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Chapter

Making Sense of Writing: Infants' Experiences in a Multilingual Day Care Centers in Luxembourg

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Abstract

Literacy holds a privileged place in early childhood education (ECE) as preliteracy skills are strong predictors of literacy skills which, in turn, influence academic achievement. To develop literacy, children need rich, meaningful, and varied print experiences at home and in ECE institutions. To this effect, ECE professionals have been shown to offer children opportunities to work on their oral skills, alphabet knowledge, print awareness, and phonological awareness. While some studies have investigated early reading experiences, fewer studies have reported on young children's writing experiences and literacy experiences in multiple languages. The present chapter from the project *Collaboration with parents and multiliteracies in ECE* presents the print experiences of emergent multilingual three-year-olds in three day care centers in Luxembourg. Our observations over the academic year 2020/21 showed that the educators provided children with literacy experiences in multiple languages, but that the space given to writing as well as the types of activities differed significantly across the settings. This was largely due to the differing approaches to literacy (social practice and autonomous model) and different underlying learning theories (social

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constructivist, behaviorist, maturationist). As a result, some children learned to make meaning of signs and express themselves in new ways in naturally occurring situations with the support of adults, while others learned about letter-sound correspondences in more technical ways which seemed removed from their experiences. The chapter concludes with a call for a social practice view of literacy in ECE settings.

Keywords: literacy, multilingualism, non-formal education

Introduction

Literacy is a fundamental element in Early Childhood Education (ECE) policy documents and curricula, shaping children's literacy trajectories through early print experiences. The latter influence children's later skills and future academic success (Strickland et al., 2004). While some researchers have investigated the effect of dialogic reading on children's vocabulary size (e.g., Whitehurst et al., 1998), few have examined children's writing activities in ECE institutions (Rowe, 2018). This holds especially true for very young children and those in multilingual contexts. This dearth of literature has to be seen in relation to ECE professionals who, reportedly, devote little time to writing (Hall et al., 2023; Rowe, 2018). This situation has been put down to the lack of explicit guidance on writing in policy documents (McLachlan, 2010; Rowe et al., 2021) as well as to the practitioners' understanding of literacy (Gerde et al., 2015).

Many researchers and professionals understand literacy from a technical, skills-based perspective. Based on this traditional view, children need to be taught discrete skills in sequential order to become successful readers and writers. A particular focus lies on print awareness, phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and oral language development, as these skills have been proven to be good predictors of children's later reading and writing performances as well as their academic achievements (Ouellette & Sénéchal, 2017; Skibbe et al., 2013).

Others promoted the "emergent literacy" perspective and conceptualized literacy development on a continuum with no clear demarcation between reading and writing (e.g., Teale & Sulzby, 1986; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). Using Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (Vygotksy, 1978) as a lens through which to understand learning and development, many scholars and professionals believed that children developed literacy almost naturally from an early age by engaging in authentic print-related activities at home and at

school. As a result, they promoted the use of a wide range of meaningful and informal activities that pay attention to both the functional and formal aspects of writing and are based on a whole language approach (Sulzby & Teale, 1985).

Studies reporting on current practices in ECE institutions show that most professionals offer a language and literacy-rich environment and develop children's oral skills as well as print awareness, phonological awareness, and alphabet knowledge, although in different ways and to different degrees (Rowe et al., 2021; Sverdlov, Aram & Levin, 2014; Weadman et al., 2022). These studies were carried out with older learners than those in Luxembourg, focused mainly on reading, and did not investigate the language use of the professionals and children. In the present chapter, we examine the print experiences of three-year-olds in day care centres in Luxembourg where Luxembourgish, French and German are the official languages. We focus on rare opportunities where emergent multilingual children engage with print, for instance when identifying letters, associating sounds and letters, or writing. These print experiences are underpinned by the educators' differing understandings of literacy, which, in turn, means that children make sense of signs in different ways.

The following sections review relevant literature and provide examples of children's writing activities and productions in multiple languages, before the chapter concludes with a call for a social practice view of literacy in ECE settings.

Developing Literacy: Empirical Studies and the ECE Framework in Luxembourg

This section provides an overview of relevant topics in the field of literacy development and examines the underlying learning theories and approaches. It then looks at the pedagogy outlined in the national framework for non-formal education in Luxembourg as well as suggested opportunities to develop literacy in multiple languages in day care centers.

