4. Languages and Identities

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4.1 Introduction: Germanic/Romance Diglossia

In Luxembourg, the phenomenon of multilingualism is an aspect of the historically evolved social reality. Since the Middle Ages, Luxembourg's location within the overlapping Germanic and Romance zones of contact and mediation has been reflected in a diglossic situation, characterized by the coexistence of German, or its regional variants, and French. The circumstances of Luxembourg's multilingualism have changed fundamentally several times over the centuries, as a result of various territorial affiliations and shifts. A series of French, Dutch and German takeover attempts were also mirrored in various efforts to enforce linguistic hegemony. These were opposed by the determination of Luxemburg's population not to be absorbed by any one side, thereby preserving the basis of their national sovereignty and identity.

As of the 19th century at the latest, Luxembourgish emerged with increasing vigour as an independent and in the minds of the inhabitants of Luxembourg, their own language with a distinct function in creating identity whereby the close linguistic-genealogical relationship with German (*'lëtzebuerger Däitsch'*) was initally stressed. Luxembourgish is based on the West-Moselle-Franconian dialect, which has, however, evolved into a language in its own right, covering nearly all linguistic domains. It has its own standardised orthography and since the Language Act of 1984, it also serves as an official national language of Luxembourg.

Luxembourgish is flanked by the two other official languages included in the Language Act of 1984, namely French and German, so that there is, in effect, a triglossic situation. French is cast in a privileged role being the only recognised language of law (see Gilles/Moulin 2003 on the Language Act). One central objective of this, primarily political, revaluation was to increase the sociolinguistic status of Luxembourgish in relation to French and German (Naglo 2007). Thus far however, this promotion to the status of national language has resulted in very few

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practical consequences, whether in terms of further standardisation or respecting an increased usage within the educational system, in which it serves merely as an auxiliary language during lessons (Gilles 1999: 9; Kraemer 1993). In fact the language was established politically and legally, as a symbol and expression of national Luxembourgish identity.

Even though the virtues of such legally sanctioned multilingualism are immediately apparent, particularly in light of EU developments and the stated requirement for multilingualism, it does, on the other hand, present the inhabitants of Luxembourg with quite specific challenges, for instance in the field of education.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that, as a country of immigration, Luxembourg is also home to large population groups with further (mother) tongues such as Italian, and, currently to a yet greater extent, Portuguese and in the wake of the redevelopment of the country as an administrative and banking centre, English. In addition, there are the various languages of the former Yugoslavia.

Questions of language, therefore, are of fundamental importance to the social structure of the Grand Duchy, in particular because they must be regarded as important aspects of the identity for the inhabitants of Luxembourg. As such, questions into the country's recent linguistic situation not only suggested themselves as subject matter for the present study, they were in fact a mandatory requirement.

It should not be overlooked that the importance of languages is by no means limited to communication content transfer. Such a mono-functional view fails to recognise the relevance of language as a basic social symbol to which multi-layered social values, over and above its communicative power, are attributed (see Mattheier 1991). At the same time, questions of prestige and stigma demand as much consideration as those relating to self-assertion or even heteronomy. Therefore questions of language are invariably also socio-political questions and, in this respect, they can be just as explosive as controversial. They can be laden with any number of different emotions and value assignments whereby often enough the language is named whereas its speakers are meant.

In Luxembourg too the varying linguistic discourses often reflect deeply rooted emotional states and states of mind, which can manifest themselves in various levels of concern, apprehension or feelings of being under threat, or, expressed offensively, in demarcation, push-back and validity claims. Aspects of identity, whether attributed or appropriated, can almost always be identified as a frame of reference factor.

This is borne out by the case study involving an analysis of letters to editors, undertaken within the framework of the present investigation. As a showcase, these demonstrate that the coexistence of the languages of Luxembourg does not always proceed without conflict. Not least because Luxembourg is an extremely dynamic country, both economically and demographically, the ratio of its national languages – which also depends upon the number and nationality of new citizens and cross-border commuters – is always dependent to some extent on partially

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candid, partly covert negotiation processes that can certainly evince moments of linguistic competition.

To anticipate a central result, one emergent constant is the Luxembourgers' pronounced loyalty to Luxembourgish, which rather than being just the prescribed national language, has, particularly in recent decades, developed into a major factor in terms of identification and integration. Because of its relatively limited communicative reach – a function of the low number of speakers – Luxembourgish is considered by many speakers as potentially endangered and therefore all the more worthy of support. Not infrequently, as a result, defensive reflexes can come to the fore in respect of the two flanking national languages, French and German, whereby the former is often felt to be too dominant in everyday linguistic practice while the latter, at least in the minds of parts of the older generation, is tainted by the stigma of being the language of occupation.

However, one would present a distorted picture were one to place too much emphasis on the aspect of conflict. For on the other hand, in spite of all the difficulties – this is also apparent from the results of the investigation – the substantial added value of multilingualism should not be overlooked. Multilingualism is not only a prerequisite for the country's prospering economy, towards which foreign workers from different countries of origin have made a substantial contribution, but rather multilingualism, in particular French and German language competence, enables Luxembourgers to access an unobstructed zone of communication of a dimension unavailable to other European countries. As the analysis of the data shows, this is also something of which the Luxembourgers are very conscious. The case study on public signage (Section 4.4) presents a vivid impression of the vibrant and dynamic relationships between Luxembourg's languages. This shows graphically how multilingualism manifests itself in written form.

It should be pointed out again that the question of the connection between language and identity is of particular relevance. It is a commonplace that identities are shaped, validated and modified in the form of linguistic constructs. However, the question as to the nature and manner in which these processes of identity formation develop, turns out to be an extremely complicated research task. In terms of 'national identity' – which should be seen not as a monolithic concept, but rather as a complex cluster of identity negotiation processes[1] which are, in addition, weighted and evaluated differently within society – the existence and acceptance of a national language is crucial (see Joseph 2004). It is still not yet possible to determine conclusively to what extent Luxembourgish had already been established as a broad-based language in the 19th century. However, since the first half of the 20th century at the latest, it can be assumed that Luxembourgish had attained national-symbolic importance for the population as a whole (Gilles/Moulin 2003; Moulin 2006). This development probably reached its zenith with the passing of the Language Act in 1984.

1 | See also Section 6.2.

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The multi-faceted complex of national identity is, however, by no means exclusively rooted in the Luxembourgish language, multilingualism per se also plays a role, at least for a part of today's population. By contrast with territorial multilingualism, as it exists in Belgium or Switzerland, the idea that multilingualism is self-evidently relevant to everyday life at a profound level is gaining ground in Luxembourg, much more so than was still the case right up into the 1970s. Among younger age groups in particular, this social multilingualism, in which a non-competitive relationship of all the languages concerned is fostered, has become a key element of identity formation.

Of course, in addition, the differentiation between *appropriated* and *attributed* identities is relevant for all aspects of language. For instance, an exemplary competence in the three national languages (or four, if one also includes English, which is playing an increasingly important part) is one of the *attributed* identities, expressed, for instance, in official statements about the structure of society or language lessons in schools. *Appropriated* identity, however, can deviate from this ideal. The resulting tensions between appropriated and attributed identity will become evident in the following analysis of public signage, because linguistic practice on official signs differs substantially from that used on private, non-institutional signs.

This chapter is structured as follows: In Section 4.2, the key results of a representative, quantitative survey are introduced, in which, *inter alia*, the pre-eminent position of Luxembourgish is confirmed. Section 4.3 is devoted to public discourse concerning the linguistic situation, on the basis of a sample analysis of letters to editors, whereby it emerges that the public discourse oscillates between a well-balanced multilingual *status quo* and a forced, occasionally militant emphasising of the relevance of and support for Luxembourgish (at the expense of other languages). And finally, in the third part (Section 4.4), there follows an analysis of multilingualism as manifested on public signage (so-called 'linguistic landscape').

4.2 Key Survey Results Concerning the Linguistic Situation

In the following, we will evaluate the results of the representative, quantitative survey, in as far as these questions relate to the linguistic situation in Luxembourg. The aim is to document the *status quo* in respect to some central issues[2]. The presented results can also be understood as an indication of *appropriated* identities where they imply linguistic value judgments. Indirectly, reference is made to

2 | See in this context the representative research conducted by Fernand Fehlen: *Une enquête sur un marché linguistique multilingue en profonde mutation. Luxemburgs Sprachenmarkt im Wandel.* Luxemburg 2009.

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attributed identities, wherever it is a matter of gathering required language skills and governmental control measures.

First of all, one should bear in mind that all the collected linguistic data are of a subjective nature and therefore come with all the imponderabilities that accompany this type of data.

The collected data comprised primarily data on self-assessment as well as attitudes which we assumed, on the basis of experience and research, would be relevant to the description of the research subject. On the one hand, these included questions that reveal a linguistic ranking order according to different criteria (*competence, usefulness, sympathy* etc.), and on the other also those that, on the basis of approval ratings for certain items ("I have several mother tongues" etc.) allowed us to draw conclusions concerning the linguistic attitudes of Luxembourg's resident population. In addition, questions were asked about the orientation towards neighbouring countries. Arguably, here too one can make inferences about the subjects' linguistic preferences.

The number of languages used in Luxembourg goes far beyond the three "official" ones, named as such in Luxembourg's Language Act of 1984: Luxembourgish, French and German. The study takes this into account by also asking questions about Portuguese, English, Italian and, as a collective category, "other languages". The evaluation and presentation of data will proceed, in principal, along the same lines, while limiting itself to the key findings and disregarding what were considered to be marginal parameters.

Multilingualism as an Added Value

In general, Luxembourgers have an extremely positive attitude towards multilingualism. A very clear majority of the interviewees (95 %) sees an advantage in being able to communicate smoothly with a large number of people thanks to their language skills. Almost all interviewees (95 %) also regard multilingualism as a cultural enrichment. There are no significant differences in regard to the national, age or milieu-related sub-groups.

Required Language Skills

With respect to the three official languages of Luxembourg, the degree of approval was assessed through the statements whether every inhabitant of Luxembourg should be fluent in three, at least two or at least one language (and passive competences in another or others). A relative majority of 43 % was in favour of a medium requirement level (2 languages), with an equal proportion for Luxembourgers and foreigners. The demand that one should be fluent in all three languages (29 %) and/or in only one (27 %), was expressed by an approximately equal proportion of the interviewees.

