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Published online: 07 Jul 2020.

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Measuring Parental Literacy Beliefs in a Socio-Economically, Linguistically and Ethnically Diverse Sample

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ABSTRACT

Research Findings: The current study examined the use of a newly developed instrument for measuring parental literacy beliefs in a highly diverse urban Dutch sample of 35 parents, participating in a family literacy program. The instrument was used to explore a new conceptualization of parental literacy beliefs and associations between beliefs and parental demographic characteristics. Data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative techniques. The instrument revealed that parents in this sample preferred meaning-oriented and facilitative practices to stimulate their children's literacy development, in which understanding the meaning of language and print is seen as the starting point in literacy development and in which teaching occurs indirectly, in an embedded child-centered approach. Parental preferences were associated with a variety of beliefs. Parents who did not speak Dutch, the majority language, with their children were more inclined toward directly instructing their children compared to parents who did speak Dutch with their children. The instrument proved to be effective in exposing the nature of and nuances in parental literacy beliefs in a diverse sample. *Practice or Policy*: Our newly developed instrument can be used by professionals working with family literacy programs to gain insight into the literacy beliefs of diverse groups of parents.

Introduction

Already at the beginning of formal schooling, children differ strongly in their emergent literacy skills (Burgess et al., 2002). A vast body of research attributes these differences in children's literacy skills to differences in their early home literacy experiences (Niklas et al., 2016; Park, 2008). Children growing up in rich home literacy environments (HLE) develop stronger literacy skills than children growing up in more limited HLEs (Burgess et al., 2002; Niklas & Schneider, 2013). Family literacy programs (FLPs) aim to stimulate children's emergent literacy development, by supporting parents in creating rich HLEs for their children (Hannon, 2003). Meta-analytic studies on the effects of FLPs on children's emergent literacy outcomes show smaller, sometimes even negligible effects for low socio-economic status (SES) and minority groups compared to high SES and mainstream groups (Manz et al., 2010; Mol et al., 2008). To date, it remains unclear which mechanisms can explain these differences but scholars have suggested that parental beliefs on supporting their children's literacy development may be important in interpreting these differences in program effects (De la Rie, 2018; Manz et al., 2010).

Research indicates that parental literacy beliefs may guide parental literacy behavior toward their children. For example, parents who have stronger beliefs in their own influence on children's reading development, in pleasure and knowledge being the most important goals of reading, and in the

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pliability of children's literacy competencies (DeBaryshe, 1995, p. 6), were found to engage their children more frequently in literacy activities in the home than parents with less strong reading beliefs (cf. Gonzalez et al., 2017; Weigel et al., 2006). However, the current research is inconclusive on the relationships between parental literacy beliefs and parental demographic variables such as educational, cultural, or linguistic background, with some scholars finding parental literacy beliefs to be associated with parental background (cf. Cottone, 2012; Curenton & Justice, 2008; Reese & Gallimore, 2000), while others do not report such relations (Evans et al., 2004; Hammer et al., 2003).

Parental literacy beliefs may partly determine parental uptake of FLPs. FLPs require parents to behave in a certain way. If parents have beliefs that induce literacy behaviors that align less well with the behavior that a program requires from parents, there is a mismatch between parental beliefs and program principles. If such misalignments exist, program engagement may be hampered. For example, if the program activities and philosophy agree with what parents think they can and should do to support their children's literacy development, parents may be more engaged, attend more program events and carry out program activities in a way intended by the program. Conversely, if a program does not match with parents' literacy beliefs, parental attendance of program events may be limited and parents may not carry out program activities according to program guidelines, which in turn may hamper any positive influences on children's emergent literacy development.

To find out more about differences in effects of FLPs, research into the literacy beliefs of parents from different socio-economic, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds participating in FLPs is necessary. In the extant research, however, the instruments used to measure parental literacy beliefs show several substantial shortcomings, which will be discussed in more detail below. Therefore, the current study examines the use of a newly developed instrument to explore the literacy beliefs of diverse parents participating in a Dutch FLP. We investigated whether this instrument is capable of exposing possible variability in parental preferences for parent–child activities, the beliefs underlying these preferences, and possible differences in preferences related to parental education, home language, and country of birth.

Measuring Parental Literacy Beliefs: Beyond Shared Reading Beliefs

Many studies measuring parental literacy beliefs focus on shared reading beliefs only. A frequently used instrument to measure such beliefs is the Parental Reading Belief Inventory (PRBI; DeBaryshe, 1995; DeBaryshe & Binder, 1994), which has been applied in many different contexts (cf. Bennett et al., 2002; Celano et al., 1998; Cottone, 2012; Curenton & Justice, 2008; Davis et al., 2016; Gonzalez et al., 2017; Radišić & Ševa, 2013; Weigel et al., 2006; Wu & Honig, 2010). The PRBI aims to measure several aspects of shared reading beliefs: parental affect toward shared reading; parental self-efficacy in reading to their children; beliefs about children's participation during shared reading; beliefs about the extent to which shared reading should include instruction; beliefs about the role of the environment for children's language and literacy skills; and parental perception of access to resources for shared reading. Nevertheless, most authors calculate a single composite score for the PRBI, as the underlying factor structure tends to vary across studies (DeBaryshe & Binder, 1994; Gonzalez et al., 2013; Rodríguez et al., 2009; Wu & Honig, 2010). This may obscure which aspects of parental literacy beliefs are actually important.

Other scholars combined the measurement of parental beliefs on shared reading with the measurement of other literacy beliefs. Bingham (2007), for instance, assessed maternal beliefs on how children become literate in addition to shared reading beliefs. Bingham (2007) found that maternal beliefs on shared reading were related to mother–child interaction quality during shared reading and that more general beliefs on how children become literate at home were associated with more general aspects of the HLE, such as the frequency with which mothers engaged their children in different types of literacy activities. Bojczyk et al. (2016) developed a scale to measure parental beliefs on shared reading strategies and on children's readiness for learning to read. Similar to the results by Bingham (2007), mothers' beliefs on the benefits of active contributions of children in shared reading were related to

mother–child interaction quality during shared book reading. Through interaction quality, these beliefs were indirectly associated with children's expressive vocabulary knowledge.

The limited focus on shared reading does not match with what we know about the HLEs of diverse families. Numerous studies into the HLEs of families from various backgrounds have shown that parents involve their children in a multitude of activities which may contribute to children's literacy development. Families may engage their children in a wide array of oral language activities that support literacy-related skills, such as singing songs, storytelling, and mealtime conversations (Curenton et al., 2008; Krijnen, Van Steensel, Meeuwisse, Jongerling, & Severiens, 2020; Van Steensel, 2006; Weigel et al., 2006). Additionally, families carry out informal print-related activities other than shared reading, such as playing letter games and discussing bible texts (Purcell-Gates, 1996). Sénéchal and colleagues' influential work showed that parents may also engage their children in instructional print activities, such as alphabet teaching and practicing letter writing (cf. Martini & Sénéchal, 2012; Sénéchal, 2006; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002, 2014). Krijnen et al. (2020) expanded the work by Sénéchal and colleagues and showed that parents not only perform direct teaching activities centered around letters and print but also direct teaching activities concerning oral language, such as the teaching of new words and definitions.

Abovementioned studies have additionally shown that different types of home literacy practices contribute differentially to different types of emergent literacy skills. Activities focusing on the code of print, such as teaching the alphabet, were found to contribute to children's code skills, which encompass all skills necessary to interpret the code of written language, such as letter knowledge, word reading, and phonological skills. Activities focusing on the meaning of language and print, such as shared reading, were found to contribute to children's meaning-related skills, which involve all skills necessary to understand the meaning of spoken and, eventually, written language, such as vocabulary knowledge, narrative knowledge, listening, and text comprehension. Nevertheless, research outcomes concerning the relations between types of home activities and children's literacy skills vary across contexts, with regards to the socio-economic, ethnic, and linguistic background of the samples (cf., Krijnen et al., 2020; Kim, 2009; Manolitsis et al., 2011; Sparks & Reese, 2012). Measures of parental literacy beliefs need to reflect the reality that parents involve their children in a variety of home literacy practices. An instrument should include beliefs on diverse relevant literacy activities, instead of focusing on shared reading beliefs only. In the current study, we therefore included a range of home literacy practices in our measurement of parental literacy beliefs.

Measuring Beliefs on Emergent Literacy Development: Including Didactic Beliefs

Besides studies focusing on parental reading beliefs, a body of research exists concerning parents' beliefs on the nature of emergent literacy development. In this line of research, generally two types of parental perspectives on emergent literacy development are distinguished (Anderson, 1995; DeBaryshe et al., 2000; Evans et al., 2004; Fitzgerald et al., 1991; Lynch et al., 2006; Torr, 2008). In the views of some parents, deciphering the written language code is the starting point for literacy development. To become competent readers, children need to be taught specific skills and knowledge on how words are built up, such as letter knowledge, phonemic awareness, and letter-sound correspondence. According to this perspective, children's code skills form the core of children's literacy development. We apply the term code-oriented perspective when referring to this view. In the views of other parents, understanding the meaning of language and print, rather than the way it is encoded, is the starting point for literacy development. Children acquire literacy skills gradually, as an integrated whole by engaging in meaningful interaction with others. Children's meaning-related skills form the core of literacy development in this perspective. We apply the term meaning-oriented perspective when referring to this view. Finally, another group of parents was found to combine code- and meaning-oriented perspectives in their views on emergent literacy development (DeBaryshe et al., 2000; Evans et al., 2004; Lynch et al., 2006). Although these perspectives resonate some scientific insights into children's emergent literacy development, one must keep in mind that these are views by

parents, thus laypersons' perspectives, on emergent literacy development. Research on the nature of reading development generally acknowledges that to become competent readers, children build on both their meaning-oriented skills and their code-oriented skills (Dickinson et al., 2003; Hoover & Gough, 1990).