What Studies and Theories Tell Us

Over the years, literacy has been studied from a range of perspectives. Adopting a psychological perspective to understand children's writing

development, some scholars described precise stages. They found that children from the age of 1.5 years make scribbles and scribble units as well as marks and stroke units before producing zigzag or wave-like forms and, later, letter-like forms and conventional letters. They then began to combine letters in invented spellings, first without paying attention to the letter–sound correspondences but over time, around the age of 6, writing more accurately (for examples, see Rowe et al. (2021)). While some researchers held fast to this linear sequence, others suggested that stages overlapped, while others again maintained that children used more than one strategy within the same creative production (Clay, 1975; Rowe et al., 2021). Rather than speaking of stages or strategies, Sulzby (1985), from an emergent literacy perspective, held that children developed hypotheses on how to write which they changed over time on account of their interactions with parents, teachers, or children. She confirmed that children may scribble in one document and combine letters in another. At the same time, they may be able to write their name correctly, and produce words in conventional or invented spellings. In contrast, Dyson (1991) criticized the previous views of writing development as fragmented and pushed for a more integrative view that explains how children learn to use signs and express meaning. She documented the idiosyncratic ways in which children develop their symbolic repertoire and learn to use symbols (speech, gestures, drawing, writing) to organize and represent their world and interact with others. This development involves shifts in the graphic forms and the functions of writing and is supported by adults in meaningful social interactions.

A different line of research investigated literacy practices in ECE settings. Scholars examined the materials used as well as the support offered by the practitioners. Rowe (2018) reviewed several studies on Head Start programs in the U.S. and concluded that most centers provided children with materials, but that professionals rarely engaged children in independent writing. If they did so at all, it was only for brief spells. A few years later, Rowe and her team video-recorded "expert early writing teachers" to research good practices. They found that the teachers organized interactive writing sessions in large groups where they modeled writing. They helped children develop ideas of what to write and assisted them in segmenting sounds or identifying correct letters. They also encouraged children to read and discuss their writing. Throughout this process, they treated children as writers. Finally, they designed a writing space with writing tools and encouraged children to include writing in their socio-dramatic play (Rowe et

al., 2021). According to Vygotsky (1978), play is a creative and productive context where children can develop language and thinking.

To understand the focus and outcomes of empirical studies, it is important to bear in mind the different approaches to literacy as well as the learning theories that underpin the studies. For instance, maturationists (e.g., Gesell, 1940) put forward a biological model of development where children acquire skills naturally when they are ready and provided with the right learning opportunities. Seen from this perspective, ECE professionals promote young children's writing development by offering them writing opportunities and materials. Examples are purpose-built writing areas and incentives to use pencils and paper during socio-dramatic play. A radically different perspective of learning is held by behaviorists who maintain that children learn if teachers make them develop knowledge and practice skills repeatedly and in a structured way, for example by the daily revising of letter and letter-sound correspondences. By contrast, constructivists (e.g., Piaget) or social constructivists (e.g., Vygotksy) maintain that children construct knowledge together with more knowledgeable others who attend to their needs and facilitate learning. Professionals with a social constructivist mindset take an active role in children's writing development, in line with the experts in the above-mentioned study by Rowe and colleagues (Rowe et al., 2021). Whatever the professionals' learning theories, everybody would nowadays agree that children need a supportive language and literacy-rich environment which is code and meaning-focused, thus, where children learn about print, letters, and sounds, and the meaning of words and text (Piasta, 2016). The exact role of the adult in assisting children as well as the type of activities, the materials, and the language use vary, however, depending on the underlying learning theory as well as the approach to literacy.

