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Emergent Literacy: Types of Beliefs of a Group of Preschool and Special Education Teachers in Chile

Alfabetización emergente: tipos de creencias de un grupo de profesores de educación preescolar y especial en Chile

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Abstract

Various studies show that teachers' beliefs are an important factor to explain teaching practices. However, in Latin American countries, there is a lack of studies on the educational concepts regarding emergent literacy and the factors that influence it. This research thus analyzes the beliefs of a group of teachers about emergent literacy and its relationship with the learning environment in the classroom and with one of the least-studied influencing factors: the socio-family context. The research was qualitative with a psycho-phenomenological approach and was conducted through in-depth interviews. The analysis revealed that the predominant type of belief is unsophisticated, with non-cognitive characteristics that emerge from knowledge derived from a discourse based mainly on the co-constructivist model of literacy. In addition, using NVivo software, it was determined that the participants' discourse did not exceed 13% consistency with the theory in each analysis category.

Keywords: Types of teachers' beliefs, emergent literacy, socio-family context, preschool education, special education, school context.

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Resumen

Diversas investigaciones muestran que las creencias docentes son un importante factor explicativo de las prácticas de enseñanza. No obstante, en países latinoamericanos aún son escasos los estudios sobre las concepciones docentes en torno a la alfabetización emergente y a los factores que intervienen en ella. Por eso, esta investigación analiza las creencias de un grupo de docentes sobre alfabetización emergente y su relación con el ambiente de aprendizaje en el aula y con uno de los factores intervinientes menos estudiado: el contexto sociofamiliar. La indagación fue cualitativa, con enfoque psicofenomenológico, y se realizó mediante entrevistas en profundidad. El análisis mostró que el tipo de creencia predominante es no sofisticada, con características no cognitivas que derivan desde saberes provenientes de un discurso basado principalmente en el modelo coconstructivista de la alfabetización. Asimismo, mediante el software NVivo, se determinó que el discurso de las participantes no supera el 13% de alcance en cada categoría de análisis.

Palabras clave: tipos de creencias del profesorado, alfabetización emergente, contexto sociofamiliar, educación preescolar, educación especial.

Introduction

Research on emergent literacy (EL) has gathering impetus thanks to the postulates of Teale and Sulzby (1986), who define it as the set of early literacy knowledge, skills, and attitudes that children acquire prior to learning formal literacy. The literature suggests that this learning constitutes a set of internal domains that children develop at home and continue to improve through formal education until they are consolidated (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008). In addition to oral language, these domains are phonological awareness (PA), alphabet knowledge (AK), print knowledge (PK) and emergent writing (EW) (Schwartz, 2017; Pavelko et al., 2018). When these domains are low at the beginning of formal literacy learning, it is slower and more difficult. These difficulties may even continue into adolescence (Rohde, 2015). In contrast, greater EL development in the preschool stage is associated with greater benefit from formal literacy teaching and higher chances of achieving the targets in the school curriculum (Merino et al., 2018).

In line with this, experiences of EL in the preschool stage, both through social interaction and indirect and direct teaching, are key to successfully learning literacy. Therefore, adults have a fundamental role in the development of EL skills. The role of preschool teachers is crucial, particularly in contexts where it is more difficult for families to be an agent of literacy. However, teacher intervention is related to various factors. In this respect, Tietze and Viernickel (2010) contend that the quality of education in preschools depends, among other things, on adults' beliefs about children and their families. In this study we are specifically interested in analyzing the beliefs of preschool teachers about the process of EL.

The idea that teachers' beliefs are an influencing factor in educational processes is not new. Studies on pedagogical beliefs have gradually consolidated the idea that they influence professional behavior since they represent a potential for acting in a certain manner. Díaz et al. (2015) thus argue that teachers' beliefs modulate planning and decision making, specific performance in the classroom, and the view of teaching work, students, and their performance (Vera et al., 2018). In this regard, research has shown that the beliefs stated by teachers are not a discourse that is disconnected from their practices (Cortez et al., 2013), but an "intermediary between knowledge and action" (Díaz et al., 2015, p. 172).

