

Symposium 6 March 2015

Language promotion and language practices in early educational settings in Luxembourg:

Research projects in the fields of non-formal and formal education


Claudine Kirsch
 Claudia Seele
 Pascale Engel de Abreu




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Outline

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



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1. Introduction: Multilingualism and Early Education in Luxembourg




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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)

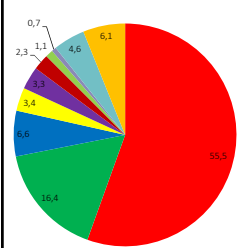
Main immigrant groups:
 Portuguese (16.5%), French (6.8%), Italian (3.4%), Belgian (3.3%), German (2.3%), other EU (6.7%), Non-EU (6.3%) [percentage of the whole resident population]

Languages in the education system:
 Luxembourgish (nursery), German (from Year 1), French (from Year 2)
 + further foreign languages (secondary school)

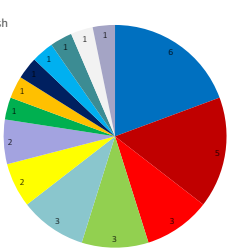


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Nationality of the resident population



Family languages of children in a crèche in Lux-city

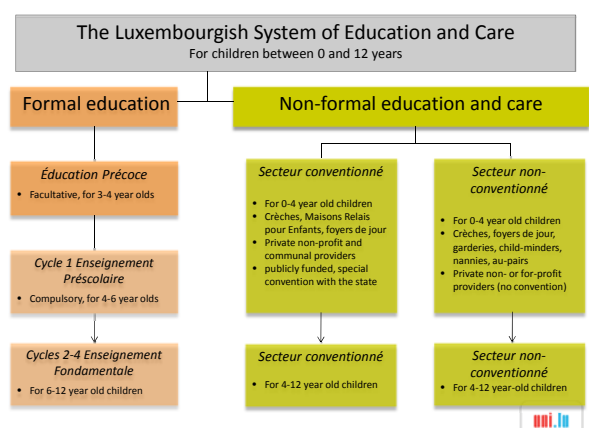


➢ 47,3% of children aged 0-4 do not have the Luxembourgish citizenship
 ➢ 62,6% of children aged 4-6 predominantly speak a language other than Luxembourgish at home



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The Luxembourgish System of Education and Care
 For children between 0 and 12 years




Formal education

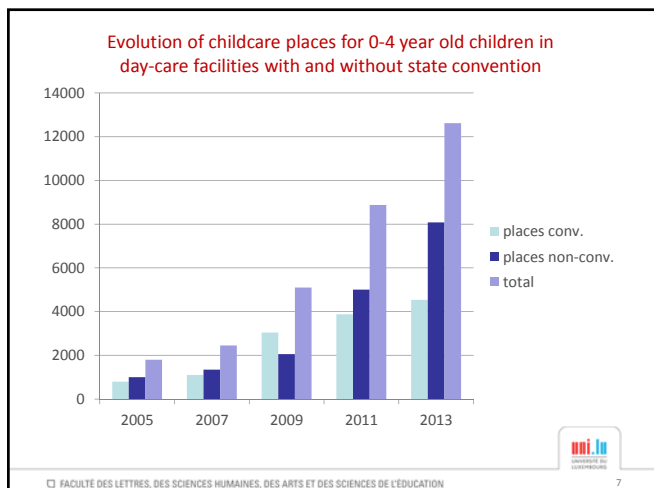
- Éducation Précoce
 - Facultative, for 3-4 year olds
- Cycle 1 Enseignement Préscolaire
 - Compulsory, for 4-6 year olds
- Cycles 2-4 Enseignement Fondamentale
 - For 6-12 year old children

Non-formal education and care

- Secteur conventionné
 - For 0-4 year old children
 - Crèches, Maisons Relais pour Enfants, foyers de jour
 - Private non-profit and communal providers
 - publicly funded, special convention with the state
- Secteur non-conventionné
 - For 0-4 year old children
 - Crèches, foyers de jour, garderies, child-minders, nannies, au-pairs
 - Private non- or for-profit providers (no convention)



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2. Language learning with pictures, rhymes and iTEO