While psychologists or linguists frequently consider literacy as a set of individual cognitive skills to be developed in a technical way, proponents of socio-cultural perspectives emphasize the links between the skills, the social interactions, and the cultural context in which literacy practices are embedded. Street (1995) referred to the first model as "autonomous literacy", the latter as "social practice". Seen from the second perspective, children develop literacy skills (in one or more languages) through participation in meaningful interactions with their community. These interactions involve tools such as strategies, language, literacy, and materials, which are shaped by norms, values, and traditions. Children learn to make meaning of signs and symbols, but this complex process varies with and depends on the social and cultural contexts as well as the variety of modes adopted. This has led

some scholars to coin the concept "multiliteracies" (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). The concept refers to the multiplicity of communication channels, media, and the continually expanding cultural and linguistic diversity. An example of multiliteracies with iPads in a preschool class comes from Pacheco and Miller (2016). Drawing on English and home languages, children spoke about pictures related to their multilingual and multicultural lives outside school. The teacher wrote down children's ideas, thereby legitimizing the use of their home languages. Besides reinforcing their multilingual identities, children acquired new vocabulary, developed metalinguistic awareness, and recognized the importance given to their home languages at school.

Children's home languages are important resources when developing literacy in an additional language as some literacy-related knowledge and skills, such as print awareness, phonological awareness, and alphabet knowledge, transfer across languages (Bialystok, 2002). To draw effectively on children's linguistic and cultural resources, it is important to offer emergent multilinguals writing opportunities that include the use of their home languages (Martinez-Alvarez & Ghiso, 2014). When children (and adults) use their entire symbolic repertoire to communicate and make meaning, they are "translanguaging" (García & Otheguy, 2019). Despite the growing consensus on the relevance of home languages to support the learning of the societal language (Ramirez et al., 2021), few studies have reported on ECE professionals offering literacy activities in multiple languages (Michel & Kuiken, 2014). One of the exceptions comes from the project *Collaboration with parents and multiliteracies* (COMPARE) in Luxembourg where the ECE professionals read with and to children in multiple languages (Kirsch & Bergeron-Morin, 2023). The activities, however, varied considerably depending on the professionals' understanding of literacy. Given that this chapter presents examples of children from the same study, it is important to understand the larger socio-cultural context.

Literacy in the National Framework in Luxembourg

ECE in Luxembourg encompasses both the formal sector (e.g. non-compulsory early education for children aged 3 and the two-year compulsory pre-primary education for children from the age of 4) and the non-formal education sector that includes both state day care centers and private not-for-

profit and for-profit organizations. The present chapter is based on the non-formal education sector that developed rapidly in the last 20 years.

In 2018, the professionals in the non-formal sector, mainly qualified educators, were presented with the first national framework for non-formal education in childhood and youth, which defined pedagogical goals and approaches and outlined seven fields of action (e.g., language, communication, and media). The document demarcates itself clearly from the formal sector, stating that the non-formal sector offers children opportunities to "have fun" and "relax" while also offering opportunities to develop during play and in naturally occurring situations (MENJE & SNJ, 2021).

The child-centered document portrays children as competent actors on an equal footing with adults, able to construct knowledge and develop skills autonomously in an interesting environment. They are empowered to select activities in which they wish to engage while also being encouraged to participate in group activities such as shared reading. In relation to language learning, they should be given the space to "acquire on their own and further develop their individual linguistic competencies" (MENJE & SNJ, 2021, p.20).

The importance of literacy is emphasized in relation to children's future development as readers and writers. While specific skills such as print awareness, phonological awareness, and alphabet knowledge are not mentioned, the authors give examples of literacy experiences (e.g., stories, finger plays, first scribbles, the discovery of books and symbols) and mention various materials:

> "The materials afford a variety of literacy experiences (e.g. letters and writing, numbers and symbols in the group room, instruments for reading and drawing, magazines). Simple office equipment encourages discovery and experimentation." (p.50).

Multilingualism is a transversal strand in the document as almost all educators and two-thirds of the children are multilingual in Luxembourg (SNJ, 2023). The policy encourages educators to use languages flexibly and appropriately as well as respect children's multilingual and multicultural resources and language choices. It considers translanguaging to be a normal phenomenon and encourages professionals to give equal status to all languages, for instance when reading in multiple languages. The educators'

supporting role in relation to language learning and literacy is described as follows:

> "creating opportunities and linguistic spaces where they [educators] can make a rich and authentic contribution and where children can act in a multilingual way (e.g. read and discuss stories, recite rhymes, sing songs, role-playing games, carry out rituals, engage in dialogue when changing nappies, create spaces [where children can] retreat with pictures and books); (…) encouraging experiences with writing and symbols, in particular by arousing interest in books, drawing children's attention to different written languages and by telling stories." (p.112)

The focus on participation and children's rights may explain why the role of the professionals is not clearly defined. Reminiscent of maturationalists' views, the role appears to consist in designing the spatial environment and identifying activities and materials based on observed needs. The concept of co-construction is mentioned, but not in the Vygotskyan sense, particularly as it mentions that educators can learn from children, without indicating that children learn as well from adults.

