



Migration, Language Policies, and Language Rights in Luxembourg

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Abstract. This paper deals with the state of language rights in Luxembourg in the light of immigration and the multilingualism associated with it. Although Luxembourg might appear to be an ideal case of multilingualism with three official languages (Luxembourgish, French, and German), the reality is very different because its language policies are marked by a hierarchy: while Luxembourgish has the symbolic dominance as the ‘national language’, French is the preferred language in the workplace and administration. The situation has become complex due to the steady influx of immigrants since the 1970s. Currently, more than 40 per cent of Luxembourg’s population consists of foreigners, and this has changed the linguistic situation in the sense that Portuguese has become one of the most widely spoken languages in Luxembourg, although it does not enjoy any legal safeguards. Taking account of this multilingual scenario, this paper examines the rights of different linguistic communities in Luxembourg. On the one hand, there is the need to protect Luxembourgish, which is the majority language in Luxembourg but a minority language when compared to other national languages of Europe, while, on the other hand, the needs of its Portuguese-speaking community also have to be taken into account since the use of German as the medium of instruction at primary level disadvantages them. Finally, the paper will also consider the role and the future of the other two main languages (French and German).

Keywords: language rights, language policies, immigration, language testing, legal discourse, Luxembourg

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to examine the state of language rights in Luxembourg in the context of immigration and the language policies devised to deal with the multilingualism resulting from immigration. Luxembourg has traditionally been a multilingual state, and the steady influx of immigrants since its economy

shifted from the industrial sector to the service sector in the 1970s has enriched its multilingual character. Kollwelter and Sadler (2013: 4–5) observe that since the end of the nineteenth century migration has significantly contributed to the economic and social development of Luxembourg and argue that ‘given Luxembourg’s ageing population, having a large migrant workforce is considered an economic necessity’. However, as the immigrant communities do not have any voting rights, Kollwelter and Sadler (2013: *ibid.*) posit that the high percentages of ‘foreigners’ not integrated in the democratic process create a democratic deficit and thus a political challenge for the country in which ‘less and less people [are] making political choices for a growing foreign population’.

This democratic deficit named above also reflects the socio-political status of different languages spoken in Luxembourg, such as Portuguese which has gained a strong presence in Luxembourg due to decades of immigration but does not have any official recognition. The national language of Luxembourg is Luxembourgish (also known as ‘Lëtzebuergesch’), which is spoken by more than half of the population as the ‘main language’ (see *Table 1*).¹ However, the language most used in the workplace is French, even though it is spoken by a relatively small section of the population as compared to Luxembourgish (Luxemburger Wort 2016). German, on the other hand, dominates the print media (Official Portal of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg 2016)

Table 1. *Languages spoken in Luxembourg*

Main language	Number of speakers	Percentage
Luxembourgish	265,731	55.8%
Portuguese	74,636	15.7%
French	57,633	12.1%
German	14,658	3.1%
Italian	13,896	2.9%
English	10,018	2.1%
Other languages	40,042	8.4%
TOTAL	476,614	—

Source: Fehlen et al. 2013

- 1 The data mentioned in *Table 1* are based on a German-language summary of a report by the national statistical institute known as *Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques* (or STATEC). The summary uses the term ‘die am besten beherrschte Sprache’, which I translate as ‘the language which one commands or knows best’. The report also uses the term ‘Hauptsprache’ (main language) as an alternative. See Fehlen et al. 2013. There were two questions on the basis of which these data were collected. The first question concerned the language which the speakers think in and know the best. The second question was ‘which language(s) do you usually speak: at home, with loved ones? at school, at work?’. While there was only one possible answer for the first question, several responses were possible to the second question. However, the choice concerned only the six most common languages selected. The others are grouped into one category. See Heinz & Fehlen 2016.