In spite of this, research on beliefs about EL among teachers of early childhood education are scarce in our context, which is in contrast with its acknowledged importance for future school success. One study in a Spanish-speaking context was carried out by Rodríguez (2017) on Spanish teachers' beliefs about teaching written language in preschool, conducted under the assumption that accessing such beliefs is essential to understand how initial processes of literacy teaching are configured. It is thus possible to identify patterns of pedagogical practices and understand their causes. We share this assumption and we believe it is essential to progress in this direction, particularly considering that research conducted in other contexts does not necessarily reflect our reality, since teachers' beliefs about EL may vary according to the culture (Sandvik et al., 2014).

In order to help to close the gap in knowledge, we conducted this qualitative study, the objective of which is to reveal the types of beliefs about EL in a group of Chilean preschool and special education teachers and their relationship with the socio-family and socio-school contexts. We hope that our results will contribute to understanding about the models that teachers use to conceive and teach EL, and whether they consider the socio-contextual aspects for its development.

Future research that observes classroom practices directly could add to and extend our findings, since the importance of studying preschool teachers' belief system about EL resides specifically in helping to explain teaching practices and their relationship with the development of the precursor skills for learning literacy.

Frame of reference

Approaches to emergent literacy (EL)

There are a variety of theoretical perspectives on teaching and learning EL. Braslavsky (2003) identifies three models of the nature of literacy (MNL): autonomous, ideological, and co-constructivist. The autonomous model views literacy as independent learning, commonly associated with school practice, which encompasses the formal and sometimes mechanical aspects of learners' appropriation of the written code under particular methods of teaching. Meanwhile, the ideological model assumes that literacy is a product of each culture and the power structures of a society: the family, the school, or other organizations. As a consequence, an array of contextual factors would be involved in the development of EL. However, the assessment of each child's conditions to initiate the reading and writing processes is subject to the school's measurement of EL skills. Finally, both models—autonomous and ideological—do not consider the literacy context, no matter how much the latter may wish to look at it.

For its part, the co-constructivist model, to which we adhere, supports the notion that, although literacy learning is an individual achievement, literacy experiences are mediated by interactions that help children develop and consolidate their EL skills to enter the literate culture (family, teachers, peers, media, etc.). From this perspective, Rohde (2015) contends that environmental factors influence access to opportunities for emergent literacy, the importance attributed to them, and the help that children receive from adults. Likewise, Strasser et al. (2018) suggest that EL learning and development opportunities depend not only on maturational and cognitive aspects of children, but also on the social-school context (SSC) and social-family context (SFC) that surround them.

Social-family context (SFC)

Various studies show that the socioeconomic status (SES) of the family (Neumann, 2016; Strang & Piasta, 2016; Espinoza & Rosas, 2019), the home learning environment (HLE), and parents' expectations towards their children (PEC) (Hamilton et al., 2016; Hernández et al., 2016; Puglisi et al., 2017) may help to explain

the variability in the development of the internal domains of EL in the first few years of formal education. In Chile, this is confirmed by Strasser and Lissi (2009). At the international level, the review by Buckingham and colleagues (2014) demonstrates that social disadvantage predicts poor EL, as it leads to gaps between children of different SES, even before their formal schooling. Hamilton et al. (2016) show that SES and HLE predict reading success among children with typical language development and children at risk of dyslexia.

As regards HLE, activities carried out by caregivers together with children (looking at books, making rhymes, among other things) with the direct or indirect intention of developing skills that promote reading and writing (Hannon et al., 2019) can be highlighted. It is also suggested that indirect literacy practices tend to be less planned, more opportunistic, dependent on the SFC, and—frequently—include day-to-day tasks. Nevertheless, both direct and indirect practices promote the development of PA, AK and writing skills (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002; Sparks & Reese, 2012). In this vein, Mendive et al. (2017) studied whether the self-reported literacy practices of 989 low-SES Chilean mothers predicted their children's EL skills. The results showed that exposure to texts and maternal practices did predict EL skills, even over the mother's educational level.