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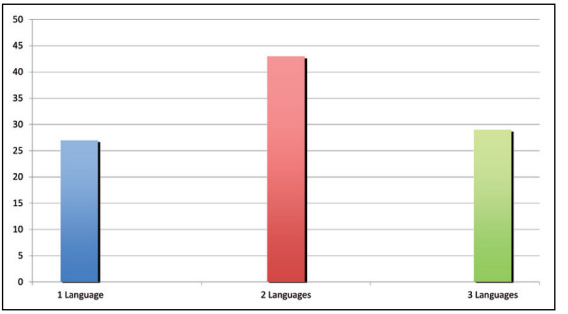

Figure 1: How many of the three national languages should everyone be fluent in?

Postulated Luxembourgish Language Skills

The study reflects a very distinctive loyalty of the interviewees towards the Luxembourgish language. From this we may deduce that the national language is also considered to have an essential significance for social cohesion.

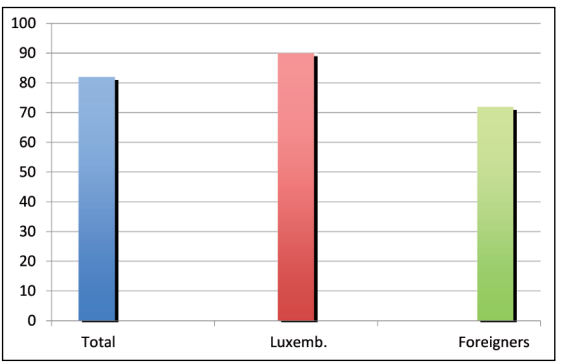

Figure 2: "Everyone should be fluent in Luxembourgish".

This is reflected by the majority opinion (82 %), which supports the demand that all inhabitants of the Grand Duchy should be fluent in Luxembourgish. Differentiated by nationality, approval was, not surprisingly, the highest among Luxembourgers (90 %). But also the overwhelming majority of the foreigners (72 %) agree, in a range between 86 % (Germans) to 63 % (French). Differentiated by milieus and in relation to the entire random sample, the petty bourgeois milieu shows the highest approval rate (86 %), and the privileged liberal milieu the lowest (71 %).

Cross-border commuters are also expected to have at least a passive competence in Luxembourgish. 86 % of the interviewees subscribe to this view, and when graded by age it is the over 60-year-olds that show the highest consent rating (93 %). Distinguished by nationality, the Luxembourgers again score highest (94 %)

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followed by the Germans (93 %), while only 73 % of the Portuguese and French respectively approve of the demand that cross-border commuters should least be able to understand Luxembourgish, thereby representing the lowest approval rate.. This is most certainly a reflection of the different systemic distances between Luxembourgish and German, on the one hand, and between Luxembourgish and the Romance languages on the other.

In terms of national affiliation, we can observe certain consistencies in the fact that the approval rate is highest in the petty bourgeois milieu and lowest in the alternative milieu. While there is still a majority of foreign interviewees from the alternative milieu (57 %) demanding passive competence in Luxembourgish for cross-border commuters, a considerable 43 % disagree with this demand.

Language Skills

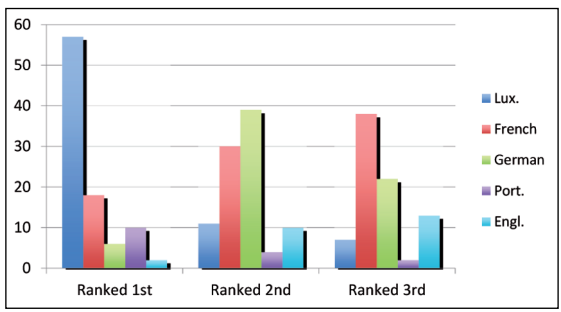

Figure 3: Ranking order of the languages spoken most fluently/overall random sample.

When the interviewees were asked which language they were most fluent in, a majority of 57 % stated Luxembourgish, well ahead of French (18 %), Portuguese (10 %), German (6 %) and English (2 %). When asked which language came second in terms of fluency, a relative majority of 39 % said German (before French with 30 %). As third-ranked language, French collects a relative majority of 38 % (before German, at 22 %).

If we differentiate by national affiliation, the results shown on the chart for Luxembourgers clearly reinforce those in figure 3. 89 % of the interviewees state that they are most fluent in Luxembourgish, while 60 % rank German as their second-best and 54 % French as their third-best language.

In contrast, the linguistic competence of the foreign population is drastically different. Here, Luxembourgish loses its dominant role in favour of French. A relative majority (34 %) names French as the language of greatest fluency, followed by 24 % indicating Portuguese, while Luxembourgish scores a mere 14 %. The second-ranked language in terms of fluency is again French, with a relative majority (32 %), before Luxembourgish (20 %) and German (10 %). English (18 %) occupies

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the place of the third-ranked language, followed closely by French (17 %), German (16 %) and Luxembourgish (15 %).

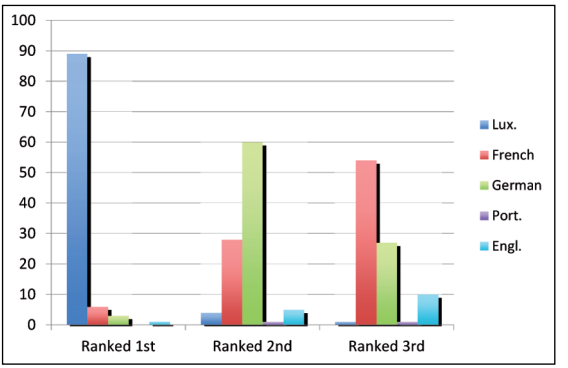

Figure 4: Ranking order of the languages spoken most fluently/Luxembourgers.

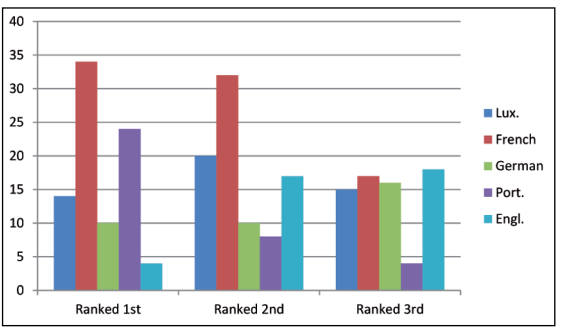

Figure 5: Ranking order of the languages spoken most fluently/foreigners.

All in all, we can therefore observe linguistic orientations that differ significantly between Luxembourgers on the one hand, who show a clear preference for Luxembourgish and for the majority of whom German is their second language in terms of fluency, and foreign residents, on the other. Here, there is a clear preference for French with Portuguese also ranked relatively high. These results coincide with the demographic ratios in the Grand Duchy.

Luxembourgish as a Mother Tongue

The statement "I have several mother tongues" is affirmed by a total of 26 % of the respondents, while 73 % disagree. The affirmation rate of the Luxembourgers is 21 % compared to that of the foreigners with some 33 %, which however reveal a clear spread between 19 % for the Portuguese and 44 % for the Belgians respectively

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even 55 % for the Italians. The response behaviour of the Luxembourgers indicates that Luxembourgish is accorded a clear (emotionally motivated) privileged position compared with the two other official languages French and German.

Usefulness of the languages in everyday life

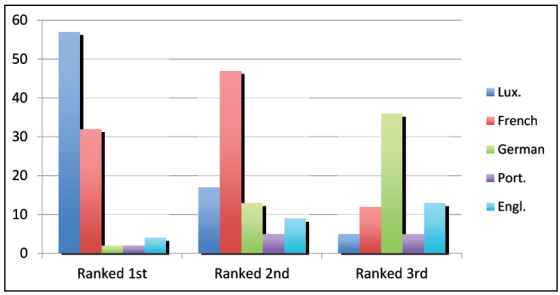

Figure 6: Ranking order of the usefulness of languages in everyday life.

Asked about the most useful language in everyday life, Luxembourgish dominates with 57 %. But a not inconsiderable 32 % of the interviewees named French. All the other languages lag far behind. French dominates as the second most useful language (47 %), while a relative majority of 36 % named German as the third most useful language.

Broken down by nationality and with respect to the most useful language (rank 1), there is a clear contrast. While the Luxembourgers named Luxembourgish, with 76 %, as the most useful language, the (relative) majority of the foreigners (49 %) indicates French as being the most useful language. Differentiated by milieus, and in relation to the overall random sample, only the underprivileged milieu (44 %) and the alternative milieu (40 %) showed proportions of less than half of the interviewees who named Luxembourgish as the most useful language in everyday life.

Most Likeable Language

As the 'most likeable language', Luxembourgish scores highest by a large margin with 56 %, independently of the interviewees' age. A breakdown by nationality, however, reveals clear discrepancies in the distribution of sympathies. Thus the Luxembourgers, with 77 %, rate Luxembourgish as the most likeable language, while only 28 % of the foreigners vote for this language. But here too, a further differentiation brings to light clear national differences. Probably the most noteworthy fact is that a surprising 49 % of the Germans also named Luxembourgish as the most likeable language. In total, however, a relative majority of the foreign interviewees (37 %) consider French to be the most likeable language.

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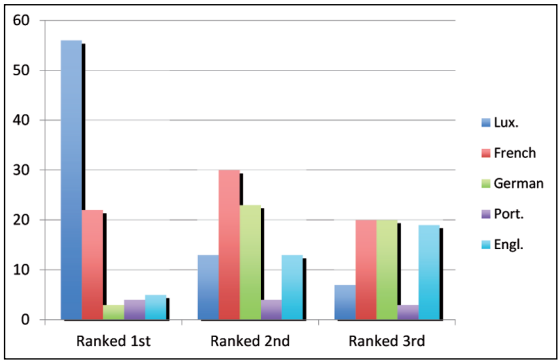

Figure 7: Ranking order of the most likeable languages.

Differentiated by milieu, Luxembourgish achieves the highest sympathy ratings, in relation to the entire random sample, in the status-oriented milieu (68 %), and the lowest ones in the underprivileged milieu (37 %).

The second rank on the 'sympathy scale' is occupied by French with 30 %, followed by German with 23 %. For Luxembourgers, French (34 %) ranks roughly equal with German (32 %) as the second-most likeable language.

In respect of the overall picture, and broken down by milieus, French – with varying degrees of difference – ranks in all milieus before German and only the status-oriented milieu shows a reversal of the ranking order.

Remarkable here, however, is that there seems to be a clear age correlation. Throughout the entire random sample, the sympathy ratings for French decline drastically with decreasing age. The corresponding rate sinks, starting with 46 % for the over 60-year-olds, down to 31 % for the 45 to 59-year-olds, down to 22 % for the 30 to 44-year-olds, down to 23 % for the 21-29-year-olds and all the way down to only 15 % for the 16 to 20-year-olds. With German, on the other hand, the corresponding figures show a clear overall increase with decreasing age, namely from 19 % for the oldest up to 33 % for the youngest age group.