Of the languages mentioned above, Luxembourgish, French, and German are recognized as official languages, and, as mentioned above, Portuguese does not have any official status despite being the second most widely spoken ‘main language’, which may be due to the fact that Portuguese does not have a historical presence in Luxembourg in the way Luxembourgish, French, or German do. The steady immigration (of mainly Portuguese-speaking immigrants) has created a challenging situation for the policymakers in the sense that the existing language-in-education policy influences their overall school success rate in Luxembourg. The medium of instruction for a large part of primary-level schooling is German, which is relatively more accessible to Luxembourgish speakers due to the closeness of Luxembourgish and German, but which works to the disadvantage of the Portuguese-speaking pupils. The official policies have hardly considered Portuguese-medium instruction as an option because the policies have so far focused on protecting Luxembourgish. While it is understandable that official policies strive to promote Luxembourgish, as although it is the majority language in Luxembourg but a minority language when compared to the other national languages of Europe, the needs of its immigrant community also have to be taken into account. Finally, one needs to consider the historical changes in the socio-political status of French and German, the two other key languages of Luxembourg apart from Luxembourgish and Portuguese. The change in the priorities of language policies over time has had an impact on the status of French and German. In view of the context presented above, the paper tries to find the hidden agendas of Luxembourg’s language policies and examines how language policies marginalize and alienate different language communities. Second, the paper considers how the rights of different linguistic communities interact with each other and the implications such interactions have for these communities.

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework consists of two key concepts of language policy research: language rights and hidden agendas in language policies. The issue of language rights was brought to the fore by Ruíz (1984) through his threefold ‘orientations’ model, in which he acknowledges ‘language as a right’ as one of the main orientations in language planning.² However, the main scholarly impetus was offered by scholars such as Tove Skutnabb-Kangas and Robert Phillipson, who in one of their essays rename ‘language rights’ as ‘linguistic human rights’ and argue that the notion of linguistic human rights is reflected by the collective

2 Ruíz (1984: 16) defines ‘orientations’ as a complex of dispositions toward language and its role and toward languages and their role in society. Ruíz’s threefold orientation model describes ‘language as problem’, ‘language as a right’, and ‘language as a resource’.

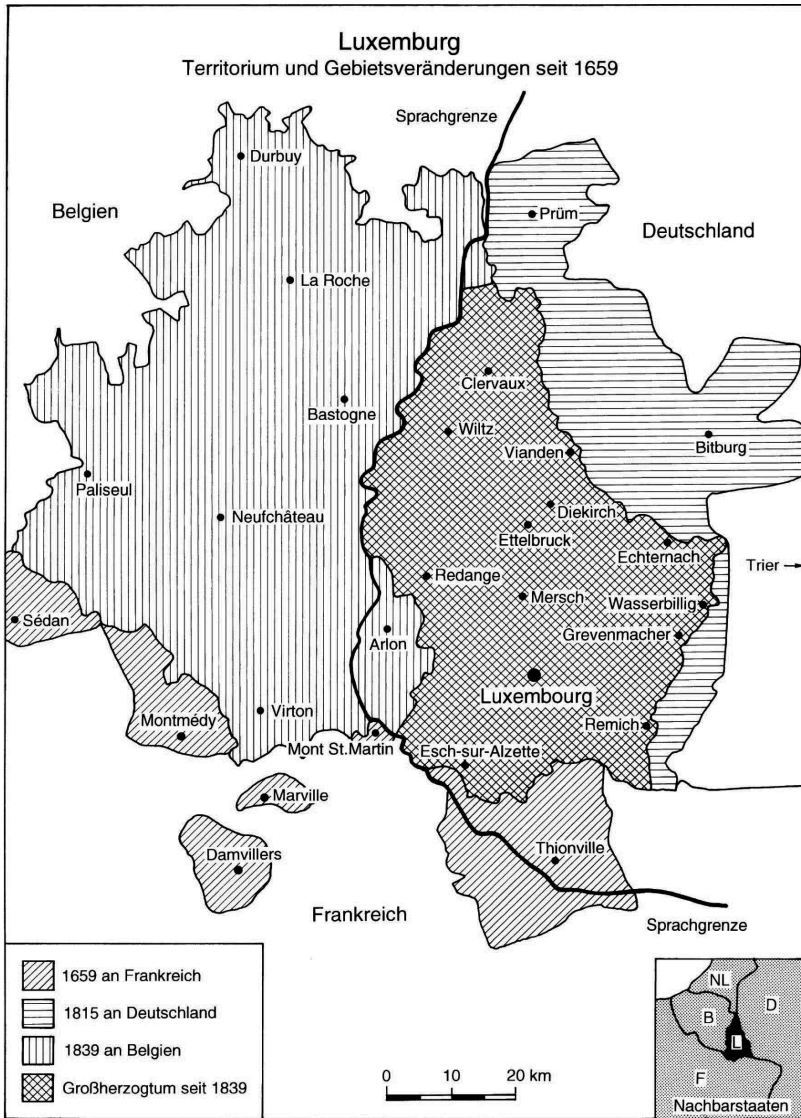
rights of varied linguistic communities to maintain their ethnolinguistic identity and difference from the dominant society and its language (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson 1995). The maintenance of such an identity was laid out in the Recife Declaration of 1983, which emphasized, amongst others, the right of every child to fully learn the language or languages of her/his group and the right of every person to use any language of her/his group in any official situation (see Phillipson 1992: 107). Although the argument for language rights is sometimes criticized for being ‘essentialist’ (cf. May 2003), I argue that the validity of such criticism can only be measured by examining the specific contexts. As far as the Luxembourgish case is concerned, I argue that languages are central to the different group identities, as, even when Portuguese language speakers acquire Luxembourgish, their identity can still be deciphered using their accent, which can lead to them being exposed to biases (cf. Weber 2009: 124–125).