HLE is related to SES, because it determines the quantity and quality of materials available in the home to enhance children's oral and written language. Inoue et al. (2018) show that SES influences the amount of book reading and that literacy practices predict AK, PA, vocabulary, and naming speed. Meanwhile, Foster and Miller (2007) report that preschool children from lower-income households tend to have less exposure to story reading and display less vocabulary development and reading prerequisites than their peers of higher SES.

Some Chilean research also indicates that homes with lower resources do not have appropriate books for infants (Mendive et al., 2017), which has an effect on the frequency of literacy experiences (Strasser & Lissi, 2009). In this vein, Susperreguy et al. (2007) show that Chilean parents of low and medium SES read to their children less frequently than low-income parents in the United States. Similarly, exposing children to low-quality books, as many low-income parents do, may not substantially increase their interest in reading (Strasser & Lissi, 2009). For their part, Pezoa et al (2018) found that parental interest in reading was a predictor of literacy practices in low-SES households and that the children of mothers with higher educational attainment showed better PA, EW, and AK development. The study also showed that teaching the alphabet at home had a positive effect on EW and that exposure to books promoted letter identification by the end of first grade.

Another factor related to the HLE is the parents' expectations towards their children (PEC) (Baker et al., 1997). PEC include affective, cognitive, and behavioral elements, that is, positive or negative attitudes and expectations toward reading and writing processes that can influence children's attitudes toward reading and writing (Pezoa et al., 2018) and literacy and reading practices in the home (Strasser & Lissi, 2009). When assessing the SFC, it is therefore important to consider these variables, which may be mediated by SES, parents' understanding of literacy, knowledge of how children learn, trust toward their children, and their schooling experiences (Phillips et al., 2017; Hannon et al., 2019).

Social-school context (SSC)

Development of EL is related to the quality of early education (Merino et al., 2018). According to Tietze and Viernickel (2010), educational quality is a complex and multifaceted construct that involves: (a) the structure, which encompasses the level of adult training, the adult-child relationship, group size, infrastructure, and teaching materials; (b) educational orientations, in terms of the beliefs, values, and principles of adults regarding children and their families; and (c) the process, which involves interactions between the children, the adults, the experiences, and the use of available materials.

However, there are still few studies on the specific role of the various components of SSC. Some argue that it encompasses the teachers' expectations and beliefs (Watson et al., 2015; Barriga et al., 2019) and the classroom learning environment (CLE). The scant studies show that, in the area of reading, teachers' expectations or beliefs are biased by the students' gender and socioeconomic status (Watson et al., 2015; Barriga et al., 2019). However, these studies were not conducted in a preschool context, so they do not specifically refer to expectations and beliefs regarding EL skills.

One component of SSC on which there is broad agreement is the CLE and the role of the practices of teachers (Galdames et al., 2010), who select and implement direct instructional practices in EL (Bratsch-Hines et al., 2019; Piasta et al., 2020). The CLE also includes teacher-student interactions (Strasser et al., 2018), environments with printed texts, or visual experiences, dialogic reading (Piasta et al., 2009), vocabulary-building activities (McGinty et al., 2012), and teachers' knowledge of EL (Bratsch-Hines et al., 2019; Piasta et al., 2020).

In Chile, Orellana-García and Melo-Hurtado (2014) examined the quality of reading environments and the teaching strategies of preschool educators at different SES. Regardless of the type of preschool establishment, the reading environments and teaching strategies of teachers were of low quality, with little variety of materials, opportunities, and environments for reading, and few experiences of written production. Therefore, having more resources does not guarantee per se the quality of early literacy. In this respect, the study confirms that appropriate training for preschool teachers is a priority so that they know what to teach and how to teach it (Merino et al., 2018; Washburn & Mulcahy, 2019; Piasta et al., 2020). However, research on teacher performance also shows that the implementation of knowledge is sensitive to teachers' beliefs (Cortez et al., 2013; Tagle et al., 2017; Vera et al., 2018). Meanwhile, Strasser et al. (2013) argue that the educational context, teachers' continuing education, and teacher-learner interactions can modulate teachers' beliefs and practices for EL.