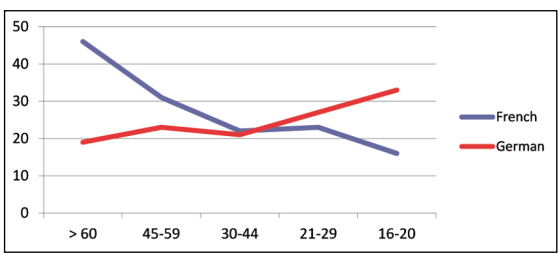

Figure 8: Sympathy for the German and French languages by age groups.

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This phenomenon is not simple to explain. One could ask to what extent this is a transitional, i.e. temporary phenomenon, entailing a decline of sympathy ratings for German and a corresponding increase for French with increasing age. A more probable explanation though is that there is a basic change of attitudes towards these two languages in progress. We can also assume that the social stigma of German as a reaction to the occupation of Luxembourg by Nazi Germany during the Second World War is increasingly losing its significance for the younger generations.

Regarding the statements concerning the third most likeable language, the proportions are nearly identical for German (20 %), French (20 %) and English (19 %).

Future Language Importance

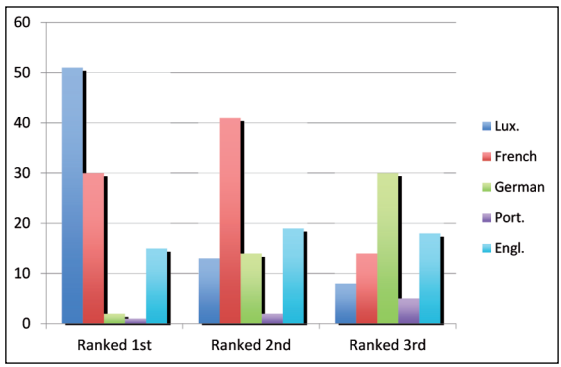

Figure 9: Most important language in the future.

A majority of 51 % of the interviewees state that for them Luxembourgish is the most important language in the future. About one third (30 %) voted for French and 15 % for English. Luxembourgish scored particularly high in the tradition-oriented milieu (61 %), the alternative milieu and the privileged conservative milieu (both 58 %), while the lowest ratings were recorded in the status-oriented milieu (37 %).

The second most important language in the future is – with a clear relative majority of 41 % – French, followed by English (19 %). As the third most important language in the future, German is named by 30 % of the respondents. Here, too, English scores relatively high (18 %).

Differentiated by age, the (predicted) importance of Luxembourgish clearly declines with decreasing age, while French shows a strong increase. Accordingly, the importance of Luxembourgish decreases from 57 % with people over the age of 60 down to 42 % with the 16 to 20-year-olds, whereas that of French increases from 20 % to 43 %.

In particular the Luxembourgers themselves consider Luxembourgish – with 63 % – as the most important language in the future, while the relative majority of the foreigners (42 %) sees French in first place. Here again, the subpopulation

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of the non-Luxembourgers shows itself to be very heterogeneous. Peak ratings for French are recorded for the Portuguese (50 %) and the French (49 %), while the relative majority of the Germans (48 %) and the group of the not further specified "other foreigners" (46 %) regards Luxembourgish as the most important language in the future.

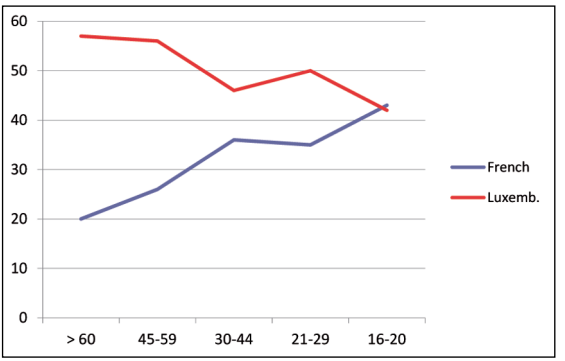

Figure 10: Most important languages in the future according to age.

Most Popular Television Language

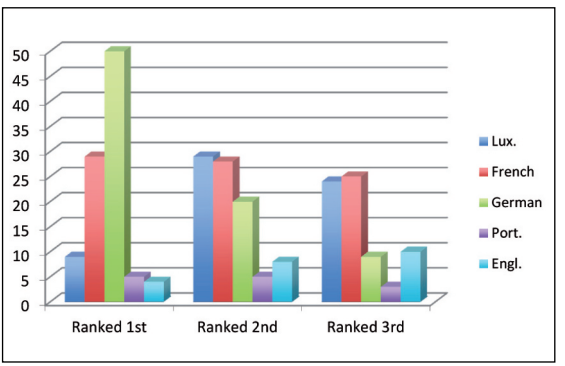

Figure 11: Most popular television language.

German acts, by a significant margin, as the primary language for television consumption: 50 % (in German) compared with 29 % (in French) and 9 % (in Luxembourgish). This ratio is in great part generated by the television consumption of the Luxembourgers (69 % in German, 14 % in Luxembourgish and 13 % in French), while foreign residents clearly prefer French language television (50 %). Here, Germans constitute an easily explained exception, with 91 % preferring German-speaking television, together with members of the unspecified "other

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nationalities" for whom German (37 %) ranks before French (25 %) and English (16 %).

German is the top television language in all milieus, but in varying degrees. Peak ratings are recorded for the status-oriented milieu (66 %), followed by the tradition-oriented milieu (55 %) and the petty bourgeois milieu (55 %), while the underprivileged milieu (38 %) and the alternative milieu (36 %) showed the lowest ratings.

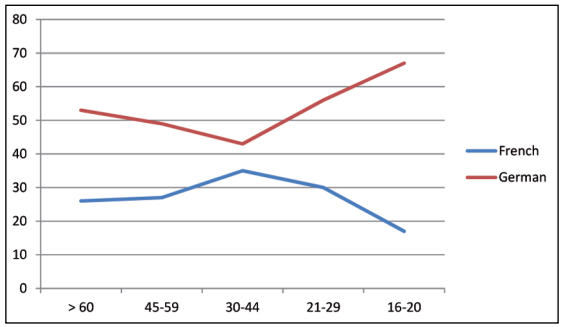

Figure 12: Most popular television language by age.

The diagram in figure 12 clearly shows that the consumption of German language television obviously increases with younger generations. 16 to 20-year-olds exhibit the highest preference for German language television (67 %) and the least for French language television (17 %).

Luxembourgish ranks as the second most popular 'television language' with 29 %, closely followed by French (28 %). The third most frequent language for television consumption, with a maximum of 25 %, is French, barely ahead of Luxembourgish (24 %).

School Situation

Regarding the question whether language lessons at school overtaxed Luxembourgish pupils, 27 % agreed, but a clear majority of about two thirds of the interviewees (65 %) apparently saw no overtaxing – with interviewees with Luxembourgish nationality scoring highest. There is, however, a correlation with educational attainment. A significant difference emerged between interviewees with a university degree, 70 % of whom see no overtaxing, and those with only basic school qualifications, where the figure is substantially lower, at 51 %.

An issue frequently brought up in the educational discussion is that of the educational opportunities of Portuguese pupils, particularly in view of the complex and demanding linguistic situation at Luxembourg's schools and the primary alphabetization by means of the German language. There is a relatively large Portuguese population in Luxembourg as a result of the labour immigration in

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recent decades, and it significantly outnumbers the other foreign population groups. Regarding the question whether language lessons overtaxed Portuguese pupils in Luxembourgish schools, the picture that emerges is a differentiated one. A relative majority of 49 % answered in the negative; 41 %, however, agreed. The internal differentiation by age groups shows that it is primarily the younger age group (16-20 years) that considers the situation at school the least overtaxing. The Portuguese themselves are (also) ambivalent in their response behaviour: Thus, 48 % of the interviewees do not see any overtaxing, but 50 % hold the view that Portuguese children are indeed overtaxed.

State Intervention

Although state intervention concerning the usage of language is demanded by just about half of the interviewees (48 %), it is also rejected by about the same percentage (46 %) – a clear split into 'two camps'. The highest approval ratings for linguistic regulation by the state are to be found in particular with the inhabitants of the north of Luxembourg (53 %), with the 16 to 20-year-olds (57 %) as well as with assisting family members (72 %), with the underprivileged milieu (57 %), the petty bourgeois milieu and the tradition-oriented milieu (53 % respectively). In terms of nationality, linguistic control by the state is demanded in a relatively high degree by the Luxembourgers (51 %), only exceeded by the Italians (59 %). Again, there is a correlation with educational attainment: The higher the educational level, the less there is a demand for state intervention into the usage of language.

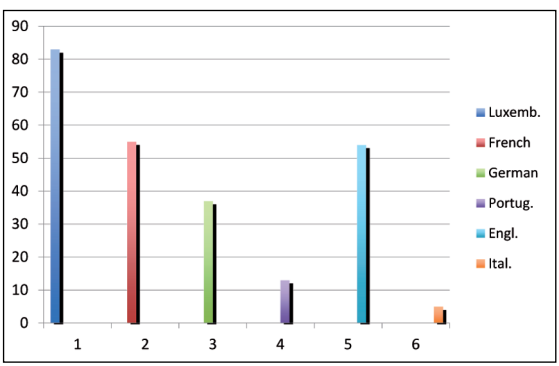

Figure 13: Languages that should be promoted by the state.

With regard to the question which languages should be promoted more strongly by the state, we can again observe a strong loyalty towards Luxembourgish. Thus, a total of 83 % of the group calling for state support would like to see it given to the official language. It is primarily the Luxembourgers themselves who demand this, with 90 %, closely followed by the Germans (89 %), while the Belgians, with

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59 %, show the relatively lowest rating. In terms of milieu differentiation, it is above all the tradition- oriented milieu (92 %), the meritocratic-oriented milieu and the privileged liberal milieu (both 88 %) that are in favour of the promotion of Luxembourgish.

Concerning the question which languages should be promoted by the state, French (55 %) and English (54 %) are more or less equal, both clearly before German (37 %) and again clearly before Portuguese (13 %) and Italian (5 %).

Neighbouring Countries: Frequency of Visits

(Regular) visits to the neighbouring countries are apparently common practice among most inhabitants of Luxembourg. About 70 % of them visit France, Belgium and Germany at least several times per year. Differentiated by nationality, Germany emerges as the most-visited neighbouring country for Luxembourgers. Only 17 % of the Luxembourgers state that they travel to Germany either "never at all" or "hardly ever". By comparison, the corresponding percentages for France are 31 % and for Belgium 32 %. With respect to Luxembourgers visiting Germany, the country scores highest both in terms of absolute numbers and of frequency.

