

From fixed to flexible multilingual education – the case of Luxembourg

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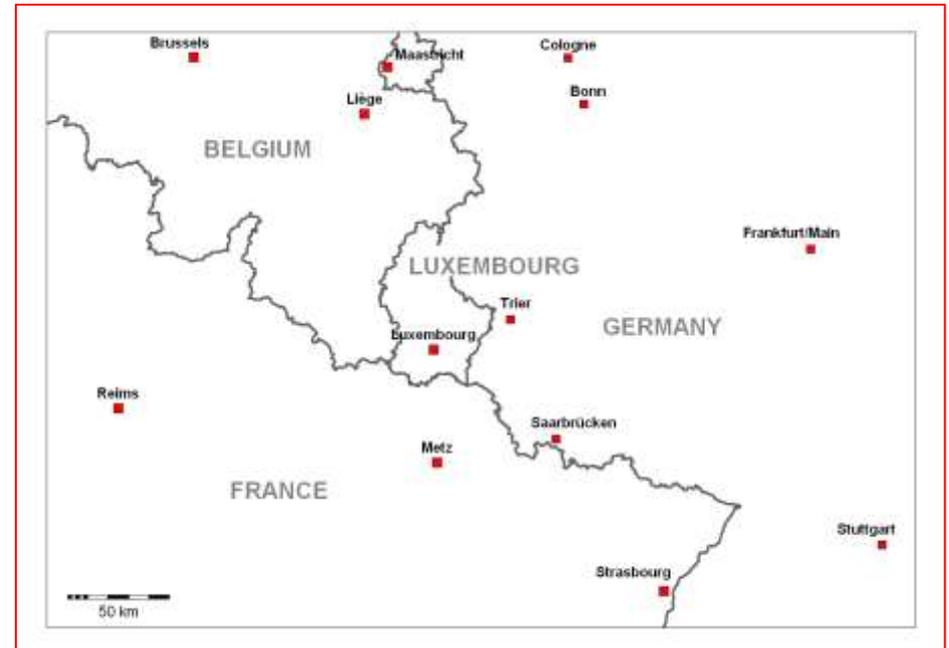
Overview of presentation

- Luxembourg's (fixed) language-in-education policy
- The role of French in Luxembourgish society and education
- Towards more flexible multilingual education: the new projects of the Ministry of Education

Luxembourg

(Statec 2015)

- Size: 2,586 km²
- Population: 563,000
- Resident foreigners: +/- 46%
(principally passport holders of other EU member-states)
- Workforce: +/-43% *frontaliers*
'border crossing commuters'
- One of the six founding EU member-states
- Luxembourg city: one of the three EU capital cities
- Officially recognized languages:
Luxembourgish, German and French



The Luxembourgish school system from pre-school to secondaire classique

	<u>Main languages taught</u>	<u>Medium of instruction</u>
Pre-school (3 years)	Luxembourgish	Luxembourgish
Primary education (6 years)		
(age 6/7)	German as language of literacy, (Luxembourgish: only 1 hour per week)	Luxembourgish, German
(age 7/8)	German, (Luxbg), French added as a subject	Luxembourgish, German
(age 8/12)	German, French, (Luxbg)	German
Secondaire classique (7 years)		
(age 12/13)	German, French, (Luxbg)	German, French
(age 13/14)	German, French, English (or Latin)	German, French
(age 14/15)	German, French, English	German, French
(age 15/18)	German, French, English	French
(age 18/19)	German, French, English (choice of two of these languages in some streams)	French