Teacher beliefs

Díaz and Solar (2011) argue that beliefs are socially shared ideas that each subject adopts as an interpretation of reality. In the case of pedagogical beliefs, they function as complex processing networks, implicitly stored in the long-term memory of educators. Therefore, they become resistant to change and form a system of ideas and conceptions that operates as "practical, personal, and subjective knowledge" (Tagle et al., 2017, p. 114) that filters the knowledge that teachers can acquire from expert theory.

Rodríguez (2017) examined beliefs about EL among 48 teachers from Spanish educational establishments. Most of the informants believed that the teaching of the code, graphomotor skills, and story reading are important as a fundamental strategy for the development of EL, which should be started from the age of five, according to the teachers.

In the educational field, one of the analyses of beliefs used is that of Schommer (1990, 2004), who proposes a multidimensional model to analyze epistemological beliefs, which makes it possible to identify whether they are sophisticated or unsophisticated. This model considers the stability, structure, and source of the knowledge on which the belief is based. A belief is unsophisticated when the discourse reveals unchangeable or rigid stability of knowledge, with a simple structure, based on naive or weakly connected ideas, the source of which is authority. On the other hand, a belief based on sophisticated knowledge is manifested by a discourse that shows stability of knowledge through more complex and integrated ideas, which leads to a less rigid and more tentative structure of discourse, in which the speaker seeks to prove what he or she believes by providing reasons that go beyond authority or what should be. According to the literature, when an unsophisticated belief is held, there is a tendency to resort to memorization to answer a question. Sophisticated beliefs would be associated with more constructivist teaching on the part of teachers (García & Sebastián, 2011).

Method

The research was qualitative with a psycho-phenomenological approach (Bolio, 2012), as it was aimed at revealing the beliefs of the participants from their own declarative discourse. It responds to an interpretative paradigm, which recognizes the existence of multiple realities that fluctuate according to the differences of each individual and their realities (Valles, 2014).

Participants

The participants had to be preschool or special education teachers with at least one year of professional practice and who worked in collaboration with preschool teachers. A small sample was chosen, since the interpretative paradigm and the psycho-phenomenological approach require careful reflection on the explanations of each participant in order to understand them in depth. For this reason, the results of the study are not generalizable, but exploratory and respond to the individual reality of each participant.

In Chile, 99.1% and 94.2% of those enrolled in preschool education and special education degree courses, respectively, are women (Ramírez, 2019), so the sample was composed of women, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Participants

Profession	ID Code	Age of participant	Years of teaching practice	Level at which they work	Regin
Special Education Teacher	SET1	34 years	9	Prekindergarten and kindergarten	Metropolitana
Special Education Teacher	SET2	30 years	5	Prekindergarten and kindergarten	Biobío
Pre-School Teacher	PST1	38 years	11	Prekindergarten and kindergarten	Biobío
Special Education Teacher	SET3	36 years	4	Prekindergarten and kindergarten	Metropolitana
Pre-School Teacher	PST2	32 years	8	Nursery and Pre-School	Biobío

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Instruments

In order to obtain the information, the study used in-depth interviews, which were structured based on categories and subcategories and carried out using a conversational guide to avoid very direct, closed, threatening, and ambiguous questions (Robles, 2011). Table 2 shows the categories and subcategories, and an example of the guiding questions asked.

Table 2
Categories and subcategories of information analysis

Categories	Subcategories	Examples of guiding questions asked
Emergent literacy	Knowledge about emergent literacy	Have you heard of the concept of emergent literacy in your training or teaching? What do you understand by this concept?
		Do you think that there are differences between the concept of emergent literacy and conventional literacy and if so, what are they?
	Classroom learning environment and emergent literacy	What activities do you do or what activities do you think are most important to work on in the classroom to enhance emergent literacy?
		What should you have in a classroom learning environment to enhance emergent literacy?
		What activities do you do or what activities do you think are most important to work on in the classroom to enhance emergent literacy?
Emergent literacy and socio-family context	Socioeconomic status and emergent literacy	Do you think that socioeconomic status has an impact on the development of the skills found in emergent literacy? Why?
	Home learning environment and emergent literacy	In terms of the home learning environment, what do you think the relationship is to emergent literacy?
	Parents' expectations towards their children and emergent literacy	Do you think the expectations of the parents are related to emergent literacy? Why?

