual resources;
- Talk a lot to children and use forms of language that are varied and age-appropriate;
- Sing, rhyme and read to children as often as possible;
- Encourage conversations with a range of children and adults within and outside of the educational settings;
- Listen carefully to children, respond appropriately, elaborate their talk and extend their vocabulary;
- When children make mistakes, avoid negative feedback, rather rephrase and provide a positive model;
- Be a role model for children: read to and write with them;
- Encourage children to reflect on languages and language use.

Some further thoughts

- baueck
- How do we understand the complex relationship between policy, practice and research?
- What are the possibilities and the limitations of transferring scientific knowledge into practice?
- What is the role of initial education and professional development? What should it look like and what are the resources?
- What are your experiences of cooperation with professionals and families? What are your recommendations?

Thank You for your attention!
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