The national framework helps explain why the professionals in the above-mentioned study of the project COMPARE used multiple languages when reading books to three-year-olds and why the professionals understood their roles in literacy activities in varied ways (Kirsch & Bergeron-Morin, 2023). The next section turns to the children's print experiences and illustrates the diversity of practices which, in turn, reflect the educators' different approaches to literacy and learning theories.

Literacy Activities in the Observed Day Care Settings

The Status of Writing in the Three Centers

One of the aims of the project COMPARE was to analyse literacy activities in multiple languages in three private day care centers which we named *Earth* (dominant in Luxembourgish), *Water* (dominant in Luxembourgish and German), and *Air* (French-dominant). Table 1 provides an overview of the data collected over the period of the academic year 2020/21 and groups them by the types of activities. Firstly, the vast majority of the literacy activities in all three centres, but mainly in *Water*, related to reading or

telling stories. On four occasions, we also observed the educators and children in *Earth* reading signs and pictures. Secondly, the time devoted to "doing rhymes", "engaging with letters and sounds", and "writing", more formal literacy activities, varies greatly as seen in Table 1. While children in the center *Earth* engaged a quarter of the time (27%) in these formal print-related activities, children in *Air* and *Water* did so rarely and, on these occasions, worked on letters and sounds or recited rhymes, respectively. Writing activities were only observed in *Earth*. Based on the previous analysis of the national framework (MENJE & SNJ, 2021) where writing is only mentioned a mere six times, it is understandable that writing was given little space and that print opportunities differed widely across the centers. Multilingualism, emphasized in the framework, was also observed in interactions in the centers *Earth* and *Water* where the educators and children used mainly Luxembourgish or German but also French and Portuguese. By contrast, communication during the activities in *Air* tended to be in French and occasionally in English with an English-speaking child.

The Perspective of Literacy and Examples of Literacy Events

Table 2 provides further insight into the types of activities and potential skills to be developed. (We do not focus on the development of oral language through storytelling here.) Professionals in *Earth* offered the most varied activities – although not regularly – and those in *Air* focused on letters and grapheme-phoneme (letter-sound) correspondence. The differences between the educators' understandings of literacy – a social practice versus a skills-based perspective – are not obvious from Table 2, but they will become clear in the next section where some of the activities are further examined.

Print Awareness

Educators in all three centers engaged children almost daily in shared reading activities and made books available to the children before naptime. They also referenced print in books or in their surroundings. In *Air* the educators used name cards and an attendance chart to help children recognize their name during the daily morning routine (see description below). In *Earth,* pictograms of clothing items were used to indicate the order in which children should get dressed before leaving the center.

Table 1. Summary of literacy experiences

Day care center	Days	Reading/ telling stories, signs and recipes	Doing rhymes	Engaging with letters and sounds	Writing	Total	% of time spent on formal activities
Earth	13	20 observations 2h 46 min	2 observations 5 min	3 observations 14 min	10 observations 43 min	3h 48 min	27%
Water	14	36 observations 4h 22 min	6 observations 10 min			4h 32 min	3%
Air	16	28 observations 2h 56 min		11 observations 35 min		3h 31 min	17%

Table 2. Literacy skills

Skill to be developed	Days	*Earth*	*Water*	*Air*
Print awareness	Referencing print	X	X	X
	Attendance chart with name care			X
	Dress chart	X		
	Books and songs	X	X	X
Phonological awareness	Chanting rhymes and doing finger games	Y	X	
	Using books with rhymes	Y		
	Identifying phonemes	Y		X
	Relating phonemes to graphemes	Y		X
Alphabet knowledge	Identifying graphemes	Y		X

Note: X means that the activity was frequently observed, Y that it was observed a few times.