Neighbouring Countries: "Feel-Good Factor"

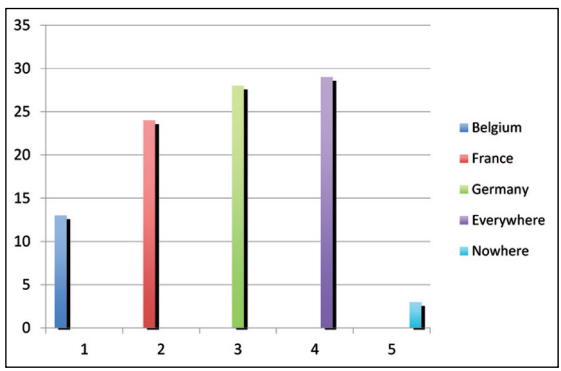

Figure 14: "In which country do you feel most comfortable?"

Also concerning the question "In which neighbouring country do you feel most comfortable?", we can observe a certain preference for the German neighbour. While a relative majority of 29 % states "everywhere", when broken up by countries, Germany occupies the front position (28 %), closely followed by France (24 %) and Belgium (13 %).

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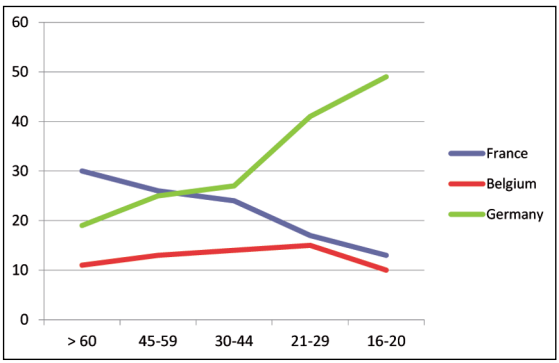

Figure 15: "Feel-good" factor by age.

Clear differences emerge in terms of age distribution. Thus, the "feel-good" factor increases continuously and distinctly with decreasing age of the interviewees. Especially with the youngest age groups (up to 29 years of age) Germany is clearly the "favourite". With the 16 to 20-year-olds, Germany scores 49 %, France 13 % and Belgium 10 %. There is however also a pronounced generation shift here, with France receiving the highest approval ratings from the older generations (from 45 years upwards).

Differentiated by nationality, it is also Germany that Luxembourgers consider by far to be the neighbouring country with the highest "feel-good" factor (37 % versus 21 % for France and 9 % for Belgium). Portuguese, French and Italian residents, on the other hand, tend to feel most comfortable in France. It is evident that in the context of this question there is a link between nationality and language.

Conclusion

The evaluation of the collected data shows that Luxembourg's trilingualism is, in general, assessed as stable and positive. In particular, it is considered to have a significant communicative added value, with a pronounced emphasis on Luxembourgish. Luxembourgish (for the Luxembourgers), is *the* mother tongue that is associated with which a high degree of loyalty. It is therefore probably safe to say that Luxembourgish serves a powerful identity-creating function.

The importance of French as the predominant language of public and formal communication is indisputable. At the same time, French clearly emerges as the language of preference for the majority of foreign residents in Luxembourg. While for the Luxembourgers the emotional attachment to as well as the rational relationship with French clearly lags behind that conferred on Luxembourgish, it is, on the other hand, ranked before German, although the ratios currently seem to be shifting (in the younger generation).

To Luxembourgers, German clearly seems to have a high practical value in the more informal aspects of life. Germany is the neighbouring country most fre-

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quently visited, with the highest "feel good" factor. In addition, media consumption is dominated by German language television. This preference for German is particularly pronounced with the younger Luxembourgers, whose general assessment of the language is clearly more positive than that of the older generation. At the same time, German is, after Luxembourgish, the language spoken and understood fluently by most people. The emotional attachment to German, however, is weak, at most. The rational assessment of German, too, is low compared to its factual practical value.

4.3 Controversies in Readers' Letters concerning the Linguistic Situation

Preliminary Remarks

The present analysis concerns itself with the readers' letters that have appeared in various Luxembourgish newspapers and discuss the issues 'Language' and 'Multilingualism'. On the basis of this discourse material, we have attempted to draw some tentative conclusions on *appropriated* identities in regard to language. Our basic premise was that languages have an enormous identity-creating potential, particularly in a multicultural and multilingual environment such as Luxembourg. Naturally, Luxembourgish occupied the centre of our interest due to its importance as a constitutive feature that permits distinction from the immediate neighbours Germany and France.

Selection of the Material

First of all, 164 recent articles and 63 readers' letters dealing with language and published in nineteen different Luxembourgish newspapers and magazines were collected and listed for a period of just over a year. Since it is the aim of this study to identify appropriated identities within Luxembourg's population, we decided to focus our attention on the readers' letters. Their analysis provides a vivid picture of the positions and opinions on specific subjects. People who write letters to the editor are not professional journalists, which makes the voices 'from within the population' appear particularly immediate as they address topics that are of particular concern to the letters' authors.

Out of the total number, 54 letters to the editor, which appeared between March 2008 to April 2009 in the newspapers *Tageblatt*, *Luxemburger Wort*, *Journal*, *La Voix*, *Le jeudi*, *Lëtzebuerger Journal*, *d'Land* and *Kulturissimo*, were evaluated. In addition to the classical letters to the editor, in which readers briefly comment on a previously published article, we also considered self-initiated articles or comments by readers that go beyond the usual letter to the editor. It is worth noting at this point that it seems to be a typical feature of Luxembourg's media landscape that

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anyone who wishes to do so can convey their private or expert opinion to a wider readership. Such articles were also taken into consideration because they allow more comprehensive conclusions on appropriated identities with regard to the topic of language[3].

All the official languages of Luxembourg – Luxembourgish, German and French – are also represented in the readers' letters and remarkably, sometimes the same writers use different languages when writing to different newspapers or on different subjects. What is equally remarkable, and perhaps a specific feature of Luxembourg, is that some letters to the editor were published in several newspapers, which produced multiple counts (in the table presented below, the numbers of readers' letters which also appeared in another newspaper are stated in brackets). A further point worth noting is that only three women wrote readers' letters on the subject of 'language (s)' as opposed to 26 men.

	Language of Article			
Print Media Selected for the Survey	Luxembourgish	German	French	Total
Luxemburger Wort	19 (4)	5	4 (1)	28 (5)
Lëtzebuerger Journal	8 (4)	3	1	12 (4)
Tageblatt	3 (2)	7 (1)	1	11 (3)
La Voix			2	2
Le Jeudi			1	1
d'Land		2		2
Journal	1 (1)	2 (1)	3 (1)	6 (3)
Kulturissimo		1		1
Total	31	20	12	63

In brackets: Number of readers' letters that have also appeared in other newspapers

Table 1: Language of readers' letters in the respective print media.

Even though an analysis of readers' letters permits certain tentative insights into a society's language awarenesss, one should exercise caution and remain mindful of the fact that even a comprehensive evaluation of reader's letters like the present one cannot reflect more than a limited section of interests and opinions existing in society. In terms of the total population, only relatively few people write letters to the editor. Research into this has only been rudimentary up to now and has as yet established no precise author profiles. One can, nevertheless, make a distinction between the spontaneous expression of opinion by laymen on certain subjects which are of special, often personal interest to individual people and the sending of letters to the editor, or articles, by experts in various fields: for example, when

3 | In actual fact, more than the analysed 54 readers' letters dealing in a broader sense with the topics of language and multilingualism were published in the period under consideration. Nevertheless, for reasons of objectivity, a number of these letters were disregarded.

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a Luxembourger writes a letter to the editor to share her favourable experience with multilingualism when shopping in Trier[4], or when scientists comment on the status of Luxembourgish. In addition, these are often people who regularly write letters to the editor. Here, one also has to distinguish between those who think they are representing a majority opinion and those who quite clearly assume more extreme positions. Moreover, not all letters sent to the editorial staff are published, and if they are, they may appear in an amended or abridged version (see Drewnowska-Vargáné 2001: 2).

Text Type 'Letter to the Editor'

On account of the fact that letters to the editor have not yet been extensively investigated as a text type, there is also no canonical definition for letters to the editor or readers' letters (Drewnowska-Vargáné 2001: 2). There is however a certain consensus about what can be regarded as a typical feature for this text type. A particularly prominent one is intertextuality (see Piirainen/Yli-Kojola 1983: 111), because letters to the editor generally refer to already published articles or to other letters to the editor that they, in turn, comment on, or criticise, or complement. Another characteristic is the specific "emitter-recipient constellation" of readers' letters. Since, in contrast to customary letters, letters to the editor are public, they have a very wide recipient readership. This is not identical with the addressee readership and usually remains unknown to the letter's author (see Drewnowska-Vargáné 2001: 2).

The reviewed material reveals recurring components that are, according to Sandig, constitutive for readers' letters: indication of the subject matter as a main heading, reference to a previous newspaper article as a secondary heading, the text itself and the signature: the writer's name and place of residence (see Sandig 1986: 185). These devices establish a connection to preceding texts, thereby creating "*indirekte Dialoge in schriftlicher Form*"[5] (see Bucher 1986: 147-160). The author also employs a "*Kohärenzmanagement*"[6] (Bucher 1989: 290) by providing the following information:

1. Womit sein Brief zusammenhängt (durch das Zitieren der betreffenden Textstelle oder Angabe des sprachlichen Ausdrucks, auf den er Bezug nimmt); 2. Wie sein Brief gemeint ist (welches Thema behandelt wird und welche Ansichten er verfolgt); 3. "eine Handlung ausführt, die als regelhafte Anschlusshandlung auf den vorausgegangenen Beitrag gilt",

4 | See Bauer, Léonie: In welcher Sprache möchten Sie beraten werden? *Tageblatt*, 15./16.03. 2008, p. 72. (Personal translation: "In which language would you like to be helped?").

5 | Personal translation: "Indirect dialogues in written form".

6 | Personal translation: "Coherence management".

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z.B. wenn er den Beitrag lobt[7] (Bucher 1986: 149, quoted according to: Drewnowska-Vargáné 2001: 3).