Parental didactic beliefs, that is, how parents think they should guide their children's literacy development, may form another important dimension of parental literacy beliefs. Following Hannon (2000, 2003), didactic beliefs can be framed in terms of a continuum with a preference for a formal, instructional approach on the one end, and a preference for a more playful, "child-centered" or "facilitative" method on the other (Hannon, 2000, 2003; Stipek et al., 1992). Home literacy practices that take an instructional approach are activities in which parents apply explicit instruction, such as teaching letter names, practicing writing, correcting a child's language use, and teaching new words and definitions (Krijnen et al., 2020). Home literacy practices that take a facilitative approach are activities in which parents expose their children to language and print in a more informal, playful way, such as shared reading, having parent–child conversations, playing letter games, and citing nursery rhymes (Krijnenet al., 2020). Instructional activities may include both code-oriented practices, such as teaching letter names, and meaning-oriented practices, such as teaching new words and definitions. Similarly, facilitative activities may include code-oriented practices, such as playing letter games, as well as meaning-oriented practices, such as parent–child conversations (Krijnen et al., 2020). Parents may vary in how they value all these types of practices. Therefore, we propose that both parental beliefs on the nature of emergent literacy development in terms of meaning-oriented and code-oriented perspectives as well as parental didactic beliefs may be related to parental preferences for certain literacy practices.

Parental didactic beliefs have been investigated in several contexts. For instance, scholars have investigated parental beliefs on play and perceived relationships between play and academic learning (cf. Fisher et al., 2008; Fogle & Mendez, 2006). Others have investigated parental didactic beliefs in the context of early math development (cf. DeFlorio & Beliakoff, 2015). These studies indicate that parents vary in their beliefs on the value of child-centered facilitative approaches for children's academic learning. In the context of literacy development, the research is limited. In most studies on parental literacy beliefs, parental didactic beliefs have either not been considered (cf. DeBaryshe et al., 2000; Evans et al., 2004) or instruction has been equated with a focus on code and facilitation with a focus on meaning (Anderson, 1995). The previously mentioned PRBI does include a subscale measuring parental beliefs about direct teaching, but as most authors compute a single composite score for the PRBI, the role of this dimension remains unclear (cf. Cottone, 2012; Curenton & Justice, 2008).

In their study on parental literacy beliefs and children's home literacy environments, Sonnenschein et al. (1997) made a distinction rather similar to the facilitation-instruction binary. Sonnenschein and colleagues distinguished an entertainment perspective, in which literacy is regarded as a source of entertainment, from a skills-based perspective, in which literacy is viewed as a set of skills to be mastered and instructed. In the study, parents were asked what they thought was the most effective way to help their children learn to read. Parents with a preference for facilitative activities, such as shared reading and play with print, were considered having an entertainment perspective. Parents preferring instructional practices, such as activities involving flashcards and workbooks, were labeled as having a skills-based perspective. Sonnenschein et al. (1997) only focused on home practices involving print, while we propose that the distinction between instruction and facilitation is also present in activities that do not involve print, such as teaching your child the meaning of new words, having parent–child conversations and citing nursery rhymes.

In the current study, we add parental didactic beliefs to our understanding of parental literacy beliefs. Our instrument for measuring parental literacy beliefs allows parental beliefs not only to be classified into a preference for a meaning- or code-oriented perspective, in which either the understanding of meaning or the understanding of code is viewed as the basis of literacy development, but also in a preference for facilitation or instruction, in which parents either regard playful exposure to

language and print or direct teaching about language and print as the best way to guide children's literacy learning.

Other Considerations: Aiming for Deeper Understanding and an Inclusive Approach

When using quantitative instruments of parental literacy beliefs, parental responses to questionnaires are classified into categories of parental beliefs, such as a meaning-oriented or code-oriented perspective (cf. DeBaryshe et al., 2000) and an entertainment versus a skills-based perspective (Sonnenschein et al., 1997), or, in studies using the PRBI, placed on a continuum of low and high scores on this reading belief measure (cf. Gonzalez et al., 2017; Weigel et al., 2006). Parental explanations for their scores remain often unknown. Allowing parents to clarify their responses to questionnaires may provide a more nuanced understanding of the factors associated with parental literacy beliefs and shed light on the possible (mis)alignment between parental beliefs and different types of FLPs. In the current study, we included a qualitative component in our measurements of parental beliefs, allowing for parents to elaborate on their responses.

Furthermore, current instruments for measuring parental literacy beliefs are not suitable for all groups of parents. Quantitative studies cited above mainly use written parent questionnaires. Generally, these questionnaires are quite lengthy, are provided only in the majority language and contain literacy jargon, such as "syllables", "letter-combination sounds", "world-topic-knowledge", and "natural language" (cf. DeBaryshe, Binder & Buell, 2000; Evans et al., 2004). This language might be difficult to follow for parents who are not used to such terms, for parents who have limited proficiency in the majority language, and for parents who have limited literacy skills. Given that the target groups of FLPs often include parents with lower educational levels and limited majority language proficiency, the development of an inclusive instrument which accommodates these parents is highly relevant when measuring the literacy beliefs of parents participating in FLPs. Such an instrument should not heavily rely on text, contain visual materials and avoid literacy jargon. For the current study, we developed an instrument that was intended to be suitable for all groups of parents.

Investigating Parental Literacy Beliefs in a Highly Diverse Context

Parental literacy beliefs are thought to originate in parents' own experiences with literacy practices and literacy learning as children (Evans et al., 2004; Gillanders & Jiménez, 2004; Reese et al., 2012; Reese & Gallimore, 2000). Such experiences are closely connected to parents' schooling experiences and the culture the parents grew up in. For instance, in their comprehensive study of parental literacy beliefs of Latino parents in the US, Reese and Gallimore (2000) found that many parents in their study viewed literacy development from a cultural code-oriented model in which children were understood to acquire literacy skills through direct instruction starting in school. This cultural model was rooted in parents' own experiences with literacy learning when they were young. However, this model was not static, but subject to change: through contact with the school teachers and exposure to their children's school system, parents also began to value more facilitative and meaning-oriented practices, such as shared reading, for their children's literacy development. Similarly, Li (2006) showed that middle-class Chinese parents in the US held mostly code-oriented beliefs on the literacy development of their children, originating in Chinese cultural conceptions of literacy education, in which explicit instruction of the copying of characters is the dominant approach to literacy teaching in schools (Wang & McBride, 2017). Yet also in Li's study, parents incorporated more meaning-oriented characteristic of the US school system into their understanding and support of their children's literacy development (Li, 2006).

Parental demographic background variables such as level of education and income, country of birth, and home language may serve as proxy variables for parental experiences associated with parental literacy beliefs. Therefore, relationships can be expected between parental beliefs and such

background variables. However, research on the relationships between literacy beliefs and demographic variable provides a complex picture. Some studies found parental beliefs to be associated with parental income and education. Sonnenschein et al. (1997), for example, found that parents with lower incomes placed more value on instructional practices such as the teaching/practicing of letters. Similarly, in some studies, code-oriented beliefs were more likely to be found in lower educated parents, while meaning-oriented beliefs were more likely to be found in higher educated parents (DeBaryshe et al., 2000; Fitzgerald et al., 1991; Lynch et al., 2006; Stipek et al., 1992). Possibly, parents with more limited schooling experiences may place higher value on the technical aspects of learning how to read because of their own experiences with such literacy instruction as children, while parents exposed to more education are more experienced in and used to reading for meaning-oriented goals, such as reading longer texts for study purposes. Additionally, some studies measuring parental reading beliefs through the previously mentioned PRBI reported that parents with higher levels of education showed higher scores on the PRBI compared to parents with lower levels of education (Cottone, 2012; Curenton & Justice, 2008). However, other scholars did not report any relationships between parental education and literacy beliefs (Bingham, 2007; Evans et al., 2004). Additionally, there is only little research on the relationships between ethnic background or home language and parental literacy beliefs. Mostly, research on the role of these background variables has focused on literacy behavior rather than literacy beliefs. The limited research available that examined differences in parental literacy beliefs across groups of parents generally did not report any significant differences in literacy beliefs across various ethnic groups living in the same country (Boomstra et al., 2013; Duren, 2006; Sawyer et al., 2018) and across groups speaking different home languages (Hammer et al., 2003, 2007).

The research discussed above concerning relations between parental literacy beliefs and demographic variables is mostly situated in the northern American context, with the exception of the study by Boomstra et al. (2013). No previous study examined parental literacy beliefs on different types of home literacy practices in the urban Dutch context. This context, which is the setting of the current study, can be characterized by a highly diverse population. In this population, many variables related to diversity intersect, including ethnicity, levels of education, and home language (Crul, 2016). As parents' literacy beliefs may be shaped by parents' own experiences with literacy learning, high variability in literacy beliefs can be expected in this population.

