

Discovering writing (2): There are written words everywhere!

Age
4+



Context:

- This activity takes place in a Luxembourg pre-school class where the children are aged 4 to 6 (the first learning cycle). About a third of the children speak a different family language or languages than the main language of schooling, Luxembourgish.

Reasons for choosing this activity:

- Writing is part of the daily lives of the children, although they might not necessarily realise this. A number of activities, offered at different times of the year, introduce the world of sounds, letters, words and sentences. This is done in playful way using a range of authentic situations, different forms and social contexts (→ continuous and coherent language learning) and show the children that writing is part of their daily lives. To help identify the function or purpose, the writing is, whenever possible, linked to the context it represents either explicitly or implied. The activity “Discovering writing – words beginning with ‘B’”, a spontaneous activity resulting from an exchange among children, has started this journey of discovery (see corresponding activity sheet).
- At the end of the school year, the majority of the children age 5 to 6 (the second year of pre-school) have acquired the basic principles of reading without having completed pre-reading programmes (these are not part of the preschool curriculum).

Description:

- At the beginning of the school year, the children start practising using the written word. This includes using cards with their names which they use to indicate their choice of activity, to label their personal creations, stories and tales, and to indicate the composition of the different groups. The children start to compare their names and discover differences and similarities (e.g. ‘shared’ letters in *Ana* and *Nina*, identical initial sounds like in *Tom* and *Tania*, short names like *Nic* and long names like *Alexander*, names made of different elements like *Marie-Anne*).
- The children start to **discover words on personal items**; when you have a new jumper or are taking out your new snack box, you will want to talk about it to others and to find out about it. This leads to a discovery of the words and phrases which are displayed on the boxes and clothing as well as the information on packaging, etc. This also provides an ideal opportunity to discover different languages and different uses of writing; words with decorative functions (e.g. *Sea World* printed on a light blue sweater); words that provide information about the product (e.g. the name, ingredients or how to prepare it), a repeat of information provided by the images (e.g. strawberry yogurt also shown in the picture), etc. The words collected by the children are photocopied.

Description (continued):

- The children go on to **discover other written words in the school building and environment** (the classroom, the entrance, the kitchen, the P.E. hall, etc.) and write them in their notebooks. They work in small teams which allow for discussion and exchanges and support the decoding of the words. Back in the classroom, the words found are displayed, read together and compared: Are these identical? Do they have the same initial sounds? Are they different words for the same object? Are they French words? Or German? Or English? The messages conveyed by the text are then discussed and explained and the functions of the writing explored.
- The discovery continues with the **words from the wider neighbourhood**; traffic signs, electronic displays, restaurant signs, shops, offices, etc. are decoded and written down in a notebook. The 'bakery' sign provides information on the food sold, the names of restaurants and cafes can be used to provide information about people ("Chez Serge"), the origin of the food (Ristorante, Tapas bar), the dishes sold (Pizzeria, Sushi bar), and allow for a personal choice to decide to eat there or not. Acronyms can be used to make assumptions about the name behind them, etc.



Observation:

- The different activities are spread over a school year to support the children in developing their awareness of the writing that surrounds them. They enjoy finding as many words as possible and copying them down in their notebooks.