Recent research of readers' letters is increasingly taking contrastive investigations of readers' letters from different communication cultures into account that are based on text-linguistic analysis (see Drewnowska-Vargáné 2001: 3). In this sense, the present analysis could well be the first step on the road to the investigation of Luxembourg's communication culture. Due to the specific circumstances, for instance the manageable scale of the readership and number of letter writers, readers' letters in this country in general appear to be somewhat more personal than, for instance, in Germany. It is for instance by no means rare for someone to close their letter to the editor, written in reaction to another one, with the words: "*Merci fir d'Dokumentatioun vun Ärem Respekt vru menger Aarbecht fir eis Sprooch; ech hoffe just, datt deen esou éierlech ass wéi meng Bewonnerung vun Ärer Leeschtung als Lëtzebuerger Historiker*".[8] The choice of language is also something that carries a particular significance in Luxembourg. Sometimes readers' letters are written in German, presumably to ensure that the addressee understands the arguments or because the debate is continued in same language as it started. There are however also readers' letters which are deliberately or on grounds of principle written in Luxembourgish. For instance, one letter to the editor begins as follows: "*Meng Identitéit als iwerzeechte Lëtzebuerger verbidd mer des puer Wierder op Däitsch ze schreiwen. Mäi Papp a meng Grousspappen genge mer et net verzeien*".[9] A postscript in German then concedes: "*Es wird sich wohl jemand finden, der Herr[n] Müntefering dies zu übersetzen weiß*".[10]

7 | Personal translation: "1. What his or her letter refers to (by quoting the respective text passage or indicating the linguistic expression that he/she is making reference to); 2. How his/her letter is meant (what topic is being dealt with and what are his/her views); 3. [... and by performing] "an act that qualifies as a standard follow-up act with respect to the preceding article", for instance, when he/she praises the article".

8 | Personal translation: "Thank you for expressing your respect for my work on behalf of our language; I can only hope that it is as genuine as my admiration for your achievements as a Luxembourg historian" (Roth, Lex:, Keng Hetzcampagne, Här Prof. Dr. Michel Pauly. *Lëtzebuerger Journal,* 31.3.2009, p. 9).

9 | Personal translation: "My identity as a staunch Luxembourger does not permit me to write these few words in German. My father and my grandfather would never forgive me" (Lenz, Guy: Nët esou, Här Müntefering. *Lëtzebuerger Journal,* 21.03.2009, p. 7 and *Luxemburger Wort,* 21.03.2009, p. 21).

10 | Personal translation: "Surely it will be possible to find someone who can translate this for Mr. Müntefering".

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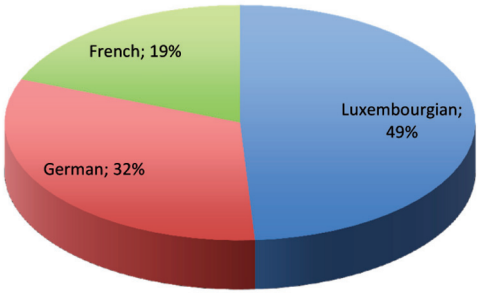

Figure 16: Language distribution of the readers' letters

Topics

In order to draw conclusions on the interrelations between language and identity, only such letters to the editor, which deal with these subjects, were selected. Some are individual letters that refer to an article in an older edition of the newspaper, while there are also entire series of letters, which revolve around one particular subject. This can either be a new law, a bill, issues at the centre of public debate, or,it could be a previous letter to the editor which is being commented on or criticised. This often draws a further response which, in turn, is frequently answered again, creating entire argumental concatenations or even veritable 'feuds'.

The most important subject areas dealing with language are integration, language and identity, the incorporation of Luxembourgish in the constitution, language schools, a momentous slip of the tongue on the radio, linguistic self-confidence, revaluation of Luxembourgish or threat to the language.

Lines of Reasoning and Conflict Lines

In general, the debates on the topic of language in Luxembourg as they appear in readers' letters show four distinct lines of reasoning: There is a) a pro-Luxembourgish, b) a German-critical or c) French-critical and d) a pro-multilingual position. In the following we will discuss these partly very radical sounding categorisations in more detail by providing exact descriptions and illustrative examples.

a) Pro-Luxembourgish

In nearly all letters to the editor, particular importance is attached to Luxembourgish. On the one hand, as an identity-creating feature, for instance when it is stated, as a

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matter of course: "*[e]is Sprooch ass eis Identitéit*"[11] or when there are calls for teaching more regional cultural topics at school in the Luxembourgish language:

> Ich hatte in letzter Zeit verschiedentlich die Gelegenheit, mich mit Primärschülern der letzten Klasse zu unterhalten. Dabei musste ich feststellen, dass kein einziger den Text geschweige denn die Melodie unserer Nationalhymne kannte. Von andern schönen luxemburgischen Liedern ganz zu schweigen. [...] Was soll in der "Chamber" das große Getue um unsere nationale Identität, wenn nicht an der Basis begonnen wird diese zu lehren? Und gibt es nicht viele luxemburgische Lieder, die einen "Ausflug" in die luxemburgische Geschichte, Geographie und Botanik ermöglichen?[12].

Some readers fear the disappearance of their language, Luxembourgish, and consequently demand that it be included in the curriculum: "*Ich bin 77 Jahre alt und verstehe immer noch nicht, warum in unseren Schulen unsere Sprache nicht gelehrt wird. Denn wenn es so weitergeht, geht unsere Sprache verloren, und das wäre sehr schade*".[13] On the other hand, Luxembourgish is seen as a language of integration that would prove useful to the many foreigners in the country in everyday life. The students of a Luxembourgish course suggest for instance the following: "*Naturellement, si un étranger décide de rester au Luxembourg, la langue luxembourgeoise sera un facteur incontournable qui lui permettra d'atteindre son but: celui de son intégration socio-professionelle*".[14] And the *Communauté Vie Chrétienne au Luxembourg* is of the following opinion: "*Nous ne nions pas le fait que le luxembourgeois reste un facteur important d'integration au Grand-Duché*".[15] Luxembourgish is therefore regarded, in

11 | Personal translation: "Our language is our identity" (Weirich, Jos: Eis Sprooch ass eis Identitéit. *Luxemburger Wort,* 09.08.2008, p. 12).

12 | Personal translation: "I recently had the opportunity on several occasions to talk to primary pupils of the upper classes and discovered that not one of them knew the words of our national anthem, let alone the melody. Not to mention other lovely Luxembourgish songs. [...] What's the point in making all that fuss in the 'Chamber' about our national identity if you don't start teaching it right from the beginning? And aren't there a lot of Luxembourgish songs that allow an 'excursion' into Luxembourgish history, geography and botany?" (J. G.: Luxemburgisch an der Basis lehren. *Lëtzebuerger Journal*, 23.10.2008, p. 6).

13 | Personal translation: "I am 77 years old and I still don't understand why our language isn't being taught in our schools. If it goes on like that, our language will vanish, and that would be a great pity" (L.V.E.: Zur luxemburgischen Sprache. *Tageblatt*, 13.2.2009, p. 65).

14 | Personal translation: "Naturally, if a foreigner decides to remain in Luxembourg, Luxembourgish is an essential factor to reach his or her objective, namely social and professional integration" (Letter to the editor by students of a Luxembourgish course: Vivre dans une société multiculturelle au quotidien. *Le Jeudi*,10.07.2008, p. 44).

15 | Personal translation: "We do not deny that Luxembourgish is an important factor for integration in the Grand Duchy" (Communauté Vie Chrétienne au Luxembourg: Lettre ouverte aux députés. *La Voix*, 24.05. 2008, p. 48).

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a positive sense, as a language of integration, but it can also be made a condition, for instance when a reader demands "*dass man, dort wo man sein Geld verdient, sich ein bisschen Mühe geben sollte, die Sprache zu erlernen*".[16] This is demanded particularly emphatically when the topic is about acquiring Luxembourgish citizenship: "*D'Sproochefuerderunge fir Lëtzebuerger ze ginn, hu fir jiddereen ze gëllen, egal wéi laang een hei geliewt huet [...]*"[17].

In the light of the generally high approval rate for Luxembourgish, it is not surprising that most letters to the editor respond favourably to the proposal to incorporate Luxembourgish in the constitution[18]: "*Elo ass jo viru kuerzem d'Proposition op den Dësch komm, eist Lëtzebuergesch als Nationalsprooch an der Verfassung ze verankeren – eng gudd Iddi, wéi mir schéngt*".[19]

b) German-critical

The acceptance of Luxembourgish is extremely high and there are frequent demands to promote one's native language more vigorously. This promotion of Luxembourgish occurs partly at the expense of the other languages spoken in the country, for instance German. This is reflected in demands for language cultivation, for instance by not needlessly borrowing words from other languages and instead using the ones available in Luxembourgish:

Also missten déi Leit, déi am Radio poteren (inklusiv déi honorabel Politiker a Gewerkschaftler) emol hir Mammesprooch zerguttstert léieren. ‚Innerhalb, ausserhalb, schwul, schwanger, fënnt statt ab ..., im nachhinein, nach wie vor, zumindest, zahlreich, am gesetzleche Rahmen, mindestens' sinn nëmmen e puer Beispiller. Dat ass kee Lëtzebuergescht, dat sinn op Däitsch geduechten an iwwerem braddelen op lëtzebuergesch iwwersate Sätz, déi do erauskommen. [...] An dann och nach dat elei: Wieder, déi et vun Aalst hier am lëtzebuergesche gëtt, musse bleiwen. (Seejomes, net Ameis, Gehaansfénkelchen, net Glühwürmchen, Päiperlek, net Schmetterling). Dat ass jo fir Ekzema an d'Oueren ze kréien![20]

---

16 | Personal translation: "[...] That when someone one earns their money in a certain place, they should also take a little trouble to learn the language".

17 | Personal translation: "The linguistic requirements of becoming a Luxembourger have to be valid for everybody, regardless of how long they have been living here" (Watgen, Fernand: Lëtzebuerger ouni Lëtzebuergesch... *Luxemburger Wort*, 21.05.2008, p. 18).

18 | See Benoit, Jos and Jos Weirich: Eis Sprooch ass eis Identitéit, duerfir eis Sprooch an d'Constitution. *Tageblatt,* 25./26.07.2008, p. 56.

19 | Personal translation: "Now the proposal has recently been put on the table to incorporate our Luxembourgish as an official language in the constitution – a good idea, it seems to me" (lucy lux: Lëtzebuergesch, franséisch, däitsch oder wat? *Journal,* 06.02.2009, p. 6).