Meta-analyses such as those by Manz et al. (2010), Mol et al. (2008), and Sénéchal and Young (2008) showed that lower educated families and ethnic minority families generally profit less from FLPs than higher educated and majority families. Therefore, it is relevant to investigate the differences in literacy beliefs between parents from different educational, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds participating in such programs. The current study not only explored whether the newly developed instrument was able to expose the variety of and nuances in parental literacy beliefs in a highly diverse sample but also whether this variability was related to parental level of education, ethnicity, and home language.

Purpose of the Study

In the current study, we examined the use of a newly developed instrument to measure parental literacy beliefs in a highly diverse sample of parents participating in an FLP. The instrument included parental literacy beliefs on a wide variety of home literacy practices and focused both on parental beliefs on the nature of children's literacy development and on their didactic beliefs. Additionally, the instrument allowed for analysis of parental elaborations on their responses. Finally, the instrument was intended to be suitable for a diverse group of parents in terms of education, country of birth, and home language. We explored the following research questions (RQs):

(1) What does the new instrument reveal about the types of literacy activities parents prefer?
(2) What beliefs possibly underlying these preferences does the instrument expose:

(a) Do these beliefs reflect the distinction between a meaning- versus a code-oriented perspective?
(b) Do these beliefs reflect the distinction between a facilitative and an instructional perspective?
(c) What other beliefs does the instrument expose?
(d) Do these beliefs differ across activity type (code, meaning, facilitative, instructive)?

(3) Does the instrument expose relations between parental preferences and parental education, home language, and country of birth?

Methods

Participants

The participants were 35 parents, divided over eight schools, with children who were second-year kindergartners (age in months $M = 69.5$, $SD = 3.1$), enrolled in a Dutch Family Literacy Program named Early Education at Home (EEH; Nederlands Jeugdinstituut, 2018). See Table 1 for an overview of the participants' characteristics. Mostly mothers participated ($n = 32$) and in one case the interview was conducted with the mother together with the mother's partner, who was not the child's father. Over a third of the parents had low educational levels, one-fifth of the sample was higher educated. More than two-thirds of the parents were born outside the Netherlands. Dutch was the only home language in less than a third of the families, in the other families Dutch as an additional language or only another language was spoken. Sixteen different languages were spoken in the sample, of which

Table 1. Participant characteristics.

Characteristic	Amount (percentage of total sample)
Parents	$N= 35$ (100%)
Mother	$n= 31$ (89%)
Father	$n= 3$ (8%)
Mother and mothers' partner (not father of child)	$n= 1$ (3%)
Interview language	
Dutch	$n= 31$ (89%)
Dutch and English	$n= 2$ (5%)
Moroccan Arabic (with interpreter)	$n= 1$ (3%)
Portuguese (with interpreter)	$n= 1$ (3%)
Parental Education	
Low[a]	$n = 13$ (37%)
Middle[b]	$n= 15$ (43%)
High[c]	$n= 6$ (17%)
Unknown[d]	$n= 1$ (3%)
Country of birth	
Netherlands	$n= 24$ (69%)
Another country	$n= 11$ (31%)
Language spoken to child	
Dutch only	$n= 10$ (29%)
Dutch and other language(s)	$n= 17$ (48%)
Only other language(s)	$n= 8$ (23%)
Child's age (in months)	$M= 69.5$, $SD = 3.1$
Gender child	
Boys	$n= 20$ (57%)
Girls	$n= 15$ (43%)

[a]No education, primary and/or prevocational secondary education.
[b]Senior general secondary education or pre-university education, and/or secondary vocational education.
[c]Higher professional education or university degree.
[d]Parent did not indicate educational level.

Dutch was mentioned most frequently, followed by Sranan (lingua franca in Suriname, a former colony of the Netherlands), Turkish and Moroccan Arabic (languages spoken by the largest groups of immigrants in the Netherlands).

Measures

Parental Literacy Beliefs

To investigate parental literacy beliefs, we developed a new instrument based on a questionnaire used in a previous study (Krijnen et al., 2020). Krijnen et al. (2020) explored a conceptualization of parent–child home literacy activities that distinguished code-oriented from meaning-oriented activities and instructional from facilitative activities. Krijnen et al. (2020) developed a questionnaire consisting of 15 home literacy activities, each describing a parent–child home literacy activity that was either meaning-oriented or code-oriented, and either instructional or facilitative. To investigate parental beliefs on different types of home literacy practices in the current study, we selected from each of the four categories in this previous questionnaire two activities that represented the categories sufficiently and would warrant a valid account of parental beliefs. This selection resulted in eight activities included in our qualitative interview instrument. We restricted this selection to eight activities to limit the complexity of the instrument. In a semi-structured interview, parents were presented eight cards, each displaying a picture of a home literacy practice with the words labeling the activity printed below the picture. Four activities were defined by us as meaning-oriented activities, namely talking with your child, shared reading, teaching your child (the meaning of) new words, and correcting your child when s/he uses a wrong word. Four activities were code-oriented activities, namely playing letter games, citing nursery rhymes, teaching your child the alphabet, and practicing letter writing. Of the abovementioned activities, four adopted an instructional teaching approach, namely teaching your child (the meaning of) new words, correcting your child when s/he uses a wrong word, teaching your child the alphabet, and practicing the writing of letters. The other four activities adopted a facilitative approach, namely talking with your child, shared reading, playing letter games, and citing nursery rhymes. See Table 2 for a visual display.

The interviewer first described the eight activities and explained them to the parents if necessary. Next, the interviewer asked the parent: "Could you rank these activities in order of importance for children's literacy development? It does not matter what you actually *do* at home with your child, but what you *think* is most important for stimulating children's literacy development. There are no right or wrong answers, it is your opinion". After the parents ranked the eight cards, the interviewer asked a set of qualitative interview questions. These questions, such as "why do you think this activity is most important for children's literacy development?", "why did you place this activity in the second position?" invited the parents to explain their ordering. A copy of the instrument is included in the Appendix.

In applying this instrument, we distinguished between parental *preferences* in supporting children's literacy development at home and parental *beliefs* underlying those preferences. Parental *preferences* are operationalized as the ranking of the eight activities in the ranking task. Parental *beliefs* are operationalized as the explanations parents provide for their rankings. After ranking, each of the eight activities was given a rank score: activities ranked in first position received a score of one point, in second position a score of two points et cetera. Based on these rank scores, variables were computed representing a meaning-oriented preference, a code-oriented preference, a preference for instruction

Table 2. Home literacy practices included in the ranking task.

	Facilitative practices	Instructional practices
Meaning-oriented practices	Talking with your child	Teaching your child new words/concepts
	Shared reading	Correcting your child when s/he used a word incorrectly
Code-oriented practices	Playing letter games	Teaching your child the alphabet
	Citing nursery rhymes	Practicing the writing of letters with your child

and a preference for facilitation. These variables were formed by averaging the scores for each of the items that represented the variables (see Table 2 for activity categories). For instance, the score for parents' preference for instruction was computed by taking the mean of the scores for the four activities representing instruction. Lower scores represent a stronger preference for a certain type of activity. Scores on each variable ranged from 2.5 ([1 + 2 + 3 + 4]/4) to 6.5 ([5 + 6 + 7 + 8]/4) points.

The scores on these variables allowed us to classify parental preferences according to the four categories of beliefs (meaning-oriented, code-oriented, instruction, facilitation). More importantly, parents' responses on the qualitative interview questions allowed us to examine which beliefs informed parents' preferences for the different types of home literacy practices and whether these were beliefs on the nature of emergent literacy development, didactic beliefs, or possibly other types of beliefs.

Demographic Information
Parents received a questionnaire at the start of the project (see Table 1 for an overview of families' characteristics).

Parental Education.   Parental education was operationalized as the highest educational level obtained by the respondent. Levels were low (no education, primary and/or prevocational secondary education), middle (senior general secondary education or pre-university education, and/or secondary vocational education), and high (higher professional education or university degree).

Child's Age.   Child's age was measured by asking parents to indicate the birth date of their child, on which we based the children's age in months at the time of data collection.

Home Language.   Parents were asked what language(s) they spoke with their child. Parents indicated whether they spoke only Dutch, Dutch and (an)other language(s), or only (an)other language(s) at home with their child.

Country of Birth.   Parents were asked to indicate their country of birth. Their responses were coded as a dichotomous variable (0 = *Netherlands*, 1 = *other country*).

Procedure

This study was conducted in the context of a larger study into the effects of a Dutch FLP, Early Education at Home (EEH; Nederlands Jeugdinstituut, 2018).