The second theoretical viewpoint concerns ‘hidden agendas’ in language policies. In her seminal work on hidden agendas, Shohamy (2006) speaks of ‘overt’ and ‘covert’ mechanisms through which languages are manipulated and controlled. According to Shohamy (2006), these mechanisms are language policy tools, the effects and consequences of which can lead to violations of democratic processes and of personal or language rights. As Shohamy argues, it is the existence of such mechanisms and their effects on covertly creating actual language policy that make up hidden agendas, which are unknown to the public. Shohamy (2006) recommends examining language policies in ‘a broader perspective that includes mechanisms, policies and practices as well as the set of negotiations, conversations and battles that take place among them’. As it is one of the aims of the paper to find the hidden agendas of the language policies in Luxembourg, I shall – apart from looking at the historical and socio-political context – also examine the legislation that directly or indirectly shapes the language policies in Luxembourg.

3. Historical Context

In order to analyse the language policies of Luxembourg, it is also important to gain an understanding of the emergence of a national identity in Luxembourg, its multilingualism, the different degrees of valorization ascribed to different languages spoken there, and the emergence of Luxembourgish as a language in its own right. If we look at the historiography of Luxembourg, the point that often resurfaces in the representations of Luxembourg’s history is the theme of ‘foreign occupation’, which is related to the fact that Luxembourg was under the occupation of neighbouring European powers for four centuries, also referred to as the ‘four centuries of domination’ (cf. Davis 1994: 31). Moreover, there is also the theme of the ‘three partitions’, which refers to the territorial losses that

Luxembourg underwent due to the Treaty of the Pyrenees in 1659, the Congress of Vienna in 1817, and the Treaty of London in 1839 (see Fig. 1).



Source: Fröhlich and Hoffmann 2006: 1160

Fig. 1. Changes in Luxembourgish territory since 1659. The dark line represents the French–German linguistic boundary. The diagonal lines represent the territory ceded to France in 1659, the horizontal lines represent the territory ceded to Germany in 1815, and the vertical lines represent the territory ceded to Belgium in 1839.