Phonological Awareness and Alphabet Knowledge

The educators in *Water* were occasionally observed making rhymes and finger games to develop phonological awareness. These practices were not observed in the other centers. Qualitative differences could be noticed between *Earth* and *Air* regarding the ways in which they developed phonological awareness and alphabet knowledge. In *Air,* children were every day encouraged to identify a card with their name written in capital letters. The educator in charge would read it aloud and emphasize the initial sounds, at times comparing names to other words with the same initial sound (e.g., "Cécilia like serpent"). She also corrected wrong answers, encouraged children to repeat after her, and praised them for correct answers. The conversations were in French except for two occasions. In December 2020, the educator greeted English-speaking Thomas and asked in English "What is the first letter of your name?" Thomas answered "T", pronounced in English. "In French, T", she uttered, pronouncing the sound in French. Thomas repeated after her. This morning routine is in line with a behaviorist learning theory, where children acquire knowledge through repetition and adult feedback. The French educators chose this skills-based approach, as they related ECE to school preparation.

Apart from this daily group activity, the educators made available literacy-related learning materials during independent playtime. Figure 1 shows an example of such material in use. The task consists of matching the letters of the word *château* (castle) written previously by the educator at the top of the tray with the letters children select from the basket and place on the black dots at the bottom. While the three-year-olds had previously repeatedly heard the word "*château"* in a story, it is doubtful that they were able to recognize the written word or make sense of it on their own, as no

adult was present to explain and assist. In this and similar situations, the educators seemed to expect that children learn independently when presented with material that afforded learning, akin to a maturationist view of learning (Gesell, 1940). This incompatibility of approaches could be related to the national framework, where the role of materials is given a dominant role and the role of the educator is not clearly defined.

Figure 1. Child using a literacy tray in *Air* (January 2021).

Figure 2. "Bienvenue" (welcome) written in letter-shaped candles at Earth (December 2020).

In *Earth* we observed a child-centered practice with activities embedded in authentic learning situations. During celebrations or parental visits, the educators included letter-shaped candles in the decoration to write names or greetings in French, Swiss German*, Portuguese, Islandic* or other languages depending on the parents. (Languages with an asterisk have been

changed to protect children's identities). For example, when a French-speaking mother visited in December 2020, the educators arranged the candles to write the word *Bienvenue* (welcome) (see Figure 2). The children spontaneously pointed to specific letters as they recognized them in their own personal names or those of relatives. Three children took the letter B and uttered "my daddy". The educator followed the children's lead and used various strategies to keep them engaged when making meaning of these letters. For example, she helped children understand that the letter "B" appears in the three fathers' names. She also let children compare the shape of the letters "U" and "V" and sounded out the letter "U", relating it to the cries of the wolves.

In March 2021, the same candles were used to write a name on a birthday cake. The educator asked if she should write the birthday boy's name with the candles and the children assented euphorically. While placing the candles on the cake, she spelled out the child's name by elongating each sound. Some children repeated after her. One boy showed his phonological awareness and commented: "When it's Gloria's birthday we write "L-O-R-A". The educator responded by sounding out the entire name, articulating every sound clearly.

These examples from *Earth* show that this center pursues a social practice view of literacy (Street, 1995). The educators used text in several languages and emphasized various functions of literacy (e.g., greeting, celebrating) in meaningful and authentic situations. Letters were used in connection with children's lives and previous experiences, which supports meaning-making (see Kemp, forthcoming). In addition, the educators took on an active role when engaging children in the events and created many opportunities where they or children scaffolded learning experiences for less experienced children. The ways in which their approach was framed by social constructivist learning theories was not only discussed in interviews, but is also visible in the following examples.

Writing in Earth

In October 2020, the educators wanted the children to make a present to celebrate Father's day. They put pictures of the children with their father on a poster and encouraged the three-year-olds to talk about the picture in their home languages (e.g., Luxembourgish and Portuguese). While attentively listening and asking for clarification and follow-up questions, they took down children's accounts. The following day, they wrote these next to the pictures. Motivated by the educators' modeling of writing, the children

added drawings, marks, or scribbles to the posters. Others made stroke units to indicate their names and glued a few random letters on the paper. This example of "multiliteracies" (see Figure 3) shows how family languages as well as multiple modes of expression were valued and resulted in a multimodal and multilingual product (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009), created collaboratively by parents, educators, and children.

