

The quality of the educational environment relating to emergent literacy practices: links to children's engagement in preschool and kindergarten

Julie Lachapelle, M. A., Annie Charron, Ph. D., Nathalie Bigras, Ph. D.
Université du Québec à Montréal, Québec, Canada



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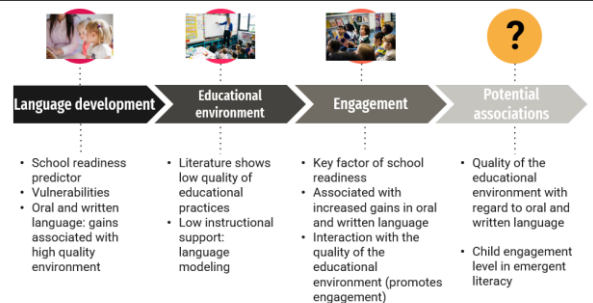
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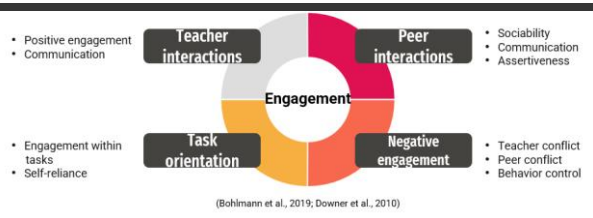


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Introduction



(Aydinoglu et al., 2015; Baroody et al., 2014; Cunniff, 2010; Dravinville et al., 2017; Lachapelle et al., 2021; Smead et al., 2018)



Objectives

1. Assess the quality of the educational environment relating to emergent literacy in Québec preschool and kindergarten classes
2. Assess children's level of engagement in emergent literacy learning and developmental contexts
3. Analyze relationships between the quality of the educational environment and children's level of engagement in emergent literacy contexts

Method

Participants

Teachers

- 23 kindergarten teachers
- 7 preschool teachers
- Teaching experience ($M = 17.20$ years, $SD = 6.38$)
- Bachelor's degree or higher: 93.3%

Children

- 150 children (75 girls)
- Age ($M = 69.73$ months, $SD = 6.438$)
- 5 children per classroom selected at random
- Mother tongue: French (74.7%), English (4%), other (21.3%)
- Family income: above 80K (60.8%); below 30K (6.8%)

Mesures

Classroom Literacy Environment

- ELLCO Pre-K (Smith et al., 2008)
- Classroom Structure
- Curriculum
- Language Environment
- Books / Book Reading
- Print / Early Writing
- Likert 1-5 (deficient to exemplary)

Child Engagement (Downer et al., 2010)

- Teacher interactions
- Peer interactions
- Task orientation
- Negative engagement
- Likert 1-7 (Low = 1-2; medium = 3-4.5; high = 6-7)

Procédures

ELLCO Pre-K

- Trained observers
- 3 hours (AM)
- 20% double coded
- Interrater agreement (within 1 point): 98.3%
- Classroom photos
- Checklist for reading and writing materials

inCLASS

- Trained observers
- 2-3 hours (AM)
- 5 children per class
- Alternating 10 minute cycles / 5 minute coding
- 4 cycles / child
- 20% double coded
- Interrater agreement (within 1 point): 92.5%

Observations conducted same day or within 1 week

Data analysis

Descriptive analysis

- ELLCO Pre-K scores
- inCLASS scores

Multilevel analysis

- Level 1: child (inCLASS scores)
- Level 2: class (ELLCO scores)
- Random intercept (ELLCO variables being at level 2)

Control variables:

- Child age (level 1)
- Child gender (level 1)
- Group size (level 2)
- Teacher experience (level 2)
- Socioeconomic status (level 2)

Discussion

- None of the five ELLCO Pre-K domains reach the **strong** rating, in line with other recent studies (Arteaga et al., 2019; Barker et al., 2021; Charron et al., 2022; Landry et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2019)
- Classroom Structure, Language environment and Books/Book reading emerge higher scores (**basic to strong**). Curricular remains in the **basic** range; **Print/Early writing** as **inadequate** (Barker et al., 2021; Charron et al., 2022; Zhang & Cook, 2019)
- As measured by the inCLASS, **Teacher interactions** and **Peer interactions** are in the **low-to-medium** level, **Task orientation** in the **medium** level, **Negative engagement** in the **low** level, similar to other studies (Kluczniok & Schmidt, 2020; Ramirez & Linberg, 2021; Roy-Vallières et al., 2022; Slot et al., 2018; Smidt & Embacher, 2021; Yang et al., 2022)
- Children more engaged towards activities than people, social skills taking longer to develop (Roy-Vallières et al., 2022)
- ELLCO Pre-K: global measure of classroom quality, perhaps less sensitive to changes in quality (Likert 1-5) whereas inCLASS focuses on fine-grained observations (Likert 1-7) (Barker et al., 2021); limited sample may affect statistical power
- Children from more advantaged backgrounds more likely to develop social skills with adults and peers (Hosokawa et al., 2017)
- Group size represents a potential influence on the interaction quality in preschools (Smidt & Embacher, 2020); may be a factor in the range of opportunities for peer interactions but also the number of conflicts within preschool and kindergarten settings
- Engagement is differentiated as children get older (McWilliam & Casey, 2008), perhaps explaining their capacity to stay on task

Results

1 Literacy environment

ELLCO Pre-K	M	SD
Classroom Structure	3.65	0.72
Curriculum	2.91	0.86
Language environment	3.38	0.73
Books / Book reading	3.37	0.72
Print / Early Writing	2.90	0.87

2 Children's engagement

inCLASS	M	SD
Teacher interactions	2.43	0.63
Peer interactions	2.82	0.73
Task orientation	4.49	0.68
Negative engagement	1.32	0.35

3 Associations

- No significant associations were found between ELLCO scores and inCLASS scores
- Socio-economic status was positively associated with Teacher interactions
- Group size was positively associated with Peer interactions
- Child age was positively associated with Task orientation
- Group size was positively associated with Conflict interactions

Conclusion

- Sample size may limit scope of research and affect regression models
- Explore literacy environment and engagement variables in different cultural contexts for comparison
- Continue to invest in teacher professional development to raise classroom literacy quality, considering generally low ELLCO scores
- Examine how classroom contexts and other socioeconomic contexts affect children's engagement

References



Contact: lachapelle.julie.3@courrier.uqam.ca