According to Horner and Weber (2008: 72), these territorial losses are linked to the ‘image of a shrinking territory’. I find it important to underline that any talk of an ‘image of a shrinking territory’ should not ignore the fact that Luxembourg’s territory grew significantly in the first four centuries of its foundation.³ Moreover, the narrative of ‘foreign occupation’ is not entirely true because in the 14th century Luxembourg was in control of Bohemia and was seen as a foreign entity there (Newcomer 1984). The history and historiography did, however, have an impact on the collective memory. To cite an example, in 1934, Marcel Noppeney, the founder of the Society of Luxembourgian Writers of the French Language (*Société des écrivains luxembourgeois de langue française*), commented that ‘having lived as serfs of foreign nations for four centuries, the Luxembourgers still have the mentality of terrorised slaves’ (quoted after Péporté et al. 2010: 10).

The much-talked-about ‘four centuries of domination’ started in 1443 when – through burden of debt – the Duchy was acquired by Philipp the Good, Duke of Burgundy (Dijon), who established his legislature at Malines/Mechelen (modern Belgium) (Newton 1996: *ibid.*). The first of three partitions occurred in 1659 as a result of the conflict between France and Spain, when Luxembourg was part of the Spanish Habsburg Empire. Under the Treaty of the Pyrenees (1659), which was the first international treaty after the Peace of Westphalia to include specific reference to a delineated boundary between two sovereign countries, France gained control of part of the southern territory of Luxembourg and the towns of Thionville/Diedenhofen and Montemedey (Shelley 2013: 45). The second partition occurred at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 at the end of the Napoleonic wars. Scholars such as Horner and Weber (2008: 72) and Fehlen (2013: 13) argue that the second partition initiated the development of modern Luxembourg, as it was granted the status of a Grand Duchy and proclaimed to be an independent state. However, such independence was insignificant because the treaty stipulated that King William I (1772–1843), monarch of the newly created ‘Kingdom of the Netherlands’, would be the ruling sovereign of the Grand Duchy (Horner/Weber 2008: *ibid.*). Under this treaty, 2,280 km² (880 sq. miles) of territory lying to the east of the rivers Moselle, Sûre, and Our, including the towns of Bitburg (Germany) and St Vith (since 1920 part of ‘New Belgium’), had been ceded to Prussia (Newton 1996: 10). On Prussian insistence, the Grand Duchy also became part of the German Confederation (*Deutscher Bund*) with the result that, while Luxembourg formed part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, its fortress was also part of the German Confederation, and garrisoned until 1867 by the troops of Prussia (Newton 1996: *ibid.*).

3 Henry of Namur (1112–1196) expanded the original Luxembourgish territory to Hainault, Limburg, and Brabant, which was expanded through marital alliances between Luxembourgish and other royal families. In 1214, the marriage of Ermesinde of Luxembourg (1196–1247) to Walram of Limburg (1165–1226) extended the territory to Arlon, Falkenstein, Bitburg, and Dahl, and the kingdom of Bohemia became part of Luxembourg upon the marriage of Henry’s son John ‘the Blind’ (1296–1346) to Elizabeth of Bohemia (1292–1330). See Newton (1996: 6–8).

In 1830, the southern section of the Kingdom of the Netherlands broke away from the north in a revolution which began in Brussels on 25 August 1830 and eventually led to the proclamation of Belgian independence on 18 November of the same year (Newton 1996: 10). The conflict between Belgium and the Netherlands continued until 1839, when the Treaty of London was signed. Under the terms of this treaty, Belgium was recognized as an independent state. The Treaty of London also resolved the status of Luxembourg and delineated the boundary between Belgium and Luxembourg (Shelley 2013: 83). The eastern section of the Grand Duchy remained William's personal possession, which he reassumed on 11 June 1839, and part of the German Confederation; a western section of 4,320 km² (1668 sq. miles) fell to Belgium (Newton 1996: *ibid.*). This event is known as the Third Partition of Luxembourg.

