

Multilingual Literacy Practices in Theory and Practice in Day care Centres in Luxembourg

- Research questions, objective, conceptual or theoretical framework (600 words)

The richness of literacy experiences at home and in settings of early childhood education and care (ECEC) shapes children's language and literacy trajectories and predicts their school achievements (Skibbe et al., 2011; Wasik et al., 2016; Wood et al., 2018). In ECEC contexts, the practice of interactive story reading such as dialogic reading has been given much attention because the rich and meaningful interactions between adults and children during literacy events contribute to children's development of oral skills in one or several languages (Farver et al., 2013; Whitehurst et al., 1998). While home languages are the foundation on which to develop additional languages (Herzog-Punzenberg et al., 2017), literacy practices in multiple languages are still rare in ECEC (Kirsch & Bergeron-Morin, 2023). More research has emerged in the last years owing to the implementation of multilingual programmes in several European countries or states (e.g. Germany, Switzerland). This is also the case in Luxembourg, where the current project comes from.

Luxembourg has three official languages (Luxembourgish, French, German) but many more are spoken on account of the highly diverse population. At present, two-thirds of the children in ECEC do not speak Luxembourgish as their home language (MENJE, 2022). Following the 2017 Education Act on multilingual education for one- to-four-year-olds in ECEC, educators in day care centres are required to develop children's skills in Luxembourgish (or French), familiarise them with French (or Luxembourgish) and value the children's linguistic and cultural backgrounds. To promote language development, the national framework foresees that educators engage children in regular literacy activities in multiple languages, possibly with the assistance of parents inside the centres. A survey in 2020 found that most educators read and told stories in multiple languages, mainly in French, Luxembourgish and German, more rarely in Portuguese, though not every educator read every day (Kirsch & Aleksić, 2021). Like elsewhere, educators are frequently unsure of how to engage children in such complex practices and use translanguaging effectively in this process.

Translanguaging is the strategic deployment of a person's entire semiotic repertoire to communicate and make meaning (García & Otheguy, 2020). It is the main pillar of translanguaging pedagogies which help teachers leverage the learners' multilingual and multimodal resources for learning. These critical pedagogies can be transformative for learners and teachers as they empower the learners to connect home and school languages, valued equally. Literacy activities in multiple languages are part of the design of translanguaging pedagogies and have proven to develop students' confidence in engaging in literacy, deepen their understanding of text, increase the diversity of the texts they produce, and promote their metalinguistic awareness (García & Kleifgen, 2019). There are, however, few studies on multilingual literacy practices with younger children.

Based on a longitudinal mixed-method project in Luxembourg, the present paper investigates literacy practices in multiple languages in three day care centres, focusing on educators who work with three-year-old children. In a qualitative study, we intended, firstly, to explore which literacy activities in which languages the educators offered over one academic year and in which ways they interacted with children. Secondly, based on these findings, we aimed to conceptualize the educators' practices in relation to several dimensions, being inspired both by Hornberger's continua of biliteracy (2022) and translanguaging (García, 2016; García & Kleifgen, 2019).

- Methodology or methods (400 words)

The participants in this study were educators whose ECEC institutions had taken part in a professional development course on collaboration with parents and literacies, offered by the research team. Among the volunteers, we chose three centres on account of their different geographical locations and different main languages. In two centres, the main language was Luxembourgish and the educators communicated in Luxembourgish as well as German and French, and even Portuguese if they knew this language. In the third centre, the main language was French. While the educators addressed the three-year-olds mainly in French, they also read to them in English.

Having received ethical clearance from the University of Luxembourg, we spent 76 days between September 2020 and October 2021 in the centres, observing the educators and children, and doing semi-structured interviews with the managers of the institutions and some of the educators. The observational data included fieldnotes, video-recordings, and thick descriptions. The interviews were transcribed as were most of the videos. We added details on the use of the participants' semiotic repertoire to get rich and contextualised descriptions.

When analysing the data, we coded the type of literacy activities (e.g. reading, singing, rhyming, writing) but, in this paper, will focus on reading or telling stories. These activities were coded in relation to the language use and the type of books as well as the adults' and children's type of engagement (i.e. browsing, reading/ telling a story, encouraging narration). These codes enabled us to compare the practices across the centres and between the educators from various perspectives. To develop a deeper understanding of the pedagogical practices, we analysed the interactions in literacy events based on conversation analysis from a sociocultural perspective (Seedhouse, 2007). We thereby focussed on the strategies that the educators and children deployed to encourage participation and promote understanding. The interviews, which were analysed with thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), were used for triangulation purposes. Finally, to conceptualize the educators' understanding, we drew on the continua of biliteracy (Hornberger, 2022) and translanguaging (García, 2016; García & Kleifgen, 2019) and compared the literacy practices on the following four continua: literacy (skills – social practice), pedagogy (behaviourist – social constructivist), multilingualism (language – languaging), and language (monolingual– multilingual).

- Conclusion, expected outcomes or findings (300 words)

The findings showed that the educators had different understandings of literacy embedded in different pedagogies based on different learning theories. Some educators understood literacy as skills to be developed and engaged children in a few question-answer games following behaviouristic practices. The aim seemed to be the development of language skills at the word or sentence level, and the perceived outcomes were related to cognitive and emotional benefits. Other educators understood literacy as a social practice and helped children make meaning of texts in multiple languages. Using dialogic reading, they engaged the three-year-olds in discussions around longer and more complex texts which they related to children's experiences. Language and literacy development were perceived in a holistic way.

All educators used at least two languages, but most used several to activate children's semiotic repertoire. While some educators translanguaged rarely, others did so in every observation. The

first group tended to separate languages, possibly based on the belief that the use of two languages confuses children. By contrast, other educators used their entire repertoire and encouraged children to do so as well to ensure understanding and participation.

When combining these findings, it became apparent that the educators who were implementing more social-constructivist pedagogies were also those who perceived literacies as social practices and frequently drew on children's entire language repertoire to help them understand stories and express themselves in meaningful ways.

Overall, the findings show that national programmes that call for literacy in multiple languages can be implemented successfully but that educators require guidance and training on various levels. Professional development courses and initial education could deepen educators' understanding of learning theories, language development, multilingualism, and literacy, help them understand the interplay of these dimensions, and encourage reflection on their own practices.

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