20 | Personal translation: "So, the people talking on the radio – including our honorable politicians and union leaders – should learn their mother-tongue first. ‚Innerhalb, ausserhalb, zahlreich, am gesetzleche Rahmen, mindestens' are just a few examples. This is no

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Et wär villäicht éischter néidig, dergéint ze protestéieren, datt eis Sprooch am Alldeeglechen vun aflossräiche Leit an och vun de geschwate Medien öffentlech mat engem franséische 'style précieux' oder engem kumpelhaften Däitsch entstallt gëtt, obwohl genuch gutt Lëtzebuerger Wierder parat stinn[21]

There are also complaints that the "*'schnarrende' deutsche Aussprache*" of the "*überwältigende Mehrheit der Schulkinder*" is due to their consumption of German-language television programmes, and "*leider gereicht das dem Luxemburgischen nicht unbedingt zum Vorteil*".[22]

On the radio, a presenter referred to Luxembourgish as "*Kauderwelsch*"[23], triggering a wave of complaints from readers who demanded a higher level of linguistic self-confidence. One needs to bear in mind here that some readers' resentments against German go back to the German occupation of Luxembourg during the Second World War and the word *Kauderwelsch* automatically provokes the corresponding associations – "*Viru 67 Joër goufe mir Lëtzebuerger schon mat dem Wuert ‚Kauderwelsch' vum Gauleiter Simon a senge Kollaborateuren konfrontéiert an affrontéiert*", connected with the question: "*Gi mer se wierklech ni lass!?*"[24]. Some comments, therefore, are highly emotional and proclaime: "*[n]ët aleng déi Persoun, och de Radio 100,7 huet sech blaméiert an disqualifizéiert*".[25] For some Luxembourgers, pride in and the esteem for their own language, appears to be closely tied to the opposition against the German occupiers, for example when one reader writes "*Trotz Repressalien a Prisong, hu mir eis fir ons Sprooch an Onofhängegkeet agesat, déi*

Luxembourgish, these are sentences that were thought in German and then, during talking, were translated into Luxembourgish. And then this: words that exist for eternities in Luxembourgish must remain. [...] That can really give you eczemas in your ears!" (Grethen, Änder: D'Lëtzebuerger an hir Sprooch. *Luxemburger Wort*, 22. 11. 2008, p. 21).

21 | Personal translation: "It would instead be necessary to protest against influential people and the spoken media deforming our language in everyday life through a French ‚style précieux' or a chummy German, although good Luxembourgish words exist" (Thewes, Nico: Eis Sproochen. *Luxemburger Wort,* 24. 03. 2009, p. 14).

22 | Personal translation. "The 'grating' German pronunciation of the great majority of schoolchildren... unfortunately this is not always to the advantage of Luxembourgish" (Roth, Lex: Deutsch und wir. *Lëtzebuerger Journal*,15.11.2008, p. 6).

23 | Personal translation: "Gibberish".

24 | Personal translation: "67 years ago, we Luxembourgers had already been confronted with and insulted by the word ‚gibberish' by Gauleiter Simon and his collaborateurs [...] Will we never get rid of them!?" (Weirich, Jos and Jos Benoit: Eis Sprooch an d'Constitution. *Journal*, 23. 07. 2008, p. 6).

25 | Personal translation: "Not only the person in question but Radio 100,7 too have disqualified themselves". (Weirich, Jos and Jos Benoit: Eis Sprooch an d'Constitution. *Journal*, 23. 07. 2008 p. 6).

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mat Blutt bezuelt goufen".[26] It may therefore be not surprising that corresponding resentments against German still exist with the older generations.

c) French-critical

Some readers' letters criticise the rapidly increasing predominance of French in Luxembourg. Often, they complain that it is impossible to go shopping without knowing French: "*Wenn ich einkaufen gehe und dann jemanden bitte, mir zu helfen, bekomme ich gleich zur Antwort: 'En français, s'il vous plaît'*"[27]. This makes some people feel like strangers in their own country. "*Wéi oft hunn sech Lëtzebuerger scho schrëftlech a mündlech driwwer opgereegt, dass een iwwerall mat dem berühmte Satz ‚en français s.v.p.' konfronteiert gëtt?*"[28]. Especially older people, it is stated, often have problems because a large proportion of the nursing staff in hospitals and senior citizen's homes only speaks French:

> Was ich sehr schlimm finde, ist die Situation in den Spitälern, in Altenheimen und überhaupt überall dort, wo ältere Menschen in Pflege sind. Besonders hier müsste das Personal unsere Sprache beherrschen. Oder müssen ältere Leute noch andere Sprachen lernen, damit man sie versteht?![29]

It appears that the usage of French in everyday life is not as uncomplicated as one might think if one assumes Luxembourg to be a trilingual country:

> *Mir perséinlech fällt och op, dass an der leschter Zäit och an den Zeitungen (an zwar net nëmmen an deenen, déi extra op Franséisch verëffentlecht ginn) mee och an deenen traditionellen Zeitungen, déi fréier praktesch nëmmen däitsch Artikelen verëffentlecht hunn, ëmmer méi franséisch Texter optauchen. An och das iergert de richtige Lëtzebuerger, deen zwar ganz gären eppes iwwert dat interessant Thema ging liesen, wat am Titel*

26 | Personal translation: "In spite of repression and prison sentences, we have committed ourselves to our language and independence, for which we have paid with our blood" (Weirich, Jos and Jos Benoit: Eis Sprooch an d'Constitution. *Journal*, 23. 07. 2008, p. 6).

27 | Personal translation: "When I go shopping and then ask for assistance, I immediately get the answer: '*En français, s'il vous plaît*' ('in French, please')" (L.V.E.: Zur luxemburgischen Sprache. *Tageblatt*, 12. 01. 2009, p. 65).

28 | Personal translation: "How often have Luxembourgers expressed, in writing and orally, their annoyance about being confronted everywhere they go with the famous sentence 'in French, please'?" (lucy lux: Lëtzebuergesch, franséisch, däitsch oder wat? *Journal,* 6. 02. 2009, p. 6).

29 | Personal translation: "What I consider as being very bad is the situation in hospitals, in old people's homes, and generally everywhere where older people are being cared for. Especially here, the staff should be fluent in our language. Or do elderly people really have to learn other languages, just so that they are understood?" (L.V.E.: Zur luxemburgischen Sprache. *Tageblatt*, 12. 02. 2009, p. 65).

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ugekënnegt gëtt, awer keng Loscht huet, sech duerch eng ganz Zeitungssäit franséisch Text zu wullen, zumol wenn dat Thema a bësse méi komplizéiert ass[30].

In addition, there is the position of many foreigners working in the country who apparently speak French naturally and also expect this from the Luxembourgers: "*Fir ze wëssen, a watfir enger Sprooch ech mat him misst schwätzen, hunn ech héiflech gefrot ‚Vouz parlez français?' wourops ech ganz onfrëndlech ugebaupst si ginn ‚Eh bien oui, puisque c'est la langue administrative'. Das ass jo erëm eng Kéier typisch!*"[31]

Some readers explicitly oppose the proposal to continue to incorporate French in the constitution, because it would be "*… politisch onvirsichteg [e]ng friem Sprooch an d'Constitution ze setzen*".[32]

d) Pro-multilingualism

The pro-multilingual position opposes linguistically one-sided trends and rejects them in favour of practised multilingualism. The constant concentration on Luxembourgish of some letter writers is therefore commented on critically, for instance when a particularly dedicated advocate of Luxembourgish is labelled as "*eisen nationalen Här R[…]*"[33] who "*net iwwert eis däitsch Noperen an hir Sprooch schreiwen [kann], ouni e Gauleiter oder soss eppes vun den Naziën an d'Spiel ze bréngen*"[34] or when the author of another letter to the editor, commenting on the

30 | Personal translation: "I personally have noticed that lately more and more French texts have been appearing in the newspapers, and not only in those that are published in French, but also in traditional newspapers that used to publish German articles only. And that annoys the real Luxembourgers, who would like to read about the interesting topic that the heading announces, but who do not want to struggle through a whole page of French text, especially if the topic is a little more complicated" (lucy lux: Lëtzebuergesch, franséisch, däitsch oder wat? *Journal*, 6. 02. 2009, p. 6).

31 | Personal translation: "In order to find out in which language I should talk to him, I asked politely, 'Do you speak French?', whereupon I was snapped at: 'Of course I do, it's the administrative language after all'. This is just so typical!" (lucy lux: Lëtzebuergesch, franséisch, däitsch oder wat? *Journal*, 6. 02. 2009, p. 6).

32 | Personal translation: "Because it would be politically imprudent to establish a foreign language in the constitution" (Thewes, Nico: Eis Sproochen. *Luxemburger Wort*, 24. 03. 2009, p. 14).

33 | Personal translation: "Our national Mr R[…]" (lucy lux: Lëtzebuergesch, franséisch, däitsch oder wat? *Journal*, 6. 02. 2009, p. 6).

34 | Personal translation: "[…] Who cannot write about our German neighbours and their language without bringing up a *Gauleiter* or something else from the Nazis" (lucy lux: Kuerz Äntwort op den Här Roth (*Journal* vum 13. Februar). *Lëtzebuerger Journal*, 25. 02. 2009, p. 6).

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proposal to strengthen Luxembourgish at EU level, asks himself: "*Wie weit kann man Nationalismus treiben?*"[35].

One characteristic feature of modern Luxembourg as an international finance and banking centre and as the location of important EU institutions is its multiculturality. This feature is explicitly emphasised by some authors of readers' letters: "*La société luxembourgeoise a choisi de comprendre et d'intégrer les autres cultures. En bref, elle est une société dynamique et hétérogène*".[36] So besides thoses stances which favour a certain language or want to upgrade and reinforce it in comparison to other languages, there are also those who consider Luxembourg's multilinguality as a significant locational advantage. "*Luxemburg hat drei offizielle Sprachen und wird für diese Sprachegewandheit bewundert*".[37]

It is only thanks to the Luxembourgers' multilingualism, it is said, that such a small country is assigned almost a key role in the European Union and in the international financial world. Moreover, precisely the good German *and* French skills ensured that Luxembourg can self-confidently assert itself against its larger neighbours Germany and France because it is not exclusively confined to one language and can therefore be ascribed neither to the germanophone nor the francophone side. In addition, multilingualism ensured the good relationship with both neighbouring countries, which is reflected, among other things, by good commercial relations and a trans-border labour market[38].

Conclusion

The fact that, over the relatively short period of just over a year, at least 164 articles and 63 readers' letters were published on the subject of 'language' in a broader sense, points to the presence of a lively discourse on this subject. It is also noteworthy that in letters to the editor, Luxembourgish is very much in the foreground, as well as a topic and as the language of communication, which indicates a strong identification of the letters' authors with this language. This is also something that the letter writers themselves notice: "*Seele wor ons Sprooch esou an der Diskussioun*

35 | Personal translation: "How far can one go with nationalism?" (Pütz, M.: Lissabon-Vertrag auf Luxemburgisch? *Tageblatt*, 8. 07. 2008, p. 63).