EEH
EEH aims to improve children's linguistic, socio-emotional, and cognitive abilities by enhancing their home literacy environment. The program is a combination of a home- and center-based intervention (Blok et al., 2005). At the time of the current study, the children and their parents had been enrolled in EEH for 15 months. EEH's thematic approach matches the curriculum of early childhood education in the Netherlands. The kindergarten curriculum targets emergent literacy development but focuses on meaning-related skills. According to this curriculum, children should know approximately 7000 (Dutch) words receptively and 3500 words productively, have acquired knowledge of the functions of print, are able to recognize and name an unspecified number of letters, are able to write symbols that resemble letters, know that letters correspond to sounds and have mastered the Dutch phonological system, before entering Grade 1 (Stichting Leerplan Ontwikkeling, 2010). In EEH, every four to six weeks the kindergarten teacher invites parents for parent meetings, where they receive materials (prompting boards, picture books, craft work) to take home. The program philosophy can be characterized as meaning-oriented and facilitative: very limited attention is paid to the code of print, while most activities aim to promote children's meaning-oriented skills, such as listening

comprehension skills and vocabulary knowledge. All activities have a playful, facilitative format; direct instruction activities are no part of the program. Parents are encouraged to follow a facilitative approach in conducting program activities.

Sampling Procedure

The sample of the current study consisted of randomly selected parents who received the EEH-intervention participating in the larger effect study. To compile the sample, we used the following procedure. From the 118 families participating in EEH, we randomly selected five parents in each of the eight schools that implemented the EEH-intervention, resulting in a sample of 40 parents. After selection, the child's teacher asked parents whether they would agree to take part. The teacher explained the aim of the project and communicated that the family would receive a gift card of 20 euros for participating. If parents did not agree to take part, another family was randomly selected and approached. Due to the many rejections by parents to take part in the project (based on various reasons: no time, personal circumstances, parents did not want to be audio-recorded, teachers were not able to reach parents, no reason), 76 parents were approached, but only 36 agreed to take part. The limited willingness for participation has been observed before in similar populations with families with lower educational and literacy levels and minority families (cf. Sadler et al., 2011). Chi-square tests and t-tests revealed no significant differences in parental education and country of birth, home language, and child's age between the group of parents who agreed to take part and parents who did not. Additionally, one parent was excluded because the oldest child mostly answered the interview questions instead of the parent. The final sample consisted of 35 parents. Informed, written consent was obtained from these parents.

Data Collection

Parents were asked whether they would prefer to do the interview in Dutch, in English, or in their home language with the aid of an interpreter. Thirty-three parents indicated they preferred to conduct the interview in Dutch, of which two parents switched to English during the interview. Two parents preferred to conduct the interview in their home language (Moroccan Arabic and Portuguese). These interviews were conducted with the aid of interpreters.

Training of Research Assistants

The data collection was carried out by five trained research assistants. In two group sessions and additional individual coaching, the research assistants were trained in interview techniques, transcription of the data, and organizational aspects of the data collection.

Coding of Parent Interviews

Coding of parental responses on the parental belief instrument was conducted by the first author using ATLAS.ti (ATLAS.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2019). Coding procedures are described in the analysis section.

Analysis

To address RQ 1 (what does the new instrument reveal about the types of literacy activities parents prefer?), we used descriptive statistical techniques. To address RQ2 (what beliefs underlying these preferences does the instrument expose) and sub-questions parental responses were coded using qualitative content analysis (QCA), which allows researchers to combine inductive coding with deductive coding (Schreier, 2012). QCA is characterized by a systematic yet flexible approach that leads to data reduction through categorization. In QCA, a sequence of steps is taken: formulating research questions, selecting material, building coding frame, trying coding, modifying coding frame, main analysis, and reporting results. Both theory-driven and data-driven codes can be used in the

coding scheme, which implies the coding frame is not fixed and can be modified throughout the analysis to increase validity. QCA leads to data reduction because it summarizes larger data fragments into categories (codes) (Schreier, 2012).

The first author analyzed the data in several steps. First, parental responses to the interview questions were coded using theory-driven and data-driven codes. The codes that emerged from this first coding session were further inspected and merged if possible. In addition, clear descriptions of codes and sub-codes were provided (see Table 4). Second, all data were coded for the second time, using the adapted coding scheme. If necessary, final adjustments were made in the coding scheme. Third, two independent coders (the second and third author of the manuscript) coded five interviews (14% of the data) using the final coding scheme. Percentage agreement was computed, which was 88% between the first author and the second author and 74% between the first author and the third author. Disagreements in coding were inspected, discussed, and solved between the three coders. Based on this discussion, small final adjustments were made in the coding scheme and all data were checked by the first author one final time. The final coding scheme is displayed in Table 4.

To address RQ3 (does the instrument expose relations between parental preferences and parental education, home language, and country of birth?) correlational analyses and Mann–Whitney U tests were conducted. For analyzing the relationships between literacy beliefs, parental birth country, and parental education we examined correlations. Because the distribution of most variables was non-normal, the sample size was small and contained a relatively large number of tied ranks (due to the variables based on the ranking task) we used Kendall's tau (τ) to examine associations between parental literacy beliefs and demographic variables. Kendall's tau (τ) is robust for non-normality and is suitable for small data sets with a large number of tied ranks (Field, 2013). Because the home language variable was a tri-partite categorical variable, distinguishing monolingual Dutch parents from parents speaking both Dutch and other languages at home with their children, and from parents who speak no Dutch at home at all, a correlational analysis is not appropriate. To explore how these three language groups differed from one another in their literacy beliefs, we conducted three sets of Mann–Whitney U tests. In the first set, we compared monolingual Dutch speakers with speakers of Dutch and (an)other language(s). In the second set, we compared monolingual Dutch speakers with parents who did not speak Dutch at home with their children and in the third set we compared parents who spoke Dutch and (an) other language(s) at home to parents who did not speak Dutch at home with their children.

Results

Parental Preferences: Ranking Task Scores

Parental rankings of the different activities in the ranking task in order of importance for children's emergent literacy development were analyzed. Based on these rankings we computed four variables: a variable representing a preference for meaning-oriented activities, a variable representing a preference for code-oriented activities, a variable representing a preference for instructional activities, and a variable representing a preference for the facilitative activities (RQ1). Overall, parents showed a general preference for meaning-oriented activities: meaning-oriented practices received higher rankings than code practices. Talking with your child was ranked in the top two positions by more than 82% of the sample, for shared reading this was 57% (Table 3). Generally, facilitative activities received higher positions than instructional activities, indicating a preference toward a facilitative approach in this sample. Additionally, in the category of meaning-oriented practices, facilitative activities received higher positions than instructional activities. In the category of code-oriented practices the picture is less clear: playing letter games received higher rankings than code-oriented instructional activities, but citing nursery rhymes was on average perceived as least important for children's emergent literacy development. Table 3 provides the frequencies and percentages of the

Table 3. Frequencies and percentages of parental rankings of the activities included in the ranking task and descriptive statistics for the four variables computed based on the rankings.

		Meaning-oriented facilitative practices		Meaning-oriented instructional practices		Code-oriented instructional practices		Code-oriented facilitative practices	
		Talking with your child	Shared reading	Teaching your child new words/ concepts	Correcting your child when s/he used a word incorrectly	Teaching your child the alphabet	Practicing the writing of letters with your child	Playing letter games	Citing nursery rhymes
Position in ranking Frequency and percentage	1	24 (68%)	6 (17%)	1 (3%)	2 (6%)	1 (3%)	0	1 (3%)	0
	2	5 (14%)	14 (40%)	4 (11%)	3 (8%)	1 (3%)	3 (9%)	4 (11%)	1 (3%)
	3	3 (9%)	6 (17%)	5 (14%)	7 (20%)	5 (14%)	2 (6%)	4 (11%)	3 (9%)
	4	1 (3%)	5 (14%)	7 (20%)	8 (23%)	4 (11%)	2 (6%)	4 (11%)	3 (9%)
	5	0	1 (3%)	2 (6%)	4 (11%)	7 (20%)	9 (26%)	3 (9%)	8 (23%)
	6	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	8 (23%)	2 (6%)	5 (14%)	7 (20%)	6 (17%)	5 (14%)
	7	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	6 (17%)	4 (11%)	4 (11%)	6 (17%)	9 (26%)	4 (11%)
	8	0	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	5 (14%)	8 (23%)	5 (14%)	4 (11%)	11 (31%)
Missing				1 (3%)			1 (3%)		
Total		35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35
M (SD)		1.71 (1.43)	2.80 (1.68)	4.71 (1.88)	4.60 (2.12)	5.46 (1.99)	5.56 (1.76)	5.23 (2.09)	5.97 (1.81)
Min.-Max.		1–7	1–8	1–8	1–8	1–8	2–8	1–8	2–8

Literacy perspectives	n	Min	Max	M	SD
Meaning-oriented perspective[a]	35	2.50	5.33	3.46	.81
Code-oriented perspective[a]	35	3.67	6.50	5.54	.81
Instructional approach[a]	34	3.50	6.50	5.10	.76
Facilitative approach[a]	35	2.50	5.50	3.93	.77

[a]Lower scores represent a stronger parental preference for this perspective/approach.

rankings of the eight home literacy activities included in the ranking task, the mean rankings of each of the activities, and the descriptive statistics of the four aggregate variables representing parental preferences for the four types of activities.

