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

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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

- 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
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Natural ability vs learned technical skill</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>GER</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- reading and writing as a natural ability</td>
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<tr>
<td>- implicit objectives</td>
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<td>- downplaying the seriousness of the lesson</td>
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<td>- playful approach to learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>- writing is done for “Penguin Pikus” and other fictional friends of the class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TUR</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- reading and writing as a learned skill</td>
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<tr>
<td>- ‘we are here to learn how to read and write’</td>
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<td>- writing as a serious activity done in a concentrated manner</td>
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<td>- technical skills of good handwriting and orthography</td>
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<td>- rhymes and songs when PUPs are exhausted</td>
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## Contextualisation

<table>
<thead>
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<th>GER</th>
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<tr>
<td>- embedded learning in textual contexts</td>
<td>- emphasis on the technical side of the writing activity</td>
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<td>- eg. telling stories and writing texts</td>
<td>- eg. size of the letters, space between words</td>
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<tr>
<td>- no explanations of text genres (i.e. letter, diary)</td>
<td>- clear handwriting &amp; well-organised notebooks as requirements</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- special texts for each letter</td>
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<td>Process-oriented experimental approach</td>
<td>vs product oriented approach</td>
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<tr>
<td>GER</td>
<td>TUR</td>
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<td>flexible attitude towards errors</td>
<td>notebooks should only include the assigned writings</td>
</tr>
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<td>learning can only take place through making errors</td>
<td>producing a flawless end product</td>
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<td>experimenting encouraged</td>
<td>‘Erase this part, it confuses me.’</td>
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<td>producing texts by trial and error</td>
<td>text production for the TEA, not for the PUP</td>
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<td></td>
<td>‘Don’t be afraid.’ &amp; ‘Be courageous.’</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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 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.