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Procedures

Ethical safeguards were respected by having the participants sign informed consent forms. The interviews were conducted in September 2019, four face-to-face and one via the Zoom platform (informant SET3). All were recorded with the telephone application Speak and Translate – Translator (Copyright 2014-2020). They were transcribed manually, by informant and question, using a simple notation system with open coding.

Information analysis techniques

In the first stage, an inductive-narrative content analysis was carried out (Valles, 2014). The responses were grouped by categories and subcategories, the descriptors were selected (frequent words within the teacher's discourse or response to each question), and, finally, a phenomenological reduction and interpretation of the categories and subcategories of analysis was conducted, for which a model of tables was used (Table 3). In the second stage, the information was analyzed with the support of the software Nvivo version 11 to identify the agreement of the teachers' discourse with the research nodes defined by the categories and subcategories.

Table 3
Example of phenomenological analysis

Category: The analysis category is indicated in this space			
Subcategory: The analysis subcategory is indicated in this space			
Questions/Reponses by informant	Description	Phenomenological reduction	Interpretation
Question and response given by each informant, in relation to the categories and subcategories of analysis	Words used most frequently in the discourse of each informant, by category and subcategory of analysis	Simple discourse formed using the frequent words of each informant	Theoretical interpretation of the phenomenological reduction by informant by question
Phenomenological reduction and interpretation by subcategory	Reduction and interpretation of the discourses of all informants versus the substantive theory at the subcategory level, without being separated by analysis code		

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Results

The results are presented below by category and subcategory.

Emerging literacy category

Unsophisticated beliefs predominate in the subcategory of knowledge of EL. Some participants occasionally blame other educational agents for their low level of knowledge. For example: "The truth is that under my practices, this language isn't really used. I researched what it was about. But we don't hear about these terms in training sessions" (PST1); "The parents don't know these terms [emergent literacy]" (SET2).

The participants tend to construct a discourse through isolated items that they link together with inadequate examples. They also change subjects during the interview and tend to confuse EL with a method of teaching literacy. Examples include: "EL comes more naturally depending on the characteristics of the child. Formal education has to do with a structure, an order according to the level and according to the method one chooses to teach formal literacy. In my case, we work with the Matte method" (SET3). "I don't use that method [emergent literacy] to teach" (PST2).

Considering the MNLs, their beliefs are more related to the co-constructivist model, since they recognize that literacy practice is not neutral, but will depend on the family, the school, and other institutions. From this perspective, the participants believe that EL is a historical-evolutionary process that develops naturally according to the opportunities provided by the environment. For example: "I think it's a process that goes hand in hand, as 'normal' evolution of the kids when they finally find the purpose and significance of the development of literacy, also hand in hand with this ecological-functional model" (SET2) and "To this is added the work we do with families, because I feel that you can do lots of early literacy strategies in the classroom, but if there's no one at home to promote it, it's difficult" (PST2). In this regard, analysis of the nodes with Nvivo showed a 13% agreement between the teachers' discourse in this subcategory of analysis and its definition in the theory.

In the second subcategory, classroom learning environment and EL, we can see that the participants' beliefs tend to be unsophisticated. Indeed, they justify their praxis using a poorly structured discourse, with arguments based on knowledge derived from their experiences and on the subjectivity of the knowledge they put into practice. In this regard, their practices may be adequate, but they do not fully justify them. For example: "Well, in the classroom everything is labeled, just like in my kindergarten. It has to be a letter that the children can understand and we [teachers] use the same letters" (PST1).