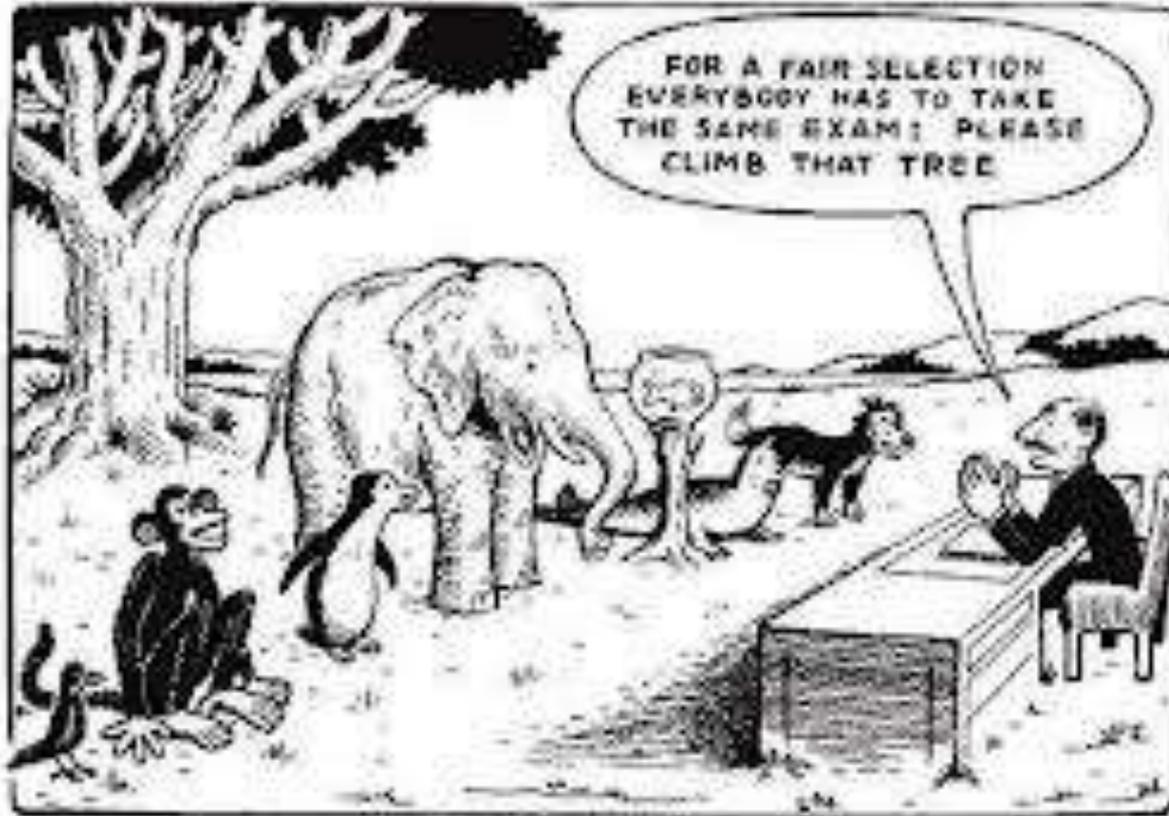
Luxembourgish: shift from 'dialect' to 'language'

- whereas in the nineteenth century, Luxembourgers tended to refer to their varieties as 'our German' or 'Luxembourgish German', they now tend to perceive Luxembourgish more and more as a wholly separate language from German
- Language Law of 1984: Luxembourgish as the 'national language' (+ French and German as administrative, legislative or judiciary languages)
- with Luxembourgish perceived as the national language/ 'mother tongue', German and French gradually came to be looked upon more and more as 'foreign' languages

Education system and changing school population

- **Trilingual:** Luxembourgish/ German/ French
- **Compartmentalization of languages:** Luxembourgish in pre-school; German as the language of basic literacy + medium of instruction; French from 2nd year of primary school onwards (as a subject)
- **Two separate tracks at secondary level:** lycées classiques and lycées techniques
- **Students in the Luxembourgish school-system:**
 - 63.6% of Luxembourgish citizenship and 36.4% of non-Luxembourgish citizenship. The latter group comprises a majority of Portuguese students (52.7%), followed by Ex-Yugoslavian (11.4%), Italian (7.7%), French (7.6%), Belgian (4.5%), German (3.2%) and Cape Verdean students (1.8%). These figures add up to about 74% potentially romanophone speakers.
 - Only 38% of four year olds have Luxembourgish as their 1st home language (J.-C. Juncker, 2011)

Educational equity?



Ministry of National Education (2013)

- Over 36% of students in Luxembourgish schools are non-Luxembourgish
- Students in *lycées techniques*: 43% are non-Luxembourgish
- Students in *lycées classiques*: only 19% are non-Luxembourgish
- Non-Luxembourgish students are underrepresented in the *lycées classiques* and overrepresented in the *lycées techniques*

2 contradictions for Romance languages speaking students

- (1) learning Luxembourgish and German at school vs French + Portuguese (+ Luxembourgish) in their out-of-school lives
 - fracture between educational policy and actual language practices, in that Luxembourgish is constructed as the sole language of integration in schools, while many migrant children live in areas where French is a widely used lingua franca

2 contradictions for Romance languages speaking students

- (2) intensive instruction in German, sometimes at the cost of English
 - because of low grades in German, they often end up in the lower streams of the technical lycees, where English is only taught at a fairly rudimentary level

Implications for access to the labour market

- hence: deprived of an important job qualification on both the Luxembourgish and the European employment market
- increasing disjuncture between the employment market (where French and English are the most important languages) and language-in-education policy (where German is the language of basic literacy + medium of instruction throughout primary education)
- exception = civil servant positions, where the traditional trilingual competence in Luxembourgish, German and French is still usually required