According to Kirps and Reitz (2001: 2), the Treaty of London (1839) marked the beginning of a new era because of the growing awareness of national identity. The citizens of Luxembourg requested William II, who came to power after his father William I abdicated in 1840, that Luxembourg should be ruled by Luxembourgers (Newton 1996: 12). Such a request can be seen as a reaction to the policy of 'Germanization' pursued by William I (cf. Newton 1996: *ibid.*). His advisor, Christian-Ernest Stifft, a German from Nassau, had worked on reports that compiled a dossier of Luxembourgish institutions and persons accused of anti-Dutch sentiments. This policy intensified when Hans Daniel Hassenpflug (1794–1862), who was appointed by William I as head of the civil administration in 1839, set about his goals of 'harmonising the administration in accordance with that of Germany, dispelling the ideas of independent national sovereignty, inculcating fear of the grand duke, and bringing about absolute compliance with his orders' (cf. Newton 1996: 12).

While the accounts of occupation by the Netherlands, Belgium, and Prussia are not to be questioned, the narrative that Luxembourg was constantly at the receiving end of foreign (especially Prussian) aggression is contested by many authors; however, it remains an important constituting element of the Luxembourgish national identity. Luxembourg had been a member of the German Customs Union (Zollverein) since 1842, which, according to Newton (1996: 12), led to 'a period of industrial development and prosperity'.⁴ Moreover, Luxembourg – which was declared neutral through the revised Treaty of London in 1867 – was not entirely neutral during the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871) fought in Lorraine, because it allowed food supplies for the French at Thionville to be routed on the railway track which ran through the Grand Duchy (Newton 1996: 13). In spite of such

4 According to Newcomer (1984: 219), the Zollverein provided an outlet for agricultural products as well as manufactured products, and later a protective tariff helped Luxembourg. By the end of the 19th century, Luxembourg was producing one-seventh of the total cast iron production of the Zollverein member states, and Germany itself purchased half of Luxembourg's production (Newcomer 1984: 218).

crucial evidence, the narratives of being perpetual victims of foreign aggression have played an important role in the history of Luxembourg and continue to influence the public discourses on ‘the foreign’ in Luxembourg.

Two global events that influenced not just the socio-political but also linguistic history of Luxembourg were World War I and World War II. The neutrality guaranteed through the 1867 Treaty of London was violated in 1914 when Luxembourg was occupied by German troops, although the government was left intact and Luxembourg was not incorporated into the German state (Horner & Weber 2008: 74). However, during World War II, the Nazi government incorporated Luxembourg into the Third Reich in 1940 and justified it using the argument that Luxembourgers were ethnically and linguistically German (Horner & Weber 2008: *ibid.*). During the occupation, the Luxembourgish language became an instrument of resisting the Nazi rule. For example, the speeches read out by Grand-Duchess Charlotte via BBC London were in Luxembourgish. Moreover, in October 1941, a census was administered, including questions on *Jetzige Staatsangehörigkeit* (current citizenship), *Muttersprache* (mother tongue), and *Volkszugehörigkeit* (ethnicity), to which many people answered with ‘Lëtzebuergesch’: this act of symbolic protest against Nazi authority is known as *dräimol Lëtzebuergesch* (‘three times Luxembourgish’) (cf. Horner & Weber 2008: *ibid.*). The role played by Luxembourgish during World War II was a key factor in it being perceived as a symbol of Luxembourgish identity.

Although it can be argued that the role played by Luxembourgish in World War II was the reason why it was designated the ‘*langue nationale*’ (national language) of Luxembourg, some scholars also take into account a number of other factors. Garcia (2014: 120), whilst pointing out that the post-war efforts to establish Luxembourgish as a language in its own right were not enthusiastically received by the public, cites two main reasons for the resurgence of Luxembourgish. First, European integration started to be seen more and more in terms of loss of national sovereignty, and the implications of the delegation of power to the supranational level become visible directly in the field of language in the sense that in 1983 EU laws guaranteeing the mobility of member state nationals prevented the Luxembourgish state from imposing strict language criteria on doctors (Garcia 2014: *ibid.*). Second, the growing number of immigrants since the 1970s started to be perceived as a threat, and the publication of the Calot report in 1978, which focused on the demography of Luxembourg, ‘triggered a wave of alarmist discourses around the idea that Luxembourgish people are bound to disappear’ (Garcia 2014: *ibid.*). ‘Echoing this existential crisis’, as Garcia (2014: *ibid.*) notes, ‘the Luxembourgish language was presented as threatened by extinction, and it became ever more legitimate to call for its protection’. Luxembourgish was officially declared the national language of Luxembourg in 1984, and the government has since then actively made efforts to promote Luxembourgish in the different spheres of public life.