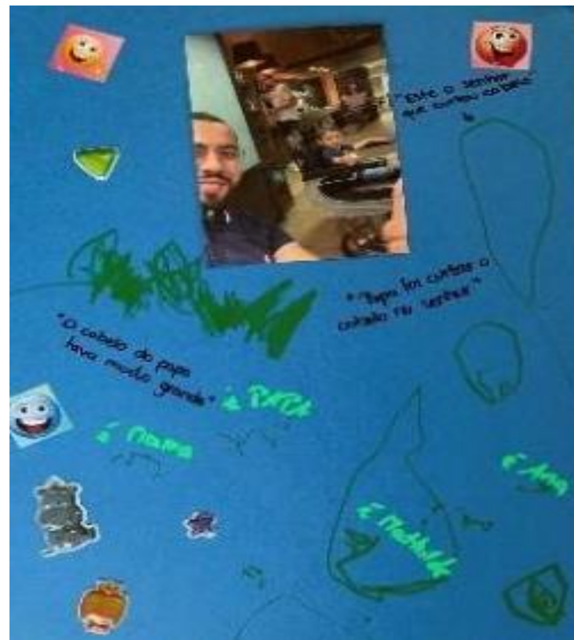

Figure 3. Mark-making in the fathers' day poster (October 2020).

The children in *Earth* were introduced to a different function of writing a few months later. After heavy rainfall in February 2021, water had accumulated at the cabin in the woods which the educators and the children frequently visited. The educators decided to write a letter to the forester to explain the situation, ask for help, and suggest solutions. On three consecutive days, the educators formulated the letter together with the children in translingual conversations. Before putting the letter in the envelope, the children decided to sign it. In this authentic situation of communication, children were seen as writers with a voice (Dyson, 1991; Rowe, 2018). Not only did they learn about formal aspects of print (e.g., format of a letter, greeting) but also about the various functions of literacy.

The final example illustrates how children, who by now considered themselves writers, decided to create a recipe for their parents. They had become confident in expressing their ideas in various languages and modes, and their writing had developed from marks and scribbles to letter-like forms (see Figure 4) as one would expect of young children who are supported in a literacy-rich environment (Rowe et al., 2021).

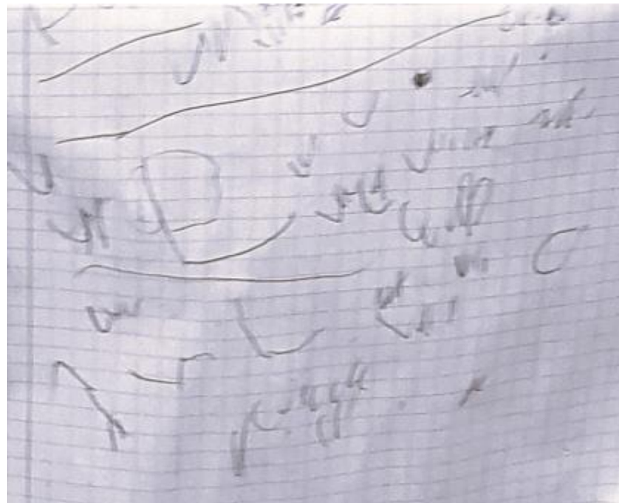

Figure 4. Letter-like forms in the recipe (June 2021).

In this particular event in June 2021, the educators and two parents (a mother and a father) made pancakes with the children. To help children read the recipe, the educators had prepared a document with pictures and pictograms. While waiting for her pancake, three-year-old Gloria began to write down the recipe, explaining to the educator that it was in Portuguese and for her mother. Figure 4 shows her letter-like forms. Lia, a Swiss German-speaking girl, listened in and promptly asked her father to write down the ingredients with her. Both looked at the pictures and Lia told her father the words of the ingredients and kitchen tools in Swiss German which he took down. He helped her find the words she did not know. Gloria and the educator listened and sometimes compared the Luxembourgish, Swiss-German, and Portuguese terms, showing language awareness and curiosity. This is an excerpt of the conversation originally in Luxembourgish (normal font), Swiss-German (italics), and Portuguese (underlined).