Parental Beliefs: Explanations Provided for Preferences

Parents provided different explanations for their preferences in ranking the activities of the ranking task reflecting different types of beliefs (RQ2). These beliefs were coded into five main categories with underlying subcategories. The five main categories were "activities support children's skill development", "activities support children's wellbeing", "parental beliefs on children's learning", "parent factors", and "other". This last category consisted of all explanations that we could not interpret or that did not provide a clear reason and was not further analyzed. For an overview of main categories, subcategories, and the number of parents that mentioned explanations belonging to these (sub)categories, see Table 4. Below, each of the main categories of beliefs with underlying subcategories are described in more detail. In this description, we focused on whether parental beliefs reflected a distinction between code- and meaning-oriented perspectives (RQ2a), a distinction between facilitative and instructional perspectives (RQ2b) and possibly other types of beliefs (RQ2c). Additionally, we described whether and how explanation types differed for code- and meaning-oriented activities and for instructional and facilitative activities. In other words, we examined if parents offer some explanations mostly for meaning-oriented and others mostly for code-oriented activities, and some explanations mostly for instructional activities and others mostly for facilitative activities (RQ2d). Table 5 shows an overview of the frequency with which certain explanation types are mentioned for each activity type (meaning, code, instruction, facilitation).

Table 4. Coding scheme for types of explanations for the ranking of the home practices in the ranking task.

Main categories	Subcategories	Mentioned by nr. of parents
Activities support children's skill development.	Stimulate meaning-related skills *Definition: explanation refers to support of meaning-related language skills, such as vocabulary, listening comprehension, speaking fluency, reading comprehension*	26
	Stimulate code skills *Definition: explanation refers to support of code skills, such as letter knowledge, word decoding, reading, phonological awareness*	14
	Stimulate learning (general) *Definition: explanation refers to support of learning in general or school readiness, content of learning is not specified.*	9
	Stimulate imagination *Definition: explanation refers to support of child's imagination.*	4
	Stimulate social skills *Definition: explanation refers to increasing knowledge of social rules, social behavior and skills in children.*	3
Activities support child's wellbeing	Enhance parent-child relationship *Definition: explanation refers to parent-child contact, wellbeing of parent and child in parent-child contact, importance of knowing child, importance of child feeling safe with parent, importance of stimulating relation of trust between parent and child*	24
	Support self-confidence *Definition: explanation refers to children's self-confidence and practices that promote or impair self–confidence*	4
	Play to relax/as reward for learning *Definition: explanation refers to play as opposed to learning, play as an instrument to have children relax or to reward children*	8
Parental beliefs on children's learning	Learning/teaching depends on child's characteristics (interests/age/development) *Definition: explanation refers to parent's consideration for children's specific age, development or interests.*	23
	Importance of play-based learning/enjoyment/interest of child in learning activity *Definition: explanation refers to parental views/observations related to children's play and enjoyment in/for learning activities*	18
	Teaching/learning occurs automatically/naturally *Definition: explanation refers to either home practices that occur naturally/ automatically in parent-child contact or to children's learning that occurs naturally, automatically (without the need to explicitly address the skills being learned)*	17
	Sequential process of learning/teaching *Definition: explanation refers to a sequential nature of learning that some activities/skills (should) occur before others, and/or to either home practices that are conditional/foundational to continue with other home practices or to skills that are conditional/foundational for the learning of other skills.*	14
	Importance of parent teaching *Definition: explanation refers to the perceived importance parental direct teaching practices for children's learning*	13
	Learning/teaching happens at school/not at home *Definition: explanation refers to learning activities viewed by the parents as the school's (or other institution's) responsibility instead*	13
	Importance of evaluating child's level of development *Definition: explanation refers to parents assessing children's development and skills, and the importance of assessing child's level of development*	4
	School is not enough for learning *Definition explanation refers to parents emphasizing the importance of learning at home, because school is not enough to acquire certain skills*	2
Importance of activities based on parent factors	Parental insecurity. *Definition: explanation refers to parents' own insecurity in performing certain learning activities well*	7
	Parental preferences *Definition: explanation refers to parents own preferences, likes and dislikes in performing certain learning activities.*	8

(*Continued*)

Table 4. (Continued).

Main categories	Subcategories	Mentioned by nr. of parents
	Practical	2
	Definition: explanation refers to practical reasons for a parent for the perceived importance of a learning activity.	
Other	Other activities are more important	7
	No or unclear motivation	10

Table 5. Frequency of types of explanations mentioned for each activity type (meaning, code, instruction, facilitation).

Main category	Explanation	Meaning-oriented activities	Code-oriented activities	Instructional activities	Facilitative activities
Activities support children's skill development.	Stimulate oral language skills	39	2	6	35
	Stimulate code skills	9	12	10	11
	Stimulate learning (general)	10	1	3	8
	Stimulate imagination	4			4
	Stimulate social skills	5		2	3
Activities support child's wellbeing	Enhance parent-child relationship	28	1, 2[a]		29, 2[a]
	Support self-confidence	4[a]		4[a]	
	Play to relax/as reward for learning		4, 4[a]	1[a]	4, 3[a]
Parental beliefs on children's learning	Learning/teaching depends on child's characteristics (interests/age/development)	13	37	27	23
	Importance of play-based learning/enjoyment/interest of child in learning activity	7	16, 1[a]	2, 1[a]	21
	Teaching/learning occurs automatically/naturally	11	10	19	2
	Sequential process of learning/teaching	8	9	7	10
	Importance of direct teaching	9	3	10	2
	Learning/teaching happens at school/not at home		22	14	8
	Importance of evaluating child's level of development	4			4
	School is not enough for learning		2	2	
Importance of activities based on parent factors	Parental insecurity	4	5	7	2
	Parental preferences	4	4	2	6
	Practical	2		1	1
Other	Other activities are more important	3	6	2	7
	No or unclear motivation	6	5	5	6

Frequencies displayed in this table are the frequency with which each explanation is mentioned for each activity type. Parents could mention the same type of explanations several times for several activities.

[a]Numbers marked with [a] represent parental responses of which the content is reversed. For example, two parents stated that the code-oriented facilitative activity playing letter games does *not* enhance parent-child relationship and four parents stated that instructional activities are counterproductive in supporting children's self-confidence.

Activities Support Children's Skill Development

In the category of skill development, parents viewed the activities as a means to stimulate the development of certain skills. The support of meaning-related skills, such as vocabulary knowledge, listening comprehension, and speaking fluency, was mentioned most frequently (by 26 parents) when motivating the benefits of practices in the ranking task: "[about talking] Talking is very important. It stimulates understanding and speaking the language better. And automatically, you acquire many words"[1] (mother, middle educated, speaks both Dutch and other language with child, born outside the Netherlands).

Stimulation of meaning-related skills was mentioned across all activity types, although considerably more frequently for meaning-oriented ($n = 39$) and facilitative activities ($n = 35$) than for code-oriented ($n = 2$) and instructional ($n = 6$) activities. This suggests that parents are knowledgeable of the opportunities of activities such as shared reading to stimulate children's meaning-related skills. In the two cases that parents perceived a code-oriented activity to be stimulating for meaning-related skills, they were referring to citing nurse rhymes. When designing the ranking task, we categorized citing nursery rhymes as a code activity, because this type of activity targets children's phonological abilities, has been related to children's code skills (Levy et al., 2006) and has been previously categorized as a code activity (Krijnen et al., 2020). However, these two parents perceived citing nursery rhymes as an activity similar to shared reading:

> [about citing nursery rhymes] I don't think it is more important than shared reading, in both activities you encounter words and sentences, but more in a singing way. And during this [shared reading] in a talking way, but I think it comes down to the same thing in learning. (Mother, middle-educated, monolingual Dutch, born in the Netherlands)

The support of code skills was mentioned by nearly half of the parents. The stimulation of code skills was mentioned nearly equally frequently for code activities ($n = 12$) and meaning-oriented activities ($n = 9$). This appears to be a result of parents' perception that shared reading is (also) a way to expose children to and teach them about letters and reading: "They look at the book when I read. I think shared reading is very important because they see many letters, that will stick in their minds" [mother, middle-educated, monolingual Dutch, born in the Netherlands]. Two parents also perceived the activity talking with your child as a way for children to learn about letters:

> Talking is important, because already when the child is still in your belly you talk to it. So, you're already talking to your child. And then, when you talk, the child starts to form letters, words. The system, it's already in the system. (Mother, middle-educated, speaks both Dutch and other language, born outside the Netherlands)

The inclusion of a wider range of home literacy practices in our measurement of parental literacy beliefs, contrary to a narrow focus on shared reading, provided a more nuanced view of the theoretical binary of meaning- versus code-oriented practices. Abovementioned quotes indicate that the theoretical distinction between code- and meaning-oriented practices is not that clear-cut in parental beliefs: according to the parents in our sample, activities pre-defined as code-oriented practices, such as rhyming, can also be perceived to stimulate meaning-oriented skills, whereas meaning-oriented practices, such as talking and shared reading, can also be perceived to stimulate code skills.

In addition, the stimulation of learning in general, stimulation of imagination and the stimulation of social skills were mentioned to explain rankings. These additional skills were only or mostly mentioned for meaning-oriented activities, indicating that if parents perceive code activities beneficial for children's skill development it is specifically for literacy development, while meaning-oriented activities may serve several goals, beyond the domain of literacy: "[about shared reading] During shared reading, whether in Dutch or in the mother tongue, they take up many things. During shared reading, a whole world of imagination opens up" (mother, middle educated, speaks both Dutch and other language with child, born outside the Netherlands).