It can be inferred that the participants tend to implement practices that they have observed in other professionals or in response to guidelines obtained from the authority (Ministry of Education and school institution). In some cases, there is a certain level of awareness that what is done at school is not always what is supported by the theory. The knowledge of what should be done is expressed in the interviews as something unspecific, vague, something that others say, but without reference to sources or reasons for acting in that way or another. For example:

> What we always talk about is that it should be a bit more diversified. Always trying to cover the whole, but unfortunately you find a much more closed, structured system. For example, in the kindergarten I'm at, the rooms are decorated in a certain way, the images are of a certain size, the colors of the curtains, the color of the room and there can't be many panels, it's all very structured (SET3).

According to the MNLs, we can generally see a position based on the autonomous model. EL is associated with daily school practice for the development of verbal language separate from written language: "We [teachers] work a lot on the issue of verbal language and I work there together with the technician, how she verbalizes, in the planning I point out to them what they should be verbalizing to the children, the issue of incorporating new words, using lots of things from nature with other materials" (PST2). However, practices aimed at developing PA are also seen: "Well, I work a lot on reading comprehension with the children, as well as syllable segmentation and phonological awareness. We start with consonants, they begin to become familiar with the sounds of the letters, they begin to associate initial sounds, final sounds" (SET1). With the Nvivo software, we find 14% agreement between the teachers' discourse and the theoretical definition of the subcategory.

To summarize, for the EL category we can state that the interviewees hold an unsophisticated type of belief. In this regard, the category shows no more than 16% consistency between the teachers' discourse and the research node.

Category of emergent literacy and socio-family context

In the first subcategory, socioeconomic status and EL, it can be interpreted that the informants' beliefs respond to a stability and structure of unsophisticated knowledge. Although the interviewees acknowledge a link between SES and EL, they are unable to justify this relationship clearly. They recognize that parents with a higher educational and economic level tend to be more concerned about their children's learning, but they do not justify it or specifically link it to the development of EL. For example: "Obviously it [SES] has an influence because the way they [the students] arrive isn't beneficial. Because the SES of my families [parents] is low, they're families that sometimes don't have the notion that the baby [student] goes to the nursery to learn" (PST2), "Yes, I think it exists anyway, it shouldn't, but it exists [relationship between SES and the development of EL]" (PST3).

We can see that the beliefs of the participants are related to the co-constructivist model because they recognize a link between SES and EL. The participants state that by promoting EL it is possible to eliminate circles of sociocultural deprivation and provide children with opportunities for cognitive development:

> So, they [students] come with a capital that needs to be enhanced and that's where the kindergarten becomes important, and we believe that our kindergartens seek to break that system. From the experience I give them, I allow them to get out of this circle in which the mother and father have been and I allow them to enrich it with experiences, to broaden it not only for the child, but also for the family (PST2).

Although responses such as these do not demonstrate sophisticated knowledge, they do suggest that there has been some process of reflection that has enabled the teacher to determine the intention of educational practices. However, the analysis shows that the interviewees' discourse demonstrated 8% agreement with the theoretical definition of the subcategory.

As regards the second subcategory, home learning environment (HLE), teachers display sophisticated beliefs that justify their beliefs according to their realities and theoretical background, based on a co-constructivist conception of literacy. The interviewees highlight home literacy experiences, emphasizing that a good HLE can be beneficial for learners, especially if language is stimulated either directly or indirectly. Thus, for example:

> There is a pattern that develops this liking for reading, because if I eventually see my brother, my grandmother, my parents, my uncles and aunts, or whoever is responsible or the caregiver, that is familiar with reading, if we play with reading, with words, if we have reading areas in my house, a specific desk to do homework, etc. (SET2).

> What has worked for me to incorporate the family has been for them to assess the learning of the three main cores, so I put them there, for example: "Form simple sentences", I leave them a space and the parents put down examples. So that gives me like an insight of what they [the families] see at home and what I see in the kindergarten. Parents also commit themselves in the assessments to promote their children's learning through outings, material with instructions from me, for example: ask the child to look for a book, ask the child to browse through the book, ask what's happening in the picture (PST2).