Father	(writes) [An dann? Eeër. Wat ass dat op Schwäizer Däitsch?] And then? Eggs. What do you say in Swiss German?
Lia	[*Eier*] *Eggs.*
Gloria	[Eeër] Eggs.
Father	[*Eier*] *Eggs.*
Educator	[*Eier*? Ass dat wann dat der vill sinn?] *Eggs*? Is this when there are many?
Father	[Jo. Et ass Plural.] Yes, it is plural.
Father	[Dann Läffel, wat ass dat?] Then spoon, what is that?
Lia	[*Löffel.*] *Spoon*.
Educator	[Uh, *Löffel*. Mir léieren hei eppes bäi.] Ah, *spoon*. We are learning something.
Gloria	[An Portugisesch ass colher.] In Portuguese it is spoon.
Educator	[Colher.] Spoon.

This event illustrates the strong sense of community in *Earth,* where multilingual educators, parents, and children were co-constructing knowledge while participating in meaningful translingual interactions. Adults and children drew on their entire semiotic repertoire to communicate and make meaning. The three-year-olds were aware of different languages and proud to produce a text in their home languages. Translanguaging was empowering (García & Otheguy, 2019). Like other emergent multilinguals, translanguaging helped the young children in Luxembourg communicate (Axelrod, 2017; Sembiante et al., 2023), develop metalinguistic awareness (Pacheco & Miller, 2016), include others (Sanders-Smith & Dávila, 2019), and mark their identity (Gort & Sembiante, 2015). This also enabled them to comprehend that literacy was an important communicative tool that mirrored their personal experiences.

Taken together, these three writing events illustrate the educators' socio-cultural perspective of literacy, the ways in which they applied social constructivist learning theories as well as their understanding of bilingualism as dynamic and flexible (García & Otheguy, 2019). In line with the national framework and the multilingual context of Luxembourg, the educators encouraged children to participate in the writing process in various languages. Literacy was used in authentic situations and fulfilled different functions, such as recording memories (e.g., fathers' day poster), communicating with others (e.g., letter to the forester), or outlining instructions (e.g., recipe). Writing was firmly embedded in the social and cultural context of the community to which educators, parents, and children belonged. Over time and with the assistance of adults, children became confident and interested writers.

Conclusion

While writing plays a significant role for emergent literacy development, it played a limited one in all centers but the ways in which they children engaged with print and the extent to which they became writers depended on the educators and the three centers. The practices we observed over one academic year were shaped by the educators' diverse approaches to literacy and learning theories. These approaches also help explain the different ways in which the educators had interpreted and implemented the national framework. Educators who primarily viewed literacy as a set of technical skills offered isolated activities. Literacy appeared as neutral, devoid of culture, context, and ideologies, akin to what Street called the "autonomous model of literacy" (Street, 1995). The language(s) used in the activities varied, depending on the educators. Educators guided by social constructivist frameworks understood their role in designing productive learning environments and scaffolding children's learning in a way that children co-constructed knowledge. Adopting a social practice perspective on literacy (Street, 1995), these educators were also more inclined to embrace children's languages, resulting in translanguaging practices (García & Otheguy, 2019) and multilingual oral and written productions.

The differences come as no surprise as there are few ECE studies on literacy with very young children and with emergent multilinguals (Dyson, 1991; Michel & Kuiken, 2014; Rowe et al., 2021; Sembiante et al., 2023) which could guide the professionals in Luxembourg. This may also explain the paucity of guidance in the innovative national framework, Luxembourg being one of few European countries where multilingual education is compulsory in ECE. We argue that there is a need for further empirical studies on the interconnectedness of literacy and multilingualism in the early years. Furthermore, we maintain that professionals need more guidance in official policy documents and more in-depth training on literacy in initial training and professional development.

Why does this matter? While a skills-based approach has its value, we illustrated the importance of the social practice view of literacy enacted in translanguaging practices in ECE settings, which helps young children understand the formal and functional aspects of literacy. Children are active meaning-makers, aware of their and others' thinking and doing. When interacting with others in literacy practices (which are always underpinned by values, norms, and traditions), they make sense of reading and writing. While some children may associate literacy solely with acquiring isolated

skills and texts created by adults, others discover that writing offers a fresh means of self-expression and a pathway to adopting new roles within their multilingual communities.

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