Parents' elaborations thus allow for an understanding of parental beliefs that is more nuanced than simply defining them as being characterized a meaning-oriented perspective. Our data show that parents not only appreciate meaning-oriented practices for their possible contribution to their children's literacy development but also because they may contribute to skills and abilities in other domains than literacy development, such as social skills, learning in general and children's imagination.

Support of Children's Wellbeing

In this category, parents viewed the activities as a means to stimulate different aspects of children's wellbeing. Stimulating the parent–child relationship was mentioned most frequently (by 24 parents) in

this category. The enhancement of the parent–child relationship was mentioned only for facilitative activities (*n*= 29) and mostly for meaning-oriented activities (*n*= 28). Apparently, according to parents, facilitative learning activities do not only serve children's learning but also provide opportunities to invest in a good relationship with their child.

> [about shared reading] I just know what a great feeling it is when you create a moment together with your child and you see how your child enjoys it. And you can do so many things during shared-reading, because mom loosens up, she loosens up. And after reading she tells you things, that she maybe wouldn't have told before reading. And it's just our moment, I think it's so important. (Mother, middle-educated, speaks both Dutch and other language, born outside the Netherlands)

Support of the child's self-confidence was another motive in this category. This motive was mentioned for instructional activities only, but in all these cases parents indicated that instructional activities may be decreasing rather than promoting children's self-confidence:

> [about correcting your child] I think correcting is a difficult one. You correct, but you don't do it all the time, like just now, I didn't. Because if you do it all the time, a child will become insecure, I think. (Mother, middle-educated, monolingual Dutch, born in the Netherlands)

A final motive in this category was play as a way to have children relax or reward them, as opposed to play as a learning activity. This motive was mentioned only for code activities, and mostly for facilitative activities. These parents viewed code-oriented facilitative activities as play-only activities rather than learning activities. A mother explains why rhyming with her child is least important in her ranking of activities. Rhyming, according to the mother, is "fun", but education comes first:

> [about rhyming] Always, a child has to play, a child has to have to have fun, but a child has to take the education serious. It's very, very important. You have to learn. You have to have fun but you have to know that education is first. For me, I want my child to know that education is first. Then afterwards, you can have your fun. (mother, middle-educated, speaks no Dutch with child, born outside the Netherlands)

However, other parents indicated that code-oriented facilitative activities were not suitable for children to relax. They perceived them as too educational, instead of as "fun" play activities:

> [about playing letter games] I think a child should be able to just relax without learning. If it would be really necessary, if she would lag behind in school for example, and the teacher would ask me to do things at home, yes, then I would do it. But as long as that isn't necessary, I'll stick to the fun games instead of the educational games. (Mother, middle-educated, monolingual Dutch, born in the Netherlands)

Parental elaborations showed here that the distinction between code- and meaning-oriented and instructional and facilitative activities cannot only be explained by parents' ideas on how a child best develops literacy skills. Parental preferences for certain practices may for a large part be explained by the extent to which parents believe those practices to provide opportunities for stimulating children's well-being, by strengthening the parent–child relationship, enhancing children's self-confidence, rewarding children, or having children relax in play.

Parental Beliefs on Children's Learning

A common factor amongst all explanations belonging to this category is that they provide information about how parents view the process of their children's learning and how to best support that learning as a parent. Explanations referring to the sequential nature of children's learning were given across all activity types. Parental beliefs in this category reflect the theoretical distinction between code- and meaning-oriented perspectives. Some parents viewed code-oriented instructional activities as conditional for further literacy development to occur: "[about teaching the alphabet] You have to learn, to write, to read, it's important. But once you know abcd, you'll learn how to write and read" (mother, middle-educated, speaks no Dutch with child, born outside the Netherlands). This type of reasoning is in line with a code-oriented perspective, in which code skills are viewed as the starting point of literacy development. Other parents, however, viewed meaning-oriented facilitative activities as a necessary first step for further learning to occur:

> [about talking with your child] I think that by talking much with your child, you'll teach him to name and explain things, increase vocabulary, and that he will understand what I tell him. And I think that if that goes well, he'll also profit from that with shared reading, but also with writing. (Mother, higher educated, monolingual Dutch, born in the Netherlands)

Teaching and learning being dependent on the children's individual characteristics, such as their interests, age, and level of development, was most frequently mentioned in this main category, indicating that parents in this sample acknowledge the importance of being sensitive and responsive to their children's needs. Parental elaborations in this subcategory also revealed a difference between the perception of the value of code- and meaning-oriented practices, as this explanation was mentioned considerably more frequently for code activities ($n= 37$) than for meaning-oriented activities ($n= 13$). This difference may indicate that parents believe that engagement in code activities is important only when these activities match their children's interests or developmental stage.

> [about practicing writing] I think the children will tell you, or really show you when they are ready to start to write. If they don't want, for example, I think we have to give them time, with the fun, like the games with the letters and then to start writing. (Mother, higher educated, speaks no Dutch with child, born outside the Netherlands)

For meaning-oriented activities, which were generally regarded as more important for children's literacy development than code activities (see Table 3), the child's interests or developmental stage may be viewed as less crucial.

A reason why parents in this sample on average prefer meaning-oriented activities over code-oriented activities, is that, according to the parents, it is primarily the school's responsibility to teach children code skills. This explanation type was mentioned by thirteen parents and was mentioned only for code-activities ($n = 22$).

> [about practicing writing] For me, this should start in school. Sometimes he does it at school and afterwards I can help at home. But for now, this can start in school. I find other things important, but not yet starting to write. (Mother, educational level unknown, speaks both Dutch and other language with child, born outside the Netherlands)

In contrast, two parents indicated explicitly that school is not enough for the teaching of code skills: extra time and support at home was perceived necessary. Such explanations reflect a very active parent role in children's literacy development. Similarly, four parents mentioned the possibility of monitoring children's development as a benefit of talking with your child:

> And then I know when he explains it, sometimes he doesn't feel like it, but then you know, you hear how far he is, what kind of things he says, how he formulates his sentences. And that is actually my intention. Of course, I want to know how his day was, certainly, but I also ask him that to listen whether he makes correct sentences. (Mother, middle-educated, mono-lingual Dutch, born in the Netherlands)

Elaborations in this subcategory indicate that some parents view themselves as gatekeepers of their children's literacy development.

A distinction between facilitative and instructional beliefs was reflected in other types of parental responses. Parents' emphasis on the importance of children's enjoyment and play in learning occurred across all activity types, but more frequently for code activities and nearly only for facilitative activities: "[about playing letter games] If you tell children 'go write this down', because I did that with her, she doesn't like it. But if I make a game of it, she likes it" (mother, middle-educated, speaks both Dutch and other language with child, born outside the Netherlands). This parent compares the instructional approach with a facilitative, child-centered approach, in favor of the latter. In contrast, some parents emphasized the importance of direct instruction for children's learning: "[about correcting your child] Sometimes he tells a story and then he forgets something, and then you have to correct him, so he knows he did something wrong. By making mistakes he'll learn better, learn the language better" (mother, lower-educated, speaks both Dutch and other language with child, born outside the Netherlands).

Parents referred to the importance of instruction only when speaking about instructional activities, except for two parents. These parents compared an instructional approach to a facilitative approach, in favor of the former, when explaining why they perceived letter games, a facilitative activity, as less important for children's literacy development:

> [about letter games] Well ..., games. What I did, and I still do. I just write down those letters, I write them on a sheet of paper and she will finish the row. And then I'll correct her how she should write. That way she learns best, by writing herself. The more she practices, the better she writes. Instead of games, in which she only sees the letters but doesn't really practice herself in writing. (Mother, middle-educated, speaks both Dutch and other language with child, born outside the Netherlands)

The belief that certain skills come naturally to children or that the teaching of particular skills happens automatically during other types of activities, generally implies that no extra support at home was perceived necessary:

> [about practicing writing] Because writing will come naturally. You can teach him how to write now and then, but writing will come with time. He will start coloring and playing and then writing will come naturally. Like, by moving his hands, he will learn how to write. (mother, lower-educated, speaks both Dutch and other language with child, born outside the Netherlands)

The belief that direct instruction is unnecessary because literacy learning occurs automatically and naturally was expressed mostly in the context of instructional activities (n = 19) and only twice in the context of facilitative activities. This implies that instructional activities were not regarded as essential for literacy development, as literacy development was perceived to happen unconsciously. This, in turn, may explain the inclination toward a facilitative approach in this sample.

However, instructional and facilitative beliefs may not be mutually exclusive, as many parents who referred to the importance of direct teaching for instructional activities, also emphasized the importance of children's enjoyment and play in learning when talking about facilitative activities. This indicates that the context in which learning occurs may determine parents' preferences for certain didactic approaches. By asking parents how they value a range of different types of home literacy practices for children's literacy development, we were able to distinguish between these different contexts.

Importance of Activities Based on Parent Factors

In the category of "parent factors", beliefs associated with parental preferences referred to certain characteristics of parents (rather than characteristics of children's development). This category contained expressions of parental insecurity in performing certain types of activities well, practical reasons, such as the perceived ease of fitting certain activities into daily family life and parents' own preferences for certain types of activities. Most of the reasons in this category were mentioned across activity types. Parental insecurity was only referred to when speaking about instructional activities or when speaking about citing nursery rhymes, indicating that these kinds of activities were perceived as most difficult.

