

**A sociology of literacy acquisition in
the context of multilingualism:
Comparative results
from LAS Turkey and Germany**

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Literacy Acquisition in Schools
in the Context of Migration and Multilingualism

Aim

- Social construction of the educated person
 - Fundamental differences
 - Underlying philosophical tenets
- What is learner?
- What is learning?
- What is literacy?
- My intention is not to favour one model to another but rather to show two different conceptions

Children vs Pupils

GER TUR

- children learning to become PUPs
 - treated as children initially
 - creating a child-friendly atmosphere
 - Classroom resembling a playground
 - easy transition to becoming a PUP
 - alternating between motivational (i.e. fictional) and instructive strategies
- treated as PUPs from the beginning
 - instructive approach
 - PUPs as serious learners
 - internalise the rules of a structured atmosphere

Natural ability vs learned technical skill

GER

- reading and writing as a natural ability
- implicit objectives
- downplaying the seriousness of the lesson
- playful approach to learning
- writing is done for “Penguin Pikus” and other fictional friends of the class

TUR

- reading and writing as a learned skill
- *‘we are here to learn how to read and write’*
- writing as a serious activity done in a concentrated manner
- technical skills of good handwriting and orthography
- rhymes and songs when PUPs are exhausted

Contextualisation

GER

- embedded learning in textual contexts
- eg. telling stories and writing texts
- no explanations of text genres (i.e. letter, diary)

TUR

- emphasis on the technical side of the writing activity
- eg. size of the letters, space between words
- clear handwriting & well-organised notebooks as requirements
- special texts for each letter

Process-oriented experimental approach vs product oriented approach

GER

TUR

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- flexible attitude towards errors
 - learning can only take place through making errors
 - experimenting encouraged
 - producing texts by trial and error
- notebooks should only include the assigned writings
 - producing a flawless end product
 - *'Erase this part, it confuses me.'*
 - text production for the TEA, not for the PUP
 - *'Don't be afraid.'* & *'Be courageous.'*

Recap

- ❑ acquiring literacy vs learning how to read and write
- ❑ functional approach to literacy targeting textual quality of language vs mechanical approach of reading and writing targeting acquisition of technical skills
- ❑ emphasis on the PUPs' own discretion and self-responsibility at the expense of maintaining order vs emphasis on everybody does the same at the expense of the development and expression of individuality

Thank you
for your attention.



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Part One:

Attitudes towards school, multilingualism and literacy
in international comparison

1 Basic assumptions

- Acquisition of literacy in schools is embedded in historically and culturally shaped views of knowledge and language
- Differently organised education processes occur in the context of of nationally different school systems and education styles

2 General features of the schools under scrutiny

- Three-tiered school system in Germany versus comprehensive school system in Turkey
- Location of Turkish LAS school leads to relative socio-economic homogeneity of clientele from the beginning; this sort of homogeneity is in Germany more pronounced in post-selection, after primary school
- Generally lower educational standard of case families in Turkey than in Germany

3 Attitudes towards the schools' educational mandate

On the part of the schools:

- Universal claim to education versus the capability to meet this claim
- Organisational differences on the immediate local level trigger major differences in the seizure of school attendance, in staffing, equipment with space and materials, teachers' salaries, and fluctuation within the staff
- Turkish LAS school is not equipped to sufficiently execute its universal claim, German schools have to compete for their clients

On the part of the parents:

- Turkey: school as a safe place to accommodate children for the day, but no differentiated ideas or attitudes as regards the procedure and planning of school careers
- Germany: school as an institution that provides children with the necessary academic degrees to meet the challenges of the labour market

4 Attitudes towards nationalism, multilingualism, and multiculturalism

- “National idea” is strongly promoted in the Turkish LAS school, but rather critically perceived in the German LAS schools
- Homogeneity of the clientele is a major concern in both countries, most obviously displayed in the banishment of minority languages from school
 - Turkish school and German primary school: attitude towards multilingualism and multiculturalism is official denial
 - German comprehensive school: such aspects are addressed and processed in a pedagogically and didactically purposeful manner
- Negative perceptions of minority groups are conveyed informally towards the researchers, but not in the classroom
- In Germany, such perceptions are coupled with “politically correct” functional arguments; in Turkey, they are openly racist

5 Attitudes towards literacy and literacy acquisition

- Turkey: hardly any regular literate practices in the LAS case pupils' families, independent of the mono-/ bilingual factor
- Germany: diverse findings from extremely scarce to well-developed literate practices with a slight surplus of such practices in the German L1-families
- The teachers' attitudes towards literacy are almost oppositional in Turkey and Germany:
 - # Both German teachers treat literacy as a "natural" quality and its acquisition as a "natural" ability regardless of the pupils' educational backgrounds.
 - # The Turkish first-grade teacher is more aware of the pupils' poor starting conditions and takes their unfamiliarity with literacy into account, leading to a systematic, mechanical didactic approach.
 - # The Turkish seventh-grade teacher makes no effort to support the pupils' literate advancement. He does not seem to consider them "higher education material".

6 Summary

- Literacy acquisition in the context of multilingualism appears to be shaped
 - by the specific schools' interpretation of the educational mandate,
 - by the respective teacher's individual didactical and pedagogical handling of topics and texts,
 - and by culturally different approaches to the issue itself.

- The Turkish approach is much more mechanical and more limited than the German one, directed towards technical skills rather than intellectual advancement.

- The German approach is the opposite, rather neglecting techniques, and demanding greater intellectual and autonomous efforts.