Role of English

- taught from the second year of secondary school onwards, except for students who study Latin and as a result only start learning English in the third year of lycée classique
- over the years, English has gradually strengthened its position within the educational system, though by competing with and to some extent displacing Latin rather than German or French, the languages which are firmly entrenched from primary school upwards

Role of English (ctd)

- English = *parent pauvre* (poor relative) of French and German in the educational system (Ministry of Education 2007)
- Council of Europe (2005):
 - should start to learn English from the first year of secondary school
 - some CLIL-type (Content and Language Integrated) learning should be introduced in English at the higher levels of secondary education

Role of Luxembourgish

- Es ist das *hidden curriculum*, das eine diffuse Dreisprachigkeit zur Norm und zur Voraussetzung aber nicht zum Gegenstand des Unterrichts macht, an dem die Immigrantenkinder scheitern. (Fehlen 2007: 36)
- It is the *hidden curriculum* which leads to migrant children's educational failure, in that it constitutes a diffused trilingualism as the norm and the presupposition but not the object of learning.

Role of Luxembourgish (ctd)

- Luxembourgish as 'language of integration'
- BUT: supposed to be picked up 'naturally', not formally taught

Main points about Luxembourgish language in education policy

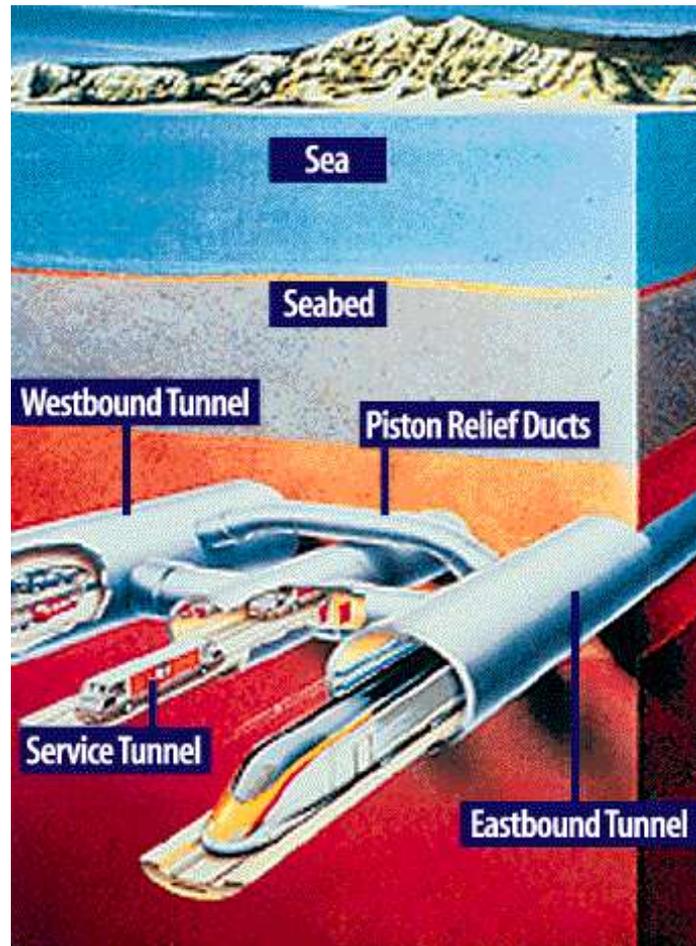
- tension between Luxembourgish as national symbol vs. Luxembourgish as a means of social cohesion and integration
- the Luxembourgish language is a small language that is frequently perceived as being endangered (even though it is still widely used in family transmission); one way of defending it has been to construct it as the language of integration, especially in pre-school education

Main points about Luxembourgish language in education policy (ctd)

- Romance languages speaking students are often given extra instruction in German and, as an indirect consequence, may be denied access to (a high proficiency in) English, through being oriented towards lower quality streams where little or no English is taught
- a more flexible system providing these students with greater access to French and English would potentially offer them better educational and professional opportunities







The role of French in Luxembourgish society: from language of prestige to language of the others

'La réalité linguistique montre une omniprésence incontournable de la langue française au Luxembourg qui, à mon avis, implique chez certains Luxembourgeois une hostilité envers le français. Beaucoup de Luxembourgeois partagent l'avis que la langue française est trop utilisée dans leur pays ... Il est quasiment inimaginable de commander une livre de pain en luxembourgeois, sans avoir une réaction stupéfaite de la part du vendeur. En général, les Luxembourgeois se plaignent du fait qu'au quotidien ils sont pratiquement toujours obligés d'avoir recours à une langue 'étrangère', officielle mais pas nationale.' (from Timm 2014: 199)

'The linguistic reality shows how omnipresent French is in Luxembourg, which I think makes some Luxembourgers feel hostile towards French. Many Luxembourgers believe that French is used too much in their country ... it is virtually impossible to order a loaf of bread in Luxembourgish without getting a shocked reaction from the sales staff. The Luxembourgers generally complain that in everyday life they are virtually always forced to use a 'foreign' language, official but not national.'

