

Language-in-Education Policy in Luxembourg

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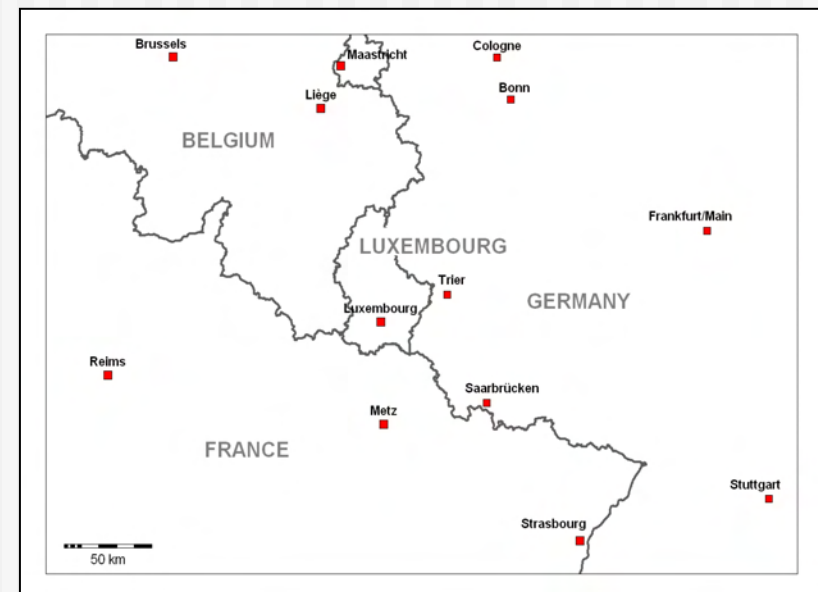
Overview of presentation

1. Language-in-education policy in Luxembourg
2. The discourse of integration
3. The effects of exclusionary language-in-education policies and hegemonic discourses

Luxembourg

(Statec 2009)

- Size: 2,586 km²
- Population: 493,000
- Resident foreigners: 43.7% (principally passport holders of other EU member-states)
- Workforce: +40% *frontaliers* 'border crossing commuters'
- One of the six founding EU member-states
- Luxembourg city: one of the three EU capital cities
- Officially recognized languages: Luxembourgish, German and French



The Luxembourgish educational system

- **Trilingual:** Luxembourgish/ German/ French
- **Compartmentalization of languages:** Luxembourgish in pre-school; German as the language for teaching basic literacy; French from near the end of the 2nd year of primary school onwards
- **Two separate tracks at secondary level:** lycées classiques and lycées techniques; non-Luxembourgish students: 37.9% of lycée technique students vs. 16.5% of lycée classique students
- **Students in the Luxembourgish school-system:** 63.6% of Luxembourgish citizenship and 36.4% of non-Luxembourgish citizenship. The latter group comprises a majority of Portuguese students (52.7%), followed by Ex-Yugoslavian (11.4%), Italian (7.7%), French (7.6%), Belgian (4.5%), German (3.2%) and Cape Verdian students (1.8%). These figures add up to about 74% potentially romanophone speakers.

Social cohesion?

- Only 16.3% of the luso-descendant pupils are oriented towards the elite lycées classiques, as opposed to 44.8% of 'Luxembourgish' pupils.
- For these 16.3% luso-descendant students who have access to the lycée classique, once they have completed their first year in lycée classique, 25.2% of their failing grades are in German, as opposed to only 3.7% for 'Luxembourgish' pupils.
- In the Luxembourgish school-system, the repetition rate (i.e. taking the same class twice because of failing grades) is 33% for luso-descendant pupils, as opposed to only 14.4% for 'Luxembourgish' pupils.

(Council of Europe 2005: 22)

Consequence: level of English

- English is only taught at secondary school level
- In lycées techniques, the acquisition of English is often limited to a fairly rudimentary level
- Yet: most important languages on labour market = French + English! (Klein 2007)

The language conflict in Luxembourg

- The roles of French vs Luxembourgish

The discourse of integration

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

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

The discourse of integration

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

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

The discourse of integration

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

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

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

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

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

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

Perspectives 'from below'

(interview data from Weber 2009)

- Clara on Portuguese and French:
Nous on commence depuis petit à avoir les deux langues.
We grow up with the two languages right from the beginning.
- Melinda:
Je crois pas parce que, quand on va en ville quelque part, même si des fois on veut parler luxembourgeois, les gens ils comprennent pas, il y a plus de gens qui comprennent le français que le luxembourgeois, alors c'est pas parce qu'on parle pas qu'on est pas intégré au Luxembourg.
I don't think [that you have to speak Luxembourgish] because, when you go into town somewhere, even if sometimes you want to speak Luxembourgish, people don't understand it, there are more people who understand French than Luxembourgish, so it's not because you don't speak [it] that you are not integrated in Luxembourg.

Experiencing language-in-education policy

La plupart que j'ai vu qui réussissent, ce sont les Luxembourgeois – peut-être qu'ils comprennent plus vite que nous.

Most of those who I've seen succeeding [in the Luxembourgeois school-system] are the Luxembourgers – maybe because they understand things more quickly than we do.

Experiencing language-in-education policy

en biologie, on parlait des animaux ou des plantes, des choses en biologie qu'on apprend en allemand; c'était un peu plus dur, c'était beaucoup plus dur, parce que les mots allemands en biologie, c'est très difficile; il fallait vraiment demander à chaque fois que je ne comprenais pas, je devais demander mot par mot au professeur pour qu'il me les explique; les Luxembourgeois ils comprenaient déjà.

in biology we spoke about animals or plants, things in biology that we learn in German; it was a little harder, it was much harder, because the German words in biology, they are very difficult; I really had to ask each time I didn't understand, I had to ask the teacher one word after the other so that he would explain them to me; the Luxembourgers, they understood already.

Experiencing language-in-education policy

Dat huet den Här Lehrer eis op Franséisch erkläert, wat déi verschidde Wierder ... also 't war och ganz schwéier fir den Här Lehrer, fir eis d'Saache bäizebréngen; mir sinn och ganz lues weiderkomm, well eben do déi Barrière war vun der Sprooch.

The schoolmaster explained it [German as the language of basic literacy] to us in French, what the various words [mean] ... indeed, it was also very difficult for the schoolmaster to teach us things; we advanced very slowly, because there was this language barrier.

Some conclusions

- Shift focus to social equality/inequality
- Unpack discourses of social cohesion and integration
- ‘Mother tongue’ education not automatically progressive
- Need to look for suitable ‘bridges into literacy’ (Weber 2009)