



Title of Project:

Digital Storytelling, Early Reading, and the African Storybook Project

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Project Summary:

Language policy and practices have been studied in the societal, educational and family settings but not extensively in the context of early childhood care and education (ECEC). This research attempts to bridge this gap by looking closely at the specific case of a newly established bilingual English-French crèche with its multilingual realities.

Since the importance of early childhood education and care (ECEC) cannot be overemphasized, it has become a priority in many countries. Understanding its crucial role in society has ushered eloquent discourses in improving quality ECEC services in European member states as it can potentially provide all children with the possibility of a good start in the world tomorrow and has far-reaching rewards educationally, socially and economically (COM: 2011, 66 final). It is with this goal in mind that a parent-run structure for very young children, partly funded by the city of Strasbourg, has been established in June 2013.

This research is a qualitative, longitudinal study, which uses an ethnographic approach (Conteh: 2005). Through participant observation, interviews with ECEC city officials, parents and carers, audio-recordings of carer-initiated activities, photos of the structure's linguistic spaces, I will attempt to address the following questions: How does a multilingual early years setting work? What are the crèche's "declared" language policies and its 'practiced language policies' (Bonacina, 2012)? How are the languages negotiated on a daily, practical basis? Finally, from a methodological point of view, how does one conduct a study involving very small children in a multilingual setting such as a crèche?