4. Demographical Changes and Voting Rights

It has already been mentioned in the sections above that there was a steady influx of immigrants in Luxembourg for some decades. According to Horner and Weber (2008: 69–70), the number of non-Luxembourgish citizens living in Luxembourg has been increasing steadily since the end of World War II, especially since the 1970s. In 1981, the total population of ‘resident foreigners’ amounted to 26.3%, which increased to 29.4% in 1991.⁵ It rose further to 36.9% in 2001, reaching 39.6% in 2006 and 43.5% in 2011.

Table 2. *Luxembourg’s population over years (Official Statistics Portal, Luxembourg 2017)*

Year	1981	1991	2001	2011	2016
Population (x 1,000)	364.6	384.4	439.5	511.4	576.2
Luxembourgers	268.8	271.4	277.2	291.9	307.0
Foreigners	95.8	113.0	162.3	220.5	269.2
– of which: Portuguese	29.3	39.1	58.7	82.4	93.1
Foreigners in %	26.3	29.4	36.9	43	46.7

Of the foreigners (either born abroad or in Luxembourg), the greatest population is of Portuguese nationality. Kollwelter (2007) makes an interesting claim when he states that ‘while the government maintained no explicit policy regarding immigration for much of the twentieth century, the implicit policy centred on accepting mainly white, Catholic, European immigrants from Italy and Portugal’.⁶ Moreover, it is to be noted that despite forming a significant proportion of the population, residents of foreign nationalities do not enjoy any voting rights in Luxembourg. In a referendum conducted in June 2015, more than 70% of the Luxembourg voters voted against granting foreigners the right to vote (Luxemburger Wort 2015a). Ingleby and Kremer (2017) posit that ‘perhaps because it is such a small country and has been occupied many times, Luxembourg is highly protective of its own values and traditions’.

5 Horner and Weber (2008: 69) use the term ‘resident foreigner’ for ‘foreigners with a residence permit’. It is a translation of the French term *résidents étrangers*. The term ‘resident foreigner’ is also to be found in English-language versions of certain official Luxembourgish websites. Cf. The Official Portal of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg 2017.

6 An explanation for such a policy can be found by looking at the historical context: Horner and Weber (2008: 72–73) note that, prior to the formation of the state and the subsequent declaration of neutrality, the Catholic Church had served to provide a sense of cultural unification and had a major impact in many areas of social and political life.

5. Varied Identities and Hidden Agendas

The protective stance that the government assumes to ensure the dominance of Luxembourgish over other languages can be understood by examining the different language policy mechanisms which also create varied identities. The policy mechanisms analysed here mainly consist of official statutes. The first key statute is the 1984 language law (officially *loi du 24 février 1984 sur le régime des langues*, or Law of 24 February 1984 on Language Regime), Article 1 of which officially recognized Luxembourgish as the ‘*langue nationale*’ (national language). The intertwining of the Luxembourgish language with the national identity induced by the 1984 law was further underscored by the *loi du 23 octobre 2008 sur la nationalité luxembourgeoise* (Law of 23 October 2008 on Luxembourgish Nationality), also known as the 2008 Nationality Law, as it made knowledge of Luxembourgish a mandatory criterion for naturalization: Article 7 of 2008 law decrees that applicants shall not be naturalized until they show evidence of ‘*intégration suffisante*’ (sufficient integration), which is proven if a candidate passes a test of Spoken Luxembourgish and has ‘sufficient active and passive knowledge of at least one of the languages’ (i.e. Luxembourgish, French, or German).⁷

