

Language learning through storying on iTEO

Claudine Kirsch, Laurence Di Letizia

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Overview

1. Languages and education in Luxembourg

2. iTEO and storying



3. iTEO project

4. Findings

5. Conclusions



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1 The language situation in Luxembourg



Details

- 2 586 km²
- 549 680 people
- 45,3% without Luxembourgish citizenship
- 36% of the active population are commuters

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At the social level

- Three administrative languages: Luxembourgish, French, German

At individual level

- 60,2 % of the nursery children do not speak Luxembourgish as a home language on school entry
- 49,4 % without Luxembourgish citizenship.
- Diverse linguistic landscape: L, G, F, P, I, E as well as the Balkans' languages (MENJE 2015)



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Languages in the education system

• Trilingual education system:

- Luxembourgish at the "précoce" (3- to 4-year-olds) and in the compulsory nursery school (4- to 6-year-olds)
- German from Year 1 (6- to 7-year-olds)
- Oral French from Year 2 and written from Year 3

• Emphasis on Luxembourgish in nursery

- "Multiple multilingual education" (Garcia & Nelson 2011, 263).

- Results of longitudinal assessment studies: not all children have equal opportunities



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The iPad App iTEO



- Project iTEO addresses the need for the development of innovative didactic methods in order to manage the diversity and heterogeneity in Luxembourgish schools
- Oracy underdeveloped in schools (space, IRE, focus on the individual)
- Relationship between oracy, literacy and general achievement (Alexander 2012, Ulich 2003, Resnick et al. 2010)
- Inclusion, equal opportunities



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2. iTEO

• The iPad App

- Records and edits oral language
- Automatic replay: materializes language and encourages reflection on language use



• Collaborative storytelling – concepts

- Language learning as a dynamic, social, cultural, cognitive and emotional process
- Respect for and capitalizing on children's linguistic background/ TL as "normal"
- Voice, audience
- Agency, control, responsibility over the task
- Collaboration, dialogue (Lantolf & Poehner 2008, Swain et al. 2011)

- Children develop language and metalinguistic skills (Gretsch 1994, 2014; Kirsch 2014; Kirsch & Gretsch 2015; Gretsch & Kirsch 2015)

<http://storying.bsce.uni.lu>



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Learning languages through storytelling

"It's their (children's) intuitive approach to all occasions. It's the way they think." (Paley 1991: 17)

"Telling stories, about ourselves and about others, to ourselves and to others, is the most natural and the earliest way in which we organize our experience and our knowledge." (Bruner 1996, 121)

Storying, defined as the activity of creating, drawing, narrating, reading, writing, editing and performing stories, is a leading activity for language development (Chalklin 2003; Newman & Holman 1993).

It is a space for transformations of cognitive processes, subjectivities and social structures.



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3. iTEO Project - methodology

Qualitative longitudinal study (2013 – 2016)

Research question (focus of the paper)

How do teachers and children use collaborative storytelling on iTEO in their daily practice?

Participants (in this paper)

1 nursery class with 2 teachers and 2 focus children



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Methods (data collected in this nursery class)

- Observation
- Video-recording of children's collaborative storytelling (12)
- Video-recording of activities with iTEO in class (12)
- Semi-structured interviews with the teacher (8)
- Semi-structured interviews with parents (4)
- Regular conversations with the children (12)



Data analysis

- Grounded theory
- iTEO activities; genres; languages; performances



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4. Findings – Storying in the classroom



Narrating, listening, drawing, constructing, playing, dictating, reading, acting out stories



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Giving children a voice through storytelling