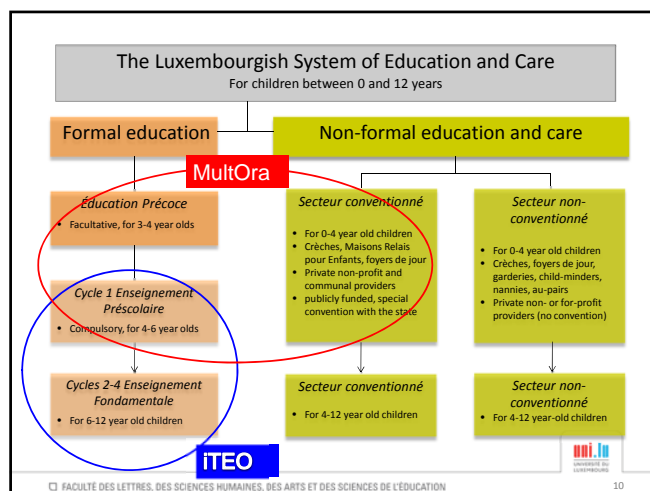
Claudine Kirsch,
ECCS, Institute of Applied Educational Sciences

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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)

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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"

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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

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Nein, das ist eine Maus, eine Katze und ein Hund.
 Ja, eine Maus und eine
 Eh, eine Katze
 Und eine Maus.
 Nein.
 Eh, eine Maus und eine Katze und ein „Mupp“.
 Nein, es ist ein Hund.
 Nein, Miguel „Mupp“ ist wie Hund „Mupp“ ist Hund „Mupp“ ist Hund.
 Nein, Mupp, er, es ist nicht Hund.
 Er ist, er ist.




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iTEO (2013 – 2016)

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



- <https://blog.bsce.uni.lu/storying/>
- <https://itunes.apple.com/de/app/iteo/id48527716?mt=8>




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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





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The children's resources / "Je m'appelle"

1

Auf Französisch?
 Moi, je m'appelle Aaron et toi tu t'appelles Lina.
 Moi je m'appelle Aaron.
 Moi se, je m'appelle Lina.
 Moi je m'appelle Aaron. Moi se, je m'appelle Lina.
 Nein, ich kann das gar nicht gut. Nein, komm wir werfen es in den Mülleimer.
 Je.
 Moi.
 Je.

2

Je.
 M'appelle
 Je m'appelle
 Lina
 Lina.
 Ja, richtig, gut. Jetzt kannst du das.
 Je m'appelle Aaron.
 Je m'appelle Lina.
 Je m'appelle Aaron. Je m'appelle Lina.
 Gut!



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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)



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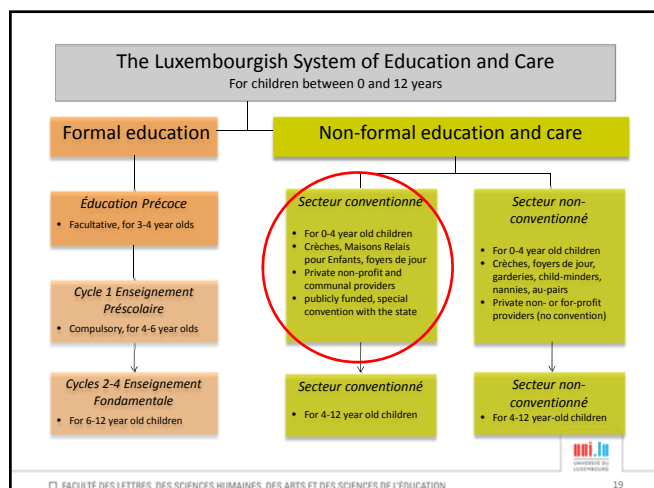
3. An Ethnography of Multilingualism in State-Funded Early Childcare in Luxembourg

Claudia Seele,
 INSIDE, Institute for Research on Generations and Family





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The Ethnographic Research Project

• Background

Early educational practice in Luxembourg is confronted with a range of expectations (from language promotion to school preparation, social integration and national cohesion).

• Research Questions

How is multilingualism actually dealt with in the daily practice of the day-care centres? How do these language practices contribute to the institutionalisation of the field of ECEC in Luxembourg?

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• 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.

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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!” [...]

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[...]

Now, the butter is nearly used up. Ilona (the caregiver) says: “Do ass nach Botter am Frigo.” [*There is more butter in the fridge (Luxembourgish).*] Alexander objects: “Nee, am... am Kühlschrank.” [*No, in the... in the ‘fridge’ (German).*] Ilona insists: “Nee, am Frigo. **Mir sinn hei am Butzegärtchen an do schwätzen mir op Lëtzebuergesch.**” [*No, in the fridge. We are in the Butzegärtchen and here we speak Luxembourgish.*]

(MRE Butzegärtchen, 12.04.2012)

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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.

