

LAS-Final Conference
Potsdam, 16/17 September, 2011

LAS

Literacy Acquisition in Schools
in the Context of Migration and Multilingualism

An outline of the LAS Project
Christoph Schroeder

Literacy Acquisition in Schools in the Context of Migration and Multilingualism A Comparative Study

- Financed 2007-2010 by the Volkswagen Foundation in the frame of the *Study groups on Migration and Integration*
- LAS is a cooperation project between
 - Istanbul Bilgi University, Center for Migration Research (CMR)
 - Universität Osnabrück, Institut für Migrationsforschung und Interkulturelle Studien (IMIS)
 - Universität Potsdam, Zentrum für Sprache, Variation und Migration (SVM)



The LAS Team

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... assisted by: Basri Çağlayan, Gülümser Efeoğlu, Gizem Külekçioğlu, Aslı Seyithanoğlu,

... and numerous student assistants

Aims of LAS: acquisition in school in the context of migration and multilingualism

- ... to investigate the practical processes in schools that lead over time to the acquisition and development of literacy competence by pupils
 - in two countries, Germany and Turkey,
 - in the social context of migration and multilingualism.

Approach of LAS: interplay of social and linguistics structures in the acquisition and development of literacy

For these processes and their results, several factors were regarded as playing important roles:

- The school as an educational organisation is the central institutional location where literacy acquisition takes place; the structural conditions of the practical organisation of these processes and of all other social processes can be regarded as the related reproduction of the school itself by its participants.
- The acquisition of literacy and its organised conveyance in schools are embedded in historically and culturally shaped views concerning knowledge and language, which are both deeply rooted in schools and shape the school children's attitudes towards learning.
- Migration and multilingualism result in the emergence of specific language and minority constellations that enter the school in the form of different linguistic and cultural competences of the participating individuals, and in the form of the school's responses to these..

Interdisciplinary approach

LAS attempts to bring together the disciplinary perspectives with a strictly operational concept:

- as the implementation of sociality in connection with the reproduction of the school itself by means of the participants' contributions,
- and as the realisation of literacy in connection with the production of textuality and the associated knowledge structures and notions of language.

Country-comparative approach

- Differently organised education processes in the context of different national education systems and the related institutionalised education styles;
- differences between views on knowledge acquisition, literacy and language;
- different experiences with migration:
 - Germany as a country of immigration in which the organisations of the education system have only slowly adjusted themselves to migration and multilingualism;
 - Turkey as a country of emigration whose education system has however at the same time included internal migrants (and increasingly migrants from other countries);
- different migrant and minority constellations, statuses, policies:
 - In Germany such minority constellations have developed as a direct result of migration,
 - in Turkey, minority constellations are largely a consequence of the history of nation-state building that have resulted in later migration processes to the west of the country;
- varying structural forms of languages: Differences both in written languages and writing systems imply different mediation problems, being related in different ways to registers and forms of usage in the relevant written languages.

Methodology

- Thus, literacy acquisition processes were empirically observed and data was collected making use of video recordings of a series of school lessons, ethnographic observations, and the literary production of the school children, as produced in school and in specially designed tests.
- This data was analysed from two disciplinary, i.e. sociological and linguistic, perspectives.
- The investigation took into account two groups of school children (mono- and bilinguals) from different age groups (first and seventh school grades) and their social backgrounds, in the two countries.

Project phase I: Preparation (Spring and Summer 2007)

- Establishment of project teams and institutional embedding of the project, in Istanbul, Osnabrück, later also in Potsdam,
- decision on research sites,
- research permits (!),
- organisational and conceptual preparation of field research.

Project phase II: Data collection (September 2007 – June/July 2008)

- Research sites:
 - German lessons in a primary school (1st grade) and a comprehensive school (7th grade) in a city in the Ruhr area;
 - Turkish lessons in a comprehensive school (1st and 7th grade) in Istanbul;
- composition of classes:
 - Ruhr area classes 27-30 pupils, 30% pupils with German as a second language, mostly Turkish as first language,
 - Istanbul classes around 40 pupils, about 50% pupils with Turkish as a second language, all of them Kurmancî-Kurdish as first language;
- selection of case pupils: six monolinguals and six bilinguals from each class in each research site – amounting to 48 case pupils.

Project phase II: Data collection (September 2007 – June/July 2008)

Collected data set:

- Video recordings of ca. 170 school lessons;
- ethnographic observations (lesson field notes, school ethnography, interviews in the parental households, with teachers, school officials and case pupils);
- written products of case pupils (products from lessons, homework, class tests);
- results of specially designed LAS tests (3 tests per class during the school year, additional tests for 1st graders).

Project phase III: Preparation for analysis (Summer 2008 – Summer 2009)

- Transcription of lesson videos, LAS tests and interviews,
- sequencing and logbooking of video transcripts,
- indexing and glossing of test transcripts and written products of case pupils,
- compilation of ethnographic data for school ethnography.

Project phase IV: Analysis (Summer 2009 – Spring 2011)

Core features of analysis

- Sociological analysis of lesson videos (videography):
 - sequential interaction analysis (core lessons, key situations/ key scenes with regard to the enabling and restricting potentials);
- linguistic analysis of written products (advancement of literacy) and LAS tests (spoken and written):
 - analysis on the basis of a structure-oriented orat-literate continuum,
 - orthographic competences included,
 - in the first and the second languages (LAS-tests) of the case pupils;
- correlation of the written products of the lesson with the lesson's chronological, content-related, and social structure.

Project phase IV: Analysis (Summer 2009 – Spring 2011)

Contextualisation of analysis

- Compilation of case pupil profiles based on the different kinds of data,
- construction of school ethnographies.

Comparative analysis

- Organisation of education in terms of literacy acquisition, and institutionalised education styles, in Turkey and Germany;
- the impact of country-specific migrant and minority constellations on literacy acquisition in school;
- country-specific mediation problems due to differences in the written languages and writing systems;
- country-specific and general enabling and restricting potentials in school for bilingual pupils.

... and here we are now

- The preliminary project report presents the (preliminary) outcomes of the project;
- the outcomes are presented, discussed and commented upon at the final conference:
 - the discussion is to enter into the revision of the project report.

... but Michael has left us

Prof. Dr. Michael Bommers

(18.10.1954 - 26.12.2010)

Chair of Migration Sociology and
director of IMIS, University of Osnabrück,

colleague, friend

and

initiator of the LAS project