36 | Personal translation: "The Luxembourgish society has decided to understand and integrate different cultures. In short, it is a dynamic and heterogeneous society" (Letter to the editor written by the students of a Luxembourgish course: Vivre dans une société multiculturelle au quotidien. *Le Jeudi*, 10. 07. 2008, p. 44).

37 | Personal translation: "Luxembourg has three official languages and is admired for its linguistic versatility" (Pütz, M.: Lissabon-Vertrag auf Luxemburgisch? *Tageblatt*, 8. 07. 2008, p. 63).

38 | See Fehlen, Fernand: Wat schwätzt d'Majorité silencieuse? *Luxemburger Wort*, 28. 03. 2009, p. 24.

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wéi an de leschte Wochen a Méint. [...] Dat ass och gutt esou".[39] We can therefore assume that Luxembourgish plays an essential role for the Luxembourgers' self-image and thus for their identity.

The analysis of the letters to the editor shows that the subject of 'language' is very emotionally charged. The language is ascribed an important role in forming national identity, statements like "*Eis Sprooch ass eis Identitéit*"[40] are very common. It is consequently not surprising that potential xenophobic leanings should be particularly visible in readers' letters dealing with the subject of language. Many letter writers are unwilling to compromise and to move away from their rigid position, for fear of losing their identity or of 'betraying' their ancestors who had dedicated themselves to the preservation of the Luxembourgish language. This leads some letter writers to become very personal and, in a few cases, even abusive, particularly when they criticise articles or letters to the editor, which express a different position from their own.

On the other hand, however, it is worth pointing out that many letters to the editor address the subject of 'language' and 'languages in Luxembourg' in a level-headed, rational and reasonable way by, for instance, making a distinction between "official language" (Luxembourgish) and "administrative language" (German or French)[41].

Some letters to the editor also take a stance against too polemic positions by correcting false allegations or voicing more temperate opposing views[42]. The authors of these kinds of letters to the editor are however frequently accused in subsequent readers' letters of "betraying" the Luxembourgish language or of simply not being qualified to express an opinion on this subject.

The examples presented above clearly show conflict running along language and language usage lines. One should however bear in mind that there is a "Majorité Silencieuse"[43], as one letter to the editor notes, which is apparently fluent in the languages officially spoken in Luxembourg and uses them quite matter-of-factly. The heated debates in the letters to the editor could therefore in part be mere spurious controversies involving very personal and partly extreme positions.

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39 | Personal translation: "Rarely has our language been discussed as much as within the last weeks and months [...] That is a good thing" (Grethen, Änder: D'Lëtzebuerger an hir Sprooch. *Luxemburger Wort*, 22. 11. 2008, p. 21).

40 | See Weirich, Jos: Eis Sprooch ass eis Identitéit. *Luxemburger Wort*, 9. 08. 2008, p. 12.

41 | See Watgen, Fernand: Lëtzebuerger ouni Lëtzebuergesch ...? *Luxemburger Wort*, 21. 05. 2008, p. 18.

42 | See also lucy lux: Lëtzebuergesch, franséisch, däitsch oder wat? *Journal*, 6. 02. 2009, p. 6; or Pauly, Michel: Net all Däitsch an een Dëppe geheien. *Luxemburger Wort*, 28. 03. 2009, p. 22.

43 | Personal translation: "The silent majority".

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4.4 'Linguistic Landscape': Public Signage and Multilingualism

Figure 17: Customs at Luxembourg Airport.

Introduction

This paper looks at visual examples of multilingualism as they appear on signs, posters, notices etc. The research field of 'Linguistic Landscaping' (in the following: LL) – a still relatively new approach within (interdisciplinary oriented) sociolinguistics and in part also of visual ethnography – analyses the structure and contextualisation of visible "signs" in public areas (Backhaus 2007: 9) and offers new insights on linguistic policy, multilingualism, language use and linguistic dominance. The prefatory illustration constitutes, to our mind, an almost emblematic condensation of what typifies the language situation in Luxembourg (a) a preference of French and (b) multilingualism where English plays an increasingly important role.

Studies of Visual Multilingualism

In sociolinguistics, the structure of publicly visible text was for a long time, simply ignored. It was only in the 1990s that research into LL began, initially focussing on complex urban areas with a multilingual population. One of the first studies to be published was that by Landry and Bourhis (1997), who directed their attention to the perception of multilingual, public signs in Canada. Here, investigation focusses primarily on language usage in public areas of towns or regions, as exhibited, for instance, on street signs, display boards, street name signs, town name signs, commercial signs and signs in public buildings etc. The analysis of

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these signs examines issues such as addressee orientation, presupposed linguistic competence, underlying linguistic preference or linguistic attitudes relevant to identity. Furthermore, quantitative results allow the identification of current development trends (e.g., increase/decline of a language, changes in the valence of a language etc.). Backhaus (2007) developed a typology (which we have adopted in our contribution) of multilingual signs which he exemplified in a survey of an urban area of Tokyo. Other research expands the field and analyses signage within a general geo-semiotic framework (for instance, Scollon/Scollon 2003). With Shohamy and Gorter (2009), we have current case studies that examine visual multilingualism and its implications for linguistic policy, linguistic identity and linguistic consciousness.

Methodology and Material

The data base of this case study consists altogether of approx. 600 digital photos which were taken – with student participation – at five different locations (Luxembourg City, Wiltz, Vianden, Esch/Alzette and Junglinster) between October 2007 and June 2009. Here, the objective was to capture all possible visual signs with text segments within a defined area in the town centre. Most of the analysed visual signs were official signs, commercial signs, notices, posters or private signs. The following were excluded: address signs, menus, advertisements for certain products or graffiti (so-called 'transgressive signs'[44]). In the course of our work it became clear that it was not always easy to draw a clear line between institutional notices and actual advertisements. For instance, is an information board pointing out specific services of the railway company *Sociéte nationale des chemins de fer luxembourgois* CFL to be classified as a top-down sign[45] or as advertising? Here, finer analytical grids need to be developed in the future.

In the following quantitative analysis, we concentrated our investigation on the linguistic distribution and the roles the different languages play. We subsequently interpreted the results with regard to the linguistic situation of the country and its linguistic profile.

Corpus Analysis

The signs are first subdivided according to whether they are monolingual or multilingual signs.They are further differentiated by authorship: Top-down signs are signs that are provided by state or quasi-state institutions (e.g. information notices issued by the authorities, town entrance signs etc.). Bottom-up signs, by contrast, are provided by private individuals, shops or companies. As will be

44 | Signs that intentionally and without authorisation disturb the real semiotics of the place, e.g., graffiti, tags, intentionally discarded garbage.

45 | Centrally and mostly uniformly provided signs: e.g. information notice boards, offer boards or advertising campaigns (internal and external producers).

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shown, this type of differentiation constitutes an essential controlling factor for the linguistic structure of the signs.

On the basis of these criteria the corpus is composed as outlined in table 1.

	Top-down signs (institutional signs)	Bottom-up signs (commercial, private)
Monolingual	95	227
multilingual*	103	159

Table 2: Distribution of monolingual/multilingual and top-down/ bottom-up signs (bilingual or trilingual).*

What is clear at first glance is that bottom-up signs are less often multilingual than top-down signs. In the case of the-top down signs, however, the ratio of unilingual to multilingual signs is almost equal.

Analysis of Monolingual Signs

The quantitative distribution of monolingual signs is as follows:

	Luxembourgish	French	German	English	Portuguese	Italian	Chinese	Total
Top-down signs	16	64	6	8	1	0	0	95
Proportion in %	**16.84**	**67.37**	**6.32**	**8.42**	**1.05**	**0.00**	**0.00**	*100.00*
Bottom-up signs	30	132	25	33	2	3	2	227
Proportion in %	**13.22**	**58.15**	**11.01**	**14.54**	**0.88**	**1.32**	**0.88**	*100.00*

Table 3: Language distribution on monolingual signs.

As is to be expected, French is most frequent (67 %), while Luxembourgish – by a considerable margin – generally occupies second place. A typical feature is that, for the top-down signs, French is represented 10 % more often than in the bottom-up category. The stronger presence of German and also of English in the bottom-up area can be explained by the high degree of globalisation. At the airport of Luxembourg in particular one finds many exclusively English language signs.

In spite of French dominance, the language distribution of the monolingual signs shows ample evidence of mutlilingualism, since the rarer languages (Luxembourgish, German, English) are also represented in no small degree.

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Figure 18: Notice board of the city of Luxembourg: Top-down, unilingual, French.

Figure 19: Road sign in the city of Luxembourg: Top down, unilingual, Luxembourgish.

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Analysis of Multilingual Signs

For an analysis of a large number of multilingual signs to lead to a uniform and unequivocal evaluation it is necessary to simplify the terminology. This obtains particularly for multilingual areas or countries with a high level of linguistic contact. In the following, we will examine aspects of linguistic preference and of sign types.

Examining Language Preference

By this, we understand the order and general presentation of the languages on multilingual signs. A particular language is often emphasised by the manner of spatial arrangement and/or by the graphic design (including size, colour, typeface) which indicates a certain rank order and valence of the language in question. It is beyond the scope of our study to factor in this code preference in a systematic way, something that will have to be carried out in a subsequent investigation. Typical for Luxembourg are the place-name signs, which display the French name at the top in boldface and capital letters, and underneath the Luxembourgish name in italics and a smaller font.

Figure 20: Place-name sign of the city of Luxembourg.

The distribution and order of the languages are examined more thoroughly in the following sections. The tables show the distribution of the language combination for bilingual and trilingual signs. The order of the language codes corresponds to the order on the respective sign.

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	FR-LU	LU-FR	LU-GE	FR-GE	GE-FR	FR-EN	EN-FR	GE-EN	FR-NL	other	Total
Top down signs	4	10	0	40	3	13	7	0	0	3	80
Proportion in %	5.00	12.5	0.00	50.00	3.75	16.3	8.75	0.00	0.00	3.75	100.00
Bottom up signs	16	5	0	25	4	18	13	6	15	26	128
Proportion in %	12.50	3.91	0.00	19.53	3.13	14.06	10.16	4.69	11.72	20.31	100.00

Table 4: Language distribution on bilingual signs.

	FR-GE-EN	FR-EN-GE	EN-FR-GE	EN-GE-FR	other	Total
Top-down signs	12	3	2	2	4	23
Proportion in %	52.17	13.04	8.70	8.70	17.39	100.00
Bottom-up signs	11	1	3	4	9	28
Proportion in %	39.29	3.57	10.71	14.29	32.14	100.00

Table 5: Language distribution on trilingual signs.