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4. Brain Development and the Role of Experience in the Early Years

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



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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



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Unresponsive
or unreliable caregiving can lead
to impaired brain development




3 **Persistent stress disrupts healthy brain development**



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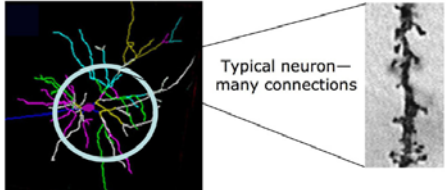
Positive
Brief increases in heart rate, mild elevations in stress hormone levels.

Tolerable
Serious, temporary stress responses, buffered by supportive relationships.

Toxic
Prolonged activation of stress response systems in the absence of protective relationships.

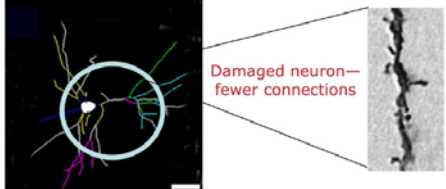
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Normal



Typical neuron—many connections

Toxic stress



Damaged neuron—fewer connections

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Language and the brain

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.



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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.



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Language and the brain



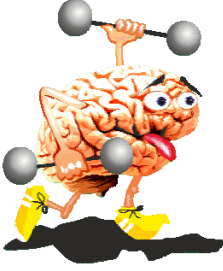
Year 2 involves dramatic changes in the brain's language areas - **more synapses** and becoming more interconnected. These changes correspond to the sudden spike in children's language abilities – sometimes called the **vocabulary explosion**.



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



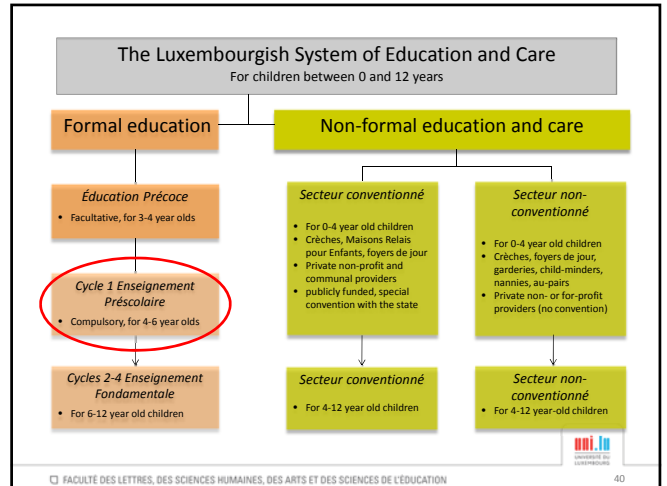
Learning changes the brain

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.



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Multilinguaalt Léierpotenzial Fërderen



Stimulate Multilingual Potential

Stimuler le Potentiel de l'Enfant Multilingue

Engel de Abreu, Carvalhais, Nikaedo, Tomás, Cornu & Martin

Grant #C13/SC/5886294, POLILux






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Multilinguaalt Léierpotenzial Fërderen

Stimulate multilingual potential


MOLLY


Mother Tongue Oral Language and Literacy for Young



MALLY

Mathematical Learning for Young





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Multilinguaalt Léierpotenzial Fërderen

Stimulate multilingual potential

The Iceberg Analogy

Surface Level

First Language Surface Features

Second Language Surface Features

Common Underlying Proficiency
Central Operating System

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Multilinguaalt Léierpotenzial Fërderen

Stimulate multilingual potential

Molly

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Multilinguaalt Léierpotenzial Fërderen

Stimulate multilingual potential

168 children

Molly

Mally

Random distribution

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Lauter Lëschteg Lauter

Early literacy instruction in a multilingual setting

Engel de Abreu & Wealer
Grant PUL, LITMUL

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Lauter lëschteg Lauter

Early literacy instruction in a multilingual setting

T t

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...)

*Dat ass den Tentafësch,
Hien huert a ganze Koup Talenter.
Hie kann Tent sprëtzen.
Mat sengen Tentakelen Taucher këddelen.
Oder mat Muschelen en Tuerm bauen.
Just Trompett spille kann hien net.
Wann hien ulänkt mat trotieren: Tut Tut Tut.
Dann tauchen all dei aner Fësch ëmmer.*

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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?



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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.



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Suggestions from quantitative and qualitative research studies



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Some suggestions



- 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;



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- 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.



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Some further thoughts



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- 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?



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Thank You for your attention!

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