Analysis of the nodes using the Nvivo software showed that the teacher's discourse demonstrated 9% agreement with the definition of the subcategory.

With respect to the subcategory of the parents' expectations toward their children, the teachers' type of belief is sophisticated in nature, with a tentative stability and structure. They acknowledge that there may be a relationship between parents' expectations and EL and associate them with academic achievement in general and with supportive experiences at home. Regarding the MNLs, again we observe a predominance of the co-constructivist model, since the participants attribute great importance to parents' expectations of their children, which vary according to the socio-cultural characteristics of the family context. Their beliefs are supported by knowledge, as can be seen here:

> I believe that expectations go hand in hand with emotional development, that is, how much motivation can I give to my child, nephew [or niece], or grandchild [depending on who the caregiver is]. From the point of view of education and emotional support, I believe that these are fundamental aspects to promote learning of reading and writing at an early age. Well, if I finally see that my caregiver, the person who loves me, is supporting me in this school and life transition, has high expectations and transmits them to me each day, as a son or daughter it generates an important motivational factor in me, because these high expectations go hand in hand with what is tangible, a parent who will finally be asking [their children] what they did today, what the miss[1] told you at school, I'll talk to the miss, what homework are we going to do to reinforce (SET2).

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1. Translator's note: The term used in Spanish is *tía*, which equates roughly to "miss" in schools in English-speaking countries.

The node analysis showed 7% consistency between the subcategory and the answers of the interviewees.

At the category level, the percentage of agreement between the participants' discourse and the research node is 13%. It is thus confirmed that the beliefs are generally based on wisdom and not on knowledge.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study sought to reveal the types of beliefs of a group of Chilean preschool and special education teachers about EL and their relationship with the socio-family context and socio-school context.

As regards the first category, emergent literacy, we can be concluded that the participants' beliefs are unsophisticated (Schommer, 1990, 2004) both for the EL knowledge subcategory and for the subcategory of CLE and EL. Indeed, some informants acknowledge that the concept of EL is unfamiliar to them, they respond with unstructured discourse, and also blame other educational agents for not knowing about the topic. Their beliefs about what EL is are mainly based on what they observe in their professional context and their own praxis, which they tend to justify with the fulfillment of duty or in response to authority, as Schommer (1990, 2004) describes unsophisticated beliefs. We observed a poorly elaborated discourse, with little theoretical justification of the type of teaching practice, which is reflected in the low level of agreement between the interviewees' responses and the theoretical definitions of both subcategories. This is consistent with studies that suggest that teaching beliefs reflect practical, personal, and subjective knowledge, strongly conditioned by the pedagogical task itself, and that usually predominates over the knowledge acquired from expert theory (Díaz et al., 2015; Tagle et al., 2017).

However, this does not mean that the participants' beliefs are wrong or false, but rather that teachers have difficulty relating theory to practice. In this respect, it is essential to connect teaching beliefs with current knowledge about EL, which reveals the importance of professional development. Considering this, national studies have shown that preschool teachers use low-quality didactic strategies (Orellana-García & Melo-Hurtado, 2014). In turn, research on teaching beliefs has revealed the link between these beliefs and praxis (Hernández et al., 2016). For this reason, we agree that more intensive curricular approaches are needed at the national level (Yoshikawa et al., 2015) and professional development programs in EL (Treviño et al., 2014) that allow teachers to update their knowledge and which promote the adaptation of their beliefs and teaching practices in line with advances in scientific research on EL (Hernández et al., 2016).

As regards the MNLs, there are differences within the same category, because in the first subcategory the teachers point out that, for the development of EL, it is essential to work with the family or agents of the context in which the children live. In other words, a co-constructivist vision is revealed from the MNLs, given that the teachers recognize that the development of EL does not solely require specific instruction from the school. Meanwhile, in the CLE subcategory, the teachers' beliefs can be associated with autonomous MNLs, since they state that the teaching of reading and writing are separate and structured processes, which depend on the pedagogical work done at school. However, as Tietze and Viernickel (2010) argue, it is essential for the development of EL in schools to be conceived as a multifaceted and multicausal process, associated with factors such as teachers' knowledge and beliefs, the interactions between teachers, the children, and their families.