> [about correcting your child] You can correct your child, but my problem is, I struggle a lot with 'de, het, dat, dit',[2] so I could correct, but actually I don't know how to how to do it myself all the time. (mother, lower educated, speaks both Dutch and other language with child, born outside the Netherlands)

Associations between Parental Preferences and Demographic Variables

In this section, we describe the results of our exploration of associations between parental literacy preferences and parental education, country of birth, and home language (RQ3). Birth country and parental education did not correlate significantly with any of the preferences (see Table 6 for all correlation coefficients). The results of the Mann–Whitney U tests to explore differences in parental preferences among the three language groups show that parents who did not speak Dutch at home

Table 6. Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations (Kendall's τ) for parental literacy preferences and demographic background variables.

		N	Min	Max	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Meaning-oriented perspective[a]	35	2.50	5.33	3.46	.81	1.00	−1.00**	.34*	−.26	.09	−.15
2	Code-oriented perspective[a]	35	3.67	6.50	5.54	.81	−1.00**	1.00	−.34*	.26	−.09	.15
3	Instructional approach[a]	34	3.50	6.50	5.10	.76	.34*	−.34*	1.00	−1.00**	−.18	.08
4	Facilitative approach[a]	35	2.50	5.50	3.93	.77	−.26	.26	−1.00**	1.00	.20	−.12
5	Migrant background	35	.00	1.00	.69	.47	.09	−.09	−.18	.20	1.00	−.28
6	Educational level	34	1.00	3.00	1.79	.73	−.15	.15	.08	−.12	−.28	1.00

[a]Lower scores represent a stronger parental preference for this perspective/approach * p < .05, ** p < .01

Table 7. Results of the Mann–Whitney U tests exploring differences in preferences across the three language groups.

Tests	Language groups	Preference	Mdn[a]	N	U	z	p	r
Set 1	Monolingual Dutch	Facilitation	3.5	10	70	−.76	.46	−.15
	Dutch and other language(s)		3.5	17				
	Monolingual Dutch	Instruction	5.5	10	70	−.53	.61	−.10
	Dutch and other language(s)		5.5	17				
	Monolingual Dutch	Meaning-oriented perspective	3.3	10	82	−.16	.89	−.03
	Dutch and other language(s)		3.5	17				
	Monolingual Dutch	Code-oriented perspective	5.8	10	82	−.16	.89	−.03
	Dutch and other language(s)		5.5	17				
Set 2	Monolingual Dutch	Facilitation	3.5	10	12	−2.51	.01*	−.59
	Only other language(s)		4.5	8				
	Monolingual Dutch	Instruction	5.5	10	12	−2.51	.01*	−.59
	Only other language(s)		4.5	8				
	Monolingual Dutch	Meaning-oriented perspective	3.3	10	38	−.18	.88	−.04
	Only other language(s)		3.6	8				
	Monolingual Dutch	Code-oriented perspective	5.8	10	38	−.18	.88	−.04
	Only other language(s)		5.4	8				
Set 3	Dutch and other language(s)	Facilitation	3.5	17	38.5	−1.73	.08	−.35
	Only other language		4.5	8				
	Dutch and other language(s)	Instruction	5.5	17	31.5	−2.01	.04*	−.40
	Only other language(s)		4.5	8				
	Dutch and other language(s)	Meaning-oriented perspective	3.5	17	67.5	−.03	.99	−.01
	Only other language(s)		3.6	8				
	Dutch and other language(s)	Code-oriented perspective	5.5	17	67.5	−.03	.99	−.01
	Only other language(s)		5.4	8				

[a]Lower median scores indicate stronger preferences. * p < .05

perceived instructional activities as significantly more important and facilitative activities as significantly less important to children's emergent literacy skills, compared to monolingual Dutch parents. They also perceived instructional activities as significantly more important compared to parents speaking both Dutch and another language. Monolingual Dutch parents and parents who spoke both Dutch and other languages at home did not differ in their preference for instruction or facilitation. Parents of all three language groups did not differ in their preference for code-oriented or meaning-oriented activities. See Table 7 for the results of all Mann–Whitney U tests.

Discussion

The aim of the current study was to examine the use of a newly developed instrument for measuring parental literacy beliefs in a highly diverse sample of parents, participating in a Dutch FLP. With the use of this new instrument, we qualitatively explored to what extent parental preferences for certain home literacy practices were associated with beliefs on emergent literacy development (code- vs. meaning-oriented perspectives) and didactic beliefs (instruction vs. facilitation), or possibly with other beliefs. Next, set in the highly diverse context of urban parts of the Netherlands, we investigated whether parental literacy preferences were related to parental demographic variables. The instrument proved to be capable of exposing the nature of and nuances in parental literacy beliefs in a diverse

sample. The instrument was able to reveal that parents in this sample generally preferred meaning-oriented practices in supporting children's literacy development compared to code-oriented practices and that they preferred facilitative activities compared to instructional activities. Additionally, the instrument revealed that parents used a variety of motives to explain their preferences, some of which indeed reflect code- and meaning-oriented and instructional and facilitative beliefs. A major strength of the instrument was its ability to expose a range of parental beliefs beyond the four predefined categories of parental beliefs, which allows for a deeper understanding of parents' preferences for different types of literacy activities. Finally, parents who did not speak the majority language with their children at home showed stronger preferences for instructional activities and weaker preferences for facilitative activities compared to parents who did speak Dutch with their children.

The study contributes to the literature on parental literacy beliefs in three ways. First, we examined the relevance of adding a dimension to the often-used distinction between code- and meaning-oriented perspectives on literacy development, namely didactic approach, which contrasts parental preferences for either a facilitative or an instructive stance to literacy teaching (Hannon, 2000; Sonnenschein et al., 1997). Our observations support the validity of this addition. Our qualitative analysis showed that parents indeed expressed facilitative or instructional beliefs when they motivate their choices for certain types of parent–child activities. For example, parents emphasized the importance of children's enjoyment and play in learning, which matches a facilitative approach to literacy development. In other cases, parents emphasized the benefits of directly instructing their children about language and print. In most research on parental literacy beliefs, didactic beliefs are generally not included or instructional beliefs are equated with code-oriented beliefs and facilitative beliefs are equated with meaning-oriented beliefs (Anderson, 1995; Evans et al., 2004). Our results show that didactic beliefs in terms of instruction and facilitation form a separate dimension of parental literacy beliefs next to parental beliefs on the nature of emergent literacy development, in terms of code- and meaning-oriented perspectives. We thus suggest to include this dimension in future, more fine-grained operationalizations of parental literacy beliefs.

Second, our qualitative analysis of parental explanations revealed that the predefined theoretical distinctions between different types of beliefs and practices (DeBaryshe et al., 2000; Hannon, 2000; Lynch et al., 2006; Sonnenschein et al., 1997) were not that clear-cut in practice. Most parents in our sample did not exclusively express either code- or meaning-oriented beliefs or either facilitative or instructional beliefs. Many parents combined beliefs when discussing different types of home literacy activities. For example, a parent could express meaning-oriented facilitative beliefs when explaining the importance of shared reading, but the same parent could emphasize an instructional approach when discussing the importance of correcting your children or practicing writing. This is in line with studies into parental literacy beliefs that also found groups of parents who do not restrict themselves to one perspective, but combine several views (Evans et al., 2004; Lynch et al., 2006; Sonnenschein et al., 1997). Including different types of home literacy practices in our measurement allowed us to distinguish between the different contexts that may determine parental literacy beliefs: parents may express different kinds of beliefs when discussing the benefits of different types of activities.

Third, our qualitative analysis showed that also other types of beliefs, in which children's learning and literacy development is not a central element, are related to parental preferences in supporting children's literacy development. Examples are parental ideas about the child's well-being, in particular the parent–child relationship (Aram et al., 2016; Friesen & Butera, 2015), and parental self-efficacy and insecurity (see also Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Newland et al., 2011; Pelletier & Brent, 2002). Our exploratory approach made it possible to expose such beliefs.

Parental Literacy Beliefs

Parents in this sample were in general more inclined toward meaning-oriented and facilitative approaches. Parental views on who is primarily responsible for teaching certain skills or offering certain types of activities may provide a possible explanation for the preference for a meaning-oriented

approach. Code activities were seen by more than a third part of the sample as the school's responsibility instead of the parents', whereas many parents viewed stimulating oral language skills as an important goal of home literacy practices, a goal that was mentioned almost exclusively for meaning-oriented practices. Another reason for a preference for meaning-oriented activities appears to be that parents find that their children are not ready for learning certain skills. This reason was most often provided when explaining a lack in preference for code activities. In contrast, meaning-oriented activities such as talking with your child and shared reading were generally perceived as important regardless of the child's developmental stage. A preference for facilitation is reflected in parents' emphasis on the importance of enjoyment and play in learning. Instruction may be seen as less important, as parents reasoned that instruction occurs automatically during facilitative activities and that the child acquires certain literacy skills naturally during engagement in facilitative activities.

Parents mentioned three explanations for their preferences for home literacy practices considerably more frequently than others, namely the stimulation of oral language skills, learning/teaching being dependent on children's development and interests and stimulation of the parent–child relationship. As indicated above, the attention for oral language development implies that parents are knowledgeable of opportunities to stimulate children's oral language development and that this domain of literacy development is valued by them.