Conspicuous at first glance is the language combination: While for the top-down signs, the combination FR-GE (50 %) or FR-GE-EN (52 %) is the most frequent, the bottom-up signs display a greater level of heterogeneity. They very clearly show the heterogeneous multilinguality that is a feature of Luxembourgish sign-posting (see also the high proportion in the category 'other' which subsumes all other possible linguistic combinations). Conversely, the proportion of Luxembourgish-French signs in the top-down category is greater than in the bottom-up one (12.5 % versus 3.9 % with the bilingual signs). On most signs, French is the first-used language, while German is practically never found in this position; in fact, English is found more often in the first position.

In table 6, the linguistic occurrence on bilingual and trilingual signs has been added up, regardless of the order, to get an impression of the usage frequency of the individual languages. The leading position of French, which is represented almost continuously in all categories, is very obvious. With bilingual top-down signs, German is found in approximately half of the cases, while this portion is lower in the case of the bottom-up signs which favour English.

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	FR	LU	GE	EN	Total
bilingual top-down signs	79	14	44	20	80
Proportion in %	**98.75**	**17.5**	**55.00**	**25.00**	
trilingual top-down signs	23	2	22	21	23
Proportion in %	**100.00**	**8.70**	**95.65**	**91.30**	
bilingual bottom-up signs	105	21	40	40	119
Proportion in %	88.24	17.65	33.61	33.61	
trilingual bottom-up signs	30	4	26	27	31
Proportion in %	**96.77**	**12.90**	**83.87**	**87.10**	

Table 6: Occurrence of the four most frequent languages on multilingual signs.

Therefore trilingualism – made up of French, German and English – is a feature of both sign types, while Luxembourgish is used only in 8 and 18 % of the cases. The figures clearly prove that English has already firmly established itself.

Analysis of the Different Sign Types

In this section we will examine the multilingual signs in terms of how the individual languages represented on them relate to each other. Following the model developed by Backhaus (2007) we distinguish three different types of signs:

1. *Homophonic signs*: The entire information presented on the sign is translated into several languages. The language distribution on such signs is ideal, as it were, because no language is preferred over another except by the order in which they are listed. A homophonic sign requires no multilingual competence from the reader because the information is available in 'his or her' own language.
2. *Mixed signs*: On such signs, only part of the information is translated.
3. *Polyphonic signs*: These signs contain information which is distributed among several languages without translation. Even more so than with the mixed signs, multilingual competence is necessary for understanding polyphonic signs.

Our Luxembourg sample reveals interesting differences between the top-down signs and the bottom-up signs, because the proportion of homophonic signs is clearly higher in the former group, whereas the latter contains more polyphonic signs (57 % and 31 %). While on homophonic signs, the information is identical in all languages represented on the sign and therefore democratically available to all population groups, readers of polyphonic signs must be conversant with

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the languages used in order to decode the entire information. It is evident that polyphonic signs require higher multilingual competence than homophonic ones.

	Top-down signs	Bottom-up signs
mixed	17	14
homophonic	57	31
polyphonic	26	55

Table 7: Sign distribution according to type.

Figure 21: Police sign: homophonic, top-down, trilingual (Luxembourg train station).

Figure 22: Hotel in Vianden: Homophonic, bottom-up, four-lingual.

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The examples shown in figures 21 and 22 represent the classical situation of the homophonic sign on which the contents are translated completely into the other languages. Often, this is also supported by a corresponding graphic design.

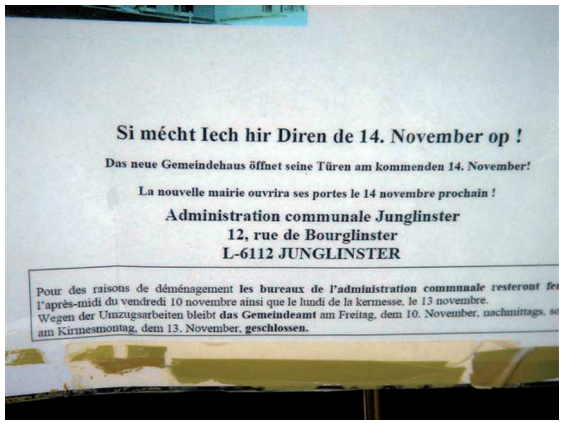

Figure 23: Notice by the Junglinster municipality: mixed sign, top-down, trilingual (Junglinster).

While the upper portion of the notice at Junglinster city hall shown in figure 23 has homophonic characteristics, the 'small print' in the bottom part is only available in French and German.

Figure 24: Advertising poster in Junglinster: polyphonic sign, bottom-up, trilingual (Junglinster).

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In order to understand all the information on the sign in figure 24, the reader must have at least a passive knowledge of French ('Expo', 'Bourse'), German ('Modellbau, Tauschbörse') and Luxembourgish ('Auer'), where opening times are mentioned).

Conclusion

The analysis of the text types present on public signs and notices, up to now largely neglected by research, produced the following results:

- In quantitative terms, about half of public sign-posting is multilingual. When signs are monolingual, French dominates, while Luxembourgish, English and German are represented clearly less often as sole language.
- On multilingual signs, French is represented almost throughout. The most frequent combination is 'French/German' and 'French/German/English'.
- Top-down signs are more frequently multilingual than bottom-up signs. Here, we can discern an element of official language policy that wishes the country's multilinguality to be reflected also in the official sign-posting.
- The occurrence of English is particularly interesting: If there are three languages on a sign, the third one is always English. Luxembourgish as the third language does not seem to be an option.
- Top-down signs tend to reproduce identical information in all the languages represented (homophonic signs), still, however, reflecting a certain bias by the frequent first position of French. Bottom-up signs, in contrast, show a bigger heterogeneity in language choice and also in dealing with the translation, meaning that polyphonic signs are more frequent in this category, requiring a higher level of multilingual competence for their decoding.
- In general, Luxembourgish is used relatively rarely on public signs and occurs more frequently in the bottom-up than in the top-down category. For many Luxembourgers, standard German is still the main written language, so that a parallel use of the closely related languages of German and Luxembourgish is considered to be redundant.

With regards to identity constructions, our LL case study seems, at first glance, to contradict both the results of the questionnaire survey presented earlier and of the analysis of the letters to the editor which clearly established the enormous significance of Luxembourgish in identity formation processes. In fact, public signage is marked by the dominance of French or by multilingualism without the participation of Luxembourgish. There are various reasons for the widespread absence of Luxembourgish, the country's official language: due to the still very dominant medial diglossia the use of Luxembourgish is restricted primarily to its oral form and it manages to penetrate only rather haltingly into those areas of the public domain where the written language prevails. The fact that Luxembourgish is still only moderately standardised is often seen as a further obstacle to using this

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language on public signage. There is too much uncertainty about committing an error. Although German is not represented on signs as rarely as one might think, it never occurs as the sole language (monophonic signs); rather, it is accompanied by French and also by English. The probable reason for this is the radical rejection of anything German immediately after the end of the Second World War .

4.5 Conclusion: Linguistic Polynomia as an Opportunity

The results presented emphatically confirm the relevance of the subject of multilingualism in Luxembourg. The co-existence, juxtaposition and occasional opposition of different languages is one of the constitutive conditions of Luxembourg's society. The complexity of the linguistic subject matter is demonstrated, for instance, by the way in which on the one hand outstanding importance is attributed to Luxembourgish, whereas this is only reflected to a very limited extent in public usage. Perhaps it seems, not least for this reason, Luxembourgish achieves its function as an identity forming language – an added value that neither French nor German can claim for itself. Despite having been used in the Grand Duchy for centuries and therefore being influential in school, press and administrative settings, these are considered by large parts of the population not as (other) mother tongues and therefore legitimate linguistic property but rather, as the languages of the neighbours.

Nonetheless, (specifically) Luxembourgish multilingualism is certainly recognised as being advantageous for the cultural and economic interests of the country. It represents a unique defining feature that makes Luxembourg a European, if not global, linguistic model. This too, as the study shows, is a fundamental element of Luxembourgish identity.

Luxembourg cannot function as a monolingual country but only on the basis of a linguistic consensus, which includes (at least) the country's three official languages. Only under this condition can the communicative efficiency of the country and the inclusion of the large foreign population groups be ensured – notwithstanding issues in the detail. However, one cannot speak of a linguistic conflict in Luxembourg, as exists, for instance, in Belgium, South Tyrol or the Basque Provinces.

In line with the premises of this investigation, identity is always to be understood in terms of continuously updating identity structure(s), drawing nourishment from public and private discourse. An essentialist approach to identity is aporistic and is not conducive to the current investigation. The society of (not only of) Luxembourg is so complex in its structure that a simple equation between language and identity is not possible: nominating Luxembourgish as the national language does not automatically mean that all inhabitants speak this language, that the state translates this linguistic-political decision into educational policy or that all sections of the population will interpret the first clause of the Language Act of 1984 ("*La langue*

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nationale des Luxembourgeois est le luxembourgeois"[46]) in the same vein. The same goes for the general principle of multilingualism: while the quantitative results in section 4.2 show that multilingualism is seen as a central cultural and social constant by almost all Luxembourgers, the same results also show that significant differences exist in terms of the manner in which to bring about this multilingual facility: thus the majority (43 %) is of the opinion that bilingualism is sufficient, while only 20 % are in favour of (the officially championed) trilingualism. This contradiction and heterogeneity is not solely due to the high proportion of foreigners, but rather it becomes evident that all parameters of social and cultural differentiation (i.e. milieu affiliation, age, gender etc.) can lead to constantly changing identity structures in which conflicts between 'appropriated' and 'attributed identities' can emerge. This inevitably leads to divergent notions about a 'good' and 'correct' structure of multilingualism, as the discussion of the letters to editors discourse has demonstrated. A linguistic identity, therefore, arises not from the languages involved but from specifically divergent notions as well as communicated and mediating discourses *about* the languages: "In this view, processes of identification take place through practice, which is not limited to the use of language, but includes representations of language (like discourses of endangerment)." (Jaffe 2007: 70)

Now, it may well be a matter of regret that no simple equation can be made between language (s) and identity and that, also in the case of Luxembourg, no simple formula exists for a national identity, however constituted. In point of fact, any society requires flexibility. Particularly in the case of multilingual communities with small regional languages, there is evidence to show that linguistic and therefore also social conflicts can be avoided if 'polynomia' (Marcellesi 2003) is permitted, i.e. the social acceptance of different linguistic standards and multilingual constellations.

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46 | Personal translation: "The Luxembourgers' national language is Luxembourgish".

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