With respect to the second category, EL and socio-family context, in the first subcategory, SES and EL, the teachers' beliefs are not sophisticated because the participants recognize a link between SES and EL, but are unable to justify it clearly. Similarly, they relate SES to cultural deprivation and differences in parents' expectations about the learning that their children could achieve in preschool education, but they do not justify the relationship or

link it specifically to the development of EL. For example, they do not refer to the quantity or quality of books available at home, a factor that has been identified as being relevant in studies by scholars such as Susperreguy et al. (2007), Mendive et al. (2017), and Pezoa et al. (2018).

Regarding the other two subcategories, HLE and EL and PEC and EL, teachers display sophisticated beliefs, which they justify by relating their praxis to theoretical knowledge. Similarly, teachers attribute great importance to literacy experiences at home, underlining that a good HLE can be beneficial, particularly when language is stimulated directly or indirectly. These beliefs of the participants are related to what is stated in the literature. Thus, for example, Chilean studies show that home literacy practices can predict children's interest in reading (Strasser & Lissi, 2009), although this interest is also influenced by the quality of printed material available in the home (Susperreguy et al., 2007). In the same respect, national studies have shown that PEC modulate the HLE (Strasser & Lissi, 2009) and whether children perceive reading and writing activities as desirable (Pezoa et al., 2018). For this reason, when assessing EL in children, it is important to consider SFC variables that could be modulating the development of EL skills (Phillips et al., 2017; Hannon et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, as unsophisticated beliefs were evident in the first subcategory, SES and EL, the agreement between the participants' discourse and the theoretical definition for the SFC and EL category was low overall. This can also be explained by the fact that teachers tend to use less specialized language and to paraphrase concepts or explain them by means of examples. Similarly, in this category we observed that, in all of the subcategories, the responses reveal beliefs that can easily be associated with Braslavski's (2003) co-constructivist MNL. Indeed, for the teachers, it is essential to work with the close context of the learners, as this would allow conducive development of EL, as proposed by some research (Mendive et al., 2017). The positioning of the teachers' discourse from the co-constructivist MNL perspective suggests that teachers recognize that the consolidation of learning and development of EL requires interactions with various agents and mediums.

Accordingly, we can state, following Tagle et al. (2017), that the participants' beliefs generally reflect practical, personal, and subjective knowledge. This knowledge-wisdom is socially shared at the same time, insofar as the interviewees have obtained it mostly from their own praxis and their adjustments to practices already established in the context of professional performance. As described in the literature, this type of belief is usually resistant to change and tends to impose itself over knowledge acquired from theory (Díaz & Solar, 2011). This might help to explain the low expert knowledge revealed in the interviews on the concept of EL and its relationships with children's SFC. Accordingly, there is a lack of explicit knowledge on the part of the informants, which could affect the quality of their interventions in the classroom, as has been observed in Chilean studies that reveal limitations in the quality of literacy practices implemented at the preschool level (Strasser et al., 2013; Orellana-García & Melo-Hurtado, 2014).

It is important to consider that opportunities for learning and development of EL depend not only on children's maturational aspects, but also on teachers' knowledge and good teaching practices (Rohde, 2015; Strasser et al., 2018). For this reason, future research on EL should consider teachers' beliefs and practices, as well as the SFC, as influencing factors in the development of EL skills.

In Chile, the guidelines provided in the Curricular Bases for Preschool Education (Ministerio de Educación, 2018) do not explicitly describe unstructured activities for the development of EL (Strasser et al., 2018), so the expertise of teachers is therefore crucial. One of the most powerful tools a teacher can have is the ability to understand theories associated with the acquisition of written and oral language, along with the ability to translate theory into practice (Terrell & Watson, 2018). There is an abundance of literature indicating that formal education could be a determining factor in reducing socioeconomic gaps, as children who enter school with lower literacy levels benefit more from school instruction (Bobalik et al., 2017; Thompson et al., 2019; Mendive et al., 2020).

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