The importance of responding to children's characteristics for learning and teaching was expressed by most parents. This shows that the parents in the sample acknowledge the significance of parental sensitive responsiveness in children's learning. This result is similar to the finding reported by Sawyer et al. (2018) in their qualitative study of literacy beliefs and practices of low-income families in the US. Mothers in their study reported that their engagement in literacy activities varied with their child's reading interest. The emphasis on responding to your child's characteristics is also in line with work by Mesman et al. (2016), who showed that parents across cultures view parental responsiveness as a characteristic of the ideal parent.

More than two-thirds of the sample mentioned enhancing the parent–child relationship as a goal of facilitative home literacy activities. Apparently, aspects of parental beliefs in which the child's literacy development is not a key element are also related to parental literacy beliefs. The abovementioned study by Mesman et al. (2016) showed that parental positive affect toward children was viewed universally as a characteristic of the ideal parent. Similarly, Aram et al. (2016) found in their study on parental literacy beliefs in an Israeli sample of home- and regular-schooled kindergartners that all parents in their sample highly valued parent–child closeness. Friesen and Butera (2015) found in their study on parental literacy beliefs of parents participating in a Head Start program that a considerable number of parents mentioned spending time with their children and being encouraging as a way to promote children's literacy development. This relates to our finding that stimulating the parent–child relationship is perceived by parents as an important goal of facilitative teaching activities.

Associations between Preferences and Home Language

In the current study, parents who did not speak Dutch at home with their children showed stronger preferences for instructional activities compared to monolingual Dutch parents and parents who spoke both Dutch and another language with their children. They also showed weaker preferences for facilitative activities compared to monolingual Dutch parents. The differences found in didactic preferences between the language groups may be an indication of cultural and contextual differences in didactic beliefs. However, we did not find a relationship with parental birth country and didactic preferences. Of the twenty-four parents who were born outside the Netherlands, sixteen spoke Dutch as an additional language with their children at home. Possibly, the degree of acculturation to the Dutch educational system may explain the relationship between home language and didactic preferences (Berry et al., 1989; Durand, 2011). Several studies have suggested that parents' own schooling experiences influence parental literacy beliefs (Gillanders & Jiménez, 2004; Li, 2006; Reese et al., 2012; Reese & Gallimore, 2000). In addition, contact with school teachers and exposure to children's school

system have been related to changes in literacy beliefs of parents with a migrant background (Li, 2006; Reese et al., 2012; Reese & Gallimore, 2000). The Dutch educational system can be characterized by a constructivist approach to learning, pupil centered, and an emphasis on pupil cooperation and interaction (Oostdam et al., 2007; Pieters & Verschaffel, 2003). Possibly, parents who spoke no Dutch with their children at home may have been less acculturated to the Dutch school system than parents who spoke Dutch as an additional language with their children, explaining their preference for instruction instead of facilitation.

As Manz et al. (2010) suggested, limited effects of FLPs for linguistic minority families may be explained by a misalignment between program principles and the literacy beliefs of these families. Our results indicate that the alignment between program principles of the meaning-oriented, facilitative program Early Education at Home and the non-Dutch speaking parents is less optimal, compared to alignment with Dutch-speaking parents. The non-Dutch speaking parents thus participate in a program that advocates an approach to literacy learning that may not fully match parents' own beliefs on how children should be guided in their literacy development. Many questions remain unanswered on this topic. One question is whether parents perceive such a misalignment between their own beliefs and the program they participate in as problematic. If this is the case, the next question is how programs such as EEH should respond to such misalignments. Possibly, explicitly introducing the program philosophy and the intended benefits of this approach for children's literacy development to parents can be a way to address differences in the beliefs of the participants. Another possible route to make the program more inclusive would be to include relevant code-oriented and instructional activities to the program in addition to the meaning-oriented and facilitative activities, to guarantee the program is perceived as meaningful by all parents.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the findings are situated in a specific context, a family literacy program conducted in schools located in urban areas of the Netherlands. Program participation in EEH can be regarded as a limitation of the study. This program mostly takes a facilitative, meaning-oriented approach. The program may thus have influenced parental literacy beliefs. However, in the larger study on program effects, we measured parents' preferences quantitively before the start of the intervention. We found that parents also scored highest on preferences for meaning-oriented facilitative activities before they took part in EEH. This suggests that the possible effect of participating in EEH on beliefs is minimal. Second, we cannot exclude a selection effect, as many parents rejected participation in the research. Although parents in our sample represented all kinds of backgrounds and the sample was comparable with the main sample of the larger study concerning the demographic background of the participants, it is possible that the parents that we could not reach hold different literacy beliefs than the parents included in the sample. Third, our instrument only included eight home literacy practices for parents to reflect on. Possibly, the inclusion of additional activities, such as craftwork, puzzles, and outdoor games, would have revealed additional aspects of parental literacy beliefs.

Directions for Future Research

Based on the outcomes of this study, some directions for future research can be formulated. First, this is a first small-scale study exploring the use of newly developed instrument. Although results seem promising, future studies should further validate this instrument. Second, the role of cultural and linguistic background and acculturation in shaping parental literacy beliefs should be further examined, as these may be factors of importance in determining parental literacy beliefs. For instance, in this study home language was related to differences in parental didactic preferences. Furthermore, during the ranking task, in some instances multilingual parents reflected on the role of multilingualism

in supporting their children's literacy development. When referring to parental insecurity, for example, some parents mentioned that they could not perform certain instructional activities in Dutch, such as correcting your child, and other parents mentioned that they did not know how to perform certain activities with their children in their mother tongue, such as rhyming. Future exploratory research could explicitly examine the role of cultural and linguistic background in parental beliefs about what is important in supporting children's literacy development. Third, research indicates that parental beliefs are not static, but subject to change. External factors, such as the family and school community may influence parental literacy beliefs (Reese et al., 2012; Reese & Gallimore, 2000). Another crucial factor may be the child (Sawyer et al., 2018). Nearly all parents in this study indicated that the importance of teaching certain skills depended on the children's characteristics, such as their level of development and literacy interest. Research into parental literacy beliefs, preferably in longitudinal designs, should consider the dynamic nature of literacy beliefs and investigate which factors may generate changes in parental literacy beliefs.

Implications for Practice

This study highlights the importance for professionals working with FLPs and families to be aware of the program principles underlying FLPs and the alignment with the literacy beliefs of parents participating in programs. The current study provided an indication of a possible mismatch between program principles and non-Dutch speaking parents, as the FLP applied a facilitative approach to teaching and this group of parents held more instructional preferences. A first step to increasing involvement in FLPs by all groups of parents is to acquire knowledge on the alignment between the program and its users. Our instrument could be used by professionals as a tool for conversations with parents on their beliefs concerning what is important in supporting their children's literacy development at home.

Conclusion

The current study showed that a new, brief instrument that is relatively easy to use in interviews with a diverse group of parents, was able to expose the variety and nuance in the literacy beliefs of diverse parents participating in a Dutch family literacy program. The instrument revealed that in this particular sample parents view meaning-oriented and facilitative home literacy activities as most important for stimulating children's literacy development. Parental explanations for the importance of different activity types reflected two dimensions of literacy beliefs, namely parental views on the nature of children's literacy development and on didactic approaches. However, also aspects of parental beliefs beyond these two dimensions, such as the importance of a good parent–child relationship, seemed to inform parental literacy beliefs. Additionally, the study showed that parents who did not speak the majority language to their child at home differed in didactic preferences from parents who did. This shows the need for further research into what shapes parental literacy beliefs.

Notes

1. When quoting from the parent interviews, we translated from Dutch to English. Additionally, we made sure the language in the quotes was grammatically correct and readable, which means that in some cases we needed to adapt the literal formulations of the parents. Grammatical errors were corrected and repeated words were omitted if this did not influence interpretation. No other changes were made.
2. "De, het, dit, dat" are Dutch articles and demonstrative pronouns. Which word should be used depends on the word gender of the word it precedes.

Disclosure Statement

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Appendix

Ranking Task to Measure Parental Literacy Beliefs

Parents are presented eight cards, each displaying a picture of a home literacy practice with the words labeling the activity printed below the picture. The cards are included in this Appendix.

The interviewer first describes the eight activities and explains them to the parents if necessary.

Next, the interviewer asks the parent: "Could you rank these activities in order of importance for children's literacy development? It does not matter what you actually do at home with your child, but what you think is most important for stimulating children's literacy development. There are no right or wrong answers, it is your opinion".

After the parents ranked the eight cards, the interviewer asks a set of qualitative interview question, such as "why do you think this activity is most important for children's literacy development?", "why did you place this activity in the second position?" etc.

Talking with your child
[picture of parent and child talking]

Shared reading
[picture of parent and child reading]

Teaching your child (the meaning of) new words
[picture of parent teaching child in conversation]

Correcting your child when s/he uses a wrong word
[picture of parent correcting child in conversation]

Playing letter games
[picture of parent and child playing letter games with blocks]

Citing nursery rhymes
[picture of parent and child citing nursery rhymes with hand clapping]

Practicing letter writing
[picture of parent and child writing together]

Teaching your child the alphabet
[picture of parent teaching child the alphet]

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