Lëtzebuerg Privat (August 2014)

Pleitegerüchte: Lopez verkauft sein Haus

Schwangerschaft: Jetzt reden die Ärzte

Lëtzebuerg Privat
Unabhängige Wochenzeitung für Luxemburg
Doppelnummer
3,50 € Nr. 391 - Woche 32
8. Jahrgang 08.08.2014 - 21.08.2014

En français s'il vous plait

NEE!

Müllers Brutalo-Foul

Luxemburger rebellieren

The role of French (ctd.)

- French has been constructed as the 'enemy' of Luxembourgish, as if a language could only develop *at the expense of* another one
- in the name of mother tongue education, French has been pushed out of pre-school and the focus has been put instead on the assumed 'mother tongues', in particular Luxembourgish and, nominally at least, Portuguese

French eradicated from pre-school

Dans les écoles à pourcentage élevé d'enfants étrangers, la langue de communication entre élèves en dehors des heures de classe est souvent le français. En classe, il arrive que l'enseignant soit obligé d'avoir recours au français pour se faire comprendre. (MENFP 1998: 8)

In the schools with a high percentage of foreign children, the language of communication between the children outside the classroom is often French. In the classroom, it can happen that the teacher is forced to use French so that the children can understand him/her.

Les grandes concentrations d'enfants étrangers dans certaines écoles sont un des principaux facteurs empêchant l'intégration. Le phénomène de 'l'immersion linguistique' ne fonctionne pas, ou alors il fonctionne en sens inverse: les enfants luxembourgeois communiquent en français avec leurs camarades non-luxembourgeois. (MENFP 1998: 12)

The large numbers of foreign children in some schools are one of the main factors impeding integration. The phenomenon of 'linguistic immersion' does not work, or works in the opposite direction: Luxembourgish children communicate in French with their non-Luxembourgish friends.

un intervenant portugais collabore avec l'enseignante luxembourgeoise dans la classe pendant trois heures par semaine.

Cette mesure a des effets très positifs à plusieurs points de vue: ...

-l'enseignante luxembourgeoise n'est plus obligée de recourir au français pour se faire comprendre par les enfants, ce qui a pour effet que les enfants étrangers peuvent se concentrer sur l'apprentissage du luxembourgeois, unique langue parlée par la titulaire de classe, tout en gardant les repères avec leur langue d'origine. (MENFP 1998: 9)

a Portuguese assistant works together with the Luxembourgish teacher in the classroom for three hours per week.

This measure has a number of very positive effects: ...

- the Luxembourgish teacher is no longer forced to use French so that the children can understand her; as a consequence, the foreign children can concentrate on the learning of Luxembourgish, the only language spoken by the teacher, while at the same time keeping in touch with their heritage language.

Towards a revalorization of French:
the new measures of the Ministry of Education
- to fight against the crisis of French:

bilingual crèches (luxembourgeois – français)

Multilingual winners

(C. Feyereisen; Luxemburger Wort 13-06-2014)

Auch für die Jüngsten der Gesellschaft muss das gemeinsame Aufwachsen mit von Hause aus französischsprachigen Kindern nicht zwangsläufig ein Nachteil sein. Laut (luxemburgischen) Eltern, deren Kinder in der Tagesstätte täglich mit frankfonen Gleichaltrigen in Kontakt sind, entwickeln diese Kinder überhaupt erst keine Sprachbarrieren und tun sich beim Erlernen des Französischen in der Schule weitaus leichter.

Even for the youngest in our society, growing up with francophone children does not necessarily have to be a disadvantage. According to Luxembourgish parents, whose children are in contact with francophone children in a creche every day, these children do not develop any linguistic barriers and find learning French at primary school much easier.

Coming full circle

- French as oral language to be (re)introduced in pre-school + 1st year primary

Beyond French: the new Differdange school project

- choice between German OR French OR English language literacy
- plus Luxembourgish (mostly as oral language) in all the sections
- 2nd foreign language at primary level
- 3rd foreign language at secondary level (choice of languages here includes Portuguese)

Differdange school project (ctd.)

- flexible language-in-education policy
- in line with heterogeneity of Luxembourg's society nowadays
- a model for a more equitable future(?)