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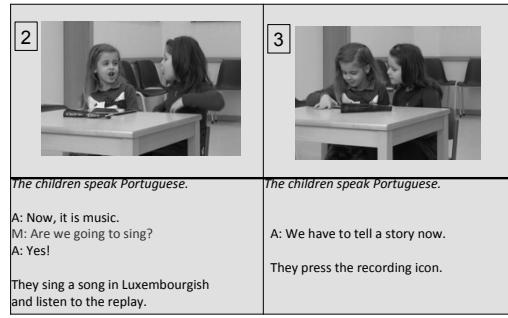
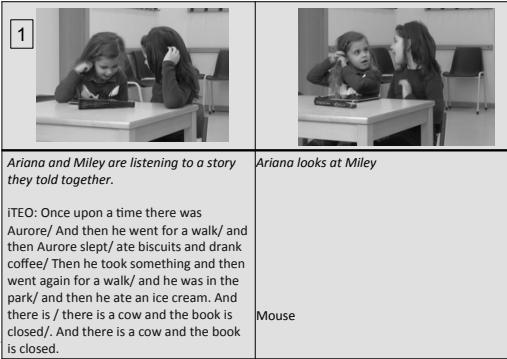
Use of iTEO for storytelling

- Systematic use
- Fully integrated into classroom life
- Available to all children at all times
- Constraints regarding the organization rather than the topic
- Specific requests (e.g. listening to the story, collaboration)
- Need for differentiated support (e.g. providing feedback on the process and the product) in order to develop the children's languages and narrative structures in Luxembourgish

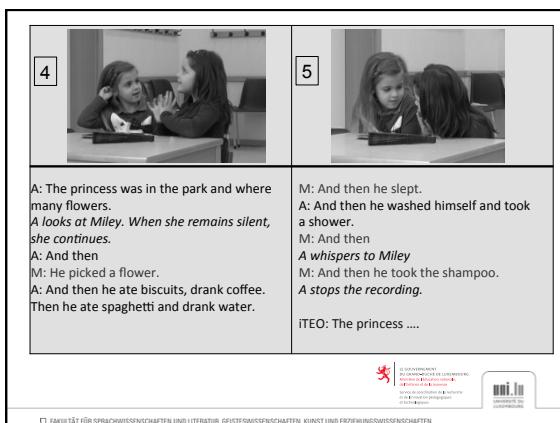


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A photo story: How children learn



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Learning languages in the iTEO team

- Collaboration
 - Discussing genre (text, song)
 - Propelling the story
 - Whispering ideas
 - Uptake of ideas (e.g. biscuits, coffee)
 - Repetition
- Attentive Listening
- Clarifying (a “mouse”)
- Corrections
- Transformation (plot)

In line with findings on collaborative language learning (Angelova et al. 2006, Lantolf & Poehner 2008, Swain et al. 2010)

In line with findings on cognitive perspectives on language learning (De Houwer 2009, Tracy 2008)

use of one’s entire semiotic repertoire for meaning-making and communication (Blackledge & Creese 2010, Garcia & Wei 2014)



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Identity performance



Storying connects children, topics and cultures
(Dyson 1997, Paley 1991)

- Ariana: emergent bilingual with Luxembourgish and Portuguese
- Developing a secure sense of identity
- Inventing and transforming stories based on Violetta, a Disney action-hero. This teenager with a migrant background moves to Argentina and further develops her personality.
- Multimodal performances and translanguaging

In line with findings on identity performances: Cummins 2006, Creese & Blackledge 2010, Garcia & Wei 2014.

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5. Conclusions

- iTEO as a learning tool
 - valorises and capitalizes on children’s background
 - makes teachers aware of the children’s funds of knowledge and traces their storying
 - allows teachers to monitor children’s progress
 - is used as a “normal” learning tool in all nursery classrooms
- iTEO offers spaces
 - for collaborative language learning
 - for translanguaging
 - for further developing one’s personality
- iTEO contributes to the development of teacher-researchers
 - regular team meetings in “professional communities of learners” (Kincheloe, 2012, Morrow, 2005 Stewart, 2014)
 - teachers link theory and practice



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Being a teacher-researcher

- Systematic observation
- Systematic reflection on children's learning and the productive learning contexts
- Regular discussion with the other teachers and the researchers about learning and teaching processes
- Linking theory and practice

"I learned to let go and trust the children. I also learned to listen more attentively to them and became more aware of their learning process. I learned to capitalize on children's resources in my teaching."



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Thank you for your attention!

claudine.kirsch@uni.lu

Laurence.DiLetizia@villeesch.lu

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