The naturalization criterion can be analysed from the viewpoint of different stakeholders. First, it should be considered that there is a need to protect and promote Luxembourgish as, while it is a majority language in Luxembourg, it is a minority language compared to other national languages of Europe. The Recife Declaration also applies to the Luxembourgish-speaking community as it has the right to protect its language. The question, however, is whether the implementation of such rights can be allowed to interfere with the interests of other language communities. This issue is intertwined with the second viewpoint, which says that ‘expelling and de-legitimising people because of their not knowing the dominant language is a form of violation of language rights’ (Shohamy 2006: 106). Knowledge of a power language, as Shohamy (2006: *ibid.*) argues, should not be used as a condition ‘for living’. However, the language-testing mechanism did impact the rights of communities that do not speak Luxembourgish, as the data reveal that the success rate in the naturalization tests has steadily fallen from 91 per cent to 63 per cent since the introduction of the language test in 2008 (Luxemburger Wort 2015b). Moreover, according to a poll conducted in 2015, more than 70 per cent of the voters were against a simplification of the test (Luxemburger Wort 2015c).

Citizenship test is not the only area where language skills are instrumentalized to maintain the hegemony of Luxembourgish. Even in the administrative domain,

7 Clause b of Article 7 (cited above) states that applicants for naturalization have to demonstrate that their listening skills in Luxembourgish should be B1, while their spoken skills should be A2 (in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).

the dominance of Luxembourgish is ensured as it is mandatory for being selected for high-ranking government positions. For example, the preliminary and final examinations for several posts in the parliamentary administration (such as administrative officer, editor, etc.) require the candidates to pass a Luxembourgish language test of 60 points, which is equal to the combined weightage of other languages, which include French, German, and/or English.⁸ This kind of language testing ensures that high-ranking positions are not accessible to those who do not speak Luxembourgish. As Kollwelter (2007) notes, ‘Luxembourgers [...] work mainly in the civil service, leaving most of the production and innovation sector work to immigrants and commuters from border areas’.

The efforts to promote Luxembourgish have naturally impacted the fate of the other languages in Luxembourg. The status of French and German, the other two administrative languages of Luxembourg, has changed significantly in the course of time. Currently, they are recognized as administrative and judicial languages (*langues administratives et judiciaires*); however, in the past, they were referred to as ‘national languages’. For example, a royal decree from 1835 stipulates that French and German are national languages of the Royal Duchy.⁹ Although the official status and the public perception of these languages have changed in the course of time, they have remained of strategic and pragmatic value. However, the recent shifts in policymaking show an increasing tendency towards the alienation of these languages. For example, the 2014 Grand-Ducal Regulation on a National Support Fund for audio-visual productions decrees that one of the criteria for the allocation of funding concerns the promotion of Luxembourg’s image, and such promotion consists in highlighting the sociocultural heritage of Luxembourg, its history, its historical and cultural sites, and ‘its language’.¹⁰ It is an interesting formulation because it ignores the historical association of French and German with Luxembourg.

6. Education and Exclusion

So far, I have focused on the official efforts to promote Luxembourgish and the alienation of French and German that results from such policies. This section highlights the othering of immigrant communities in schools due to the language

8 The statutes related to preliminary and final examinations for different parliamentary positions are to be found in *Texte Cordonne du Règlement de la chambre des Députés*. See the references for details.

9 *Arrêté de sa Majesté du 4 janvier 1835* (see the references).

10 The original text reads as follows: ‘Le Comité instruit les demandes et évalue les projets en considérant [...] les critères concernant la promotion du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, tels que: l’intérêt du projet pour le rayonnement de l’image de marque du pays et la promotion de son patrimoine socio-culturel, son histoire, ses sites historiques et touristiques, sa langue’. See: *Règlement grand-ducal du 4 novembre 2014 portant exécution de la loi du 22 septembre 2014 relative au Fonds national de soutien à la production audiovisuelle*.

policies. Luxembourg follows a ‘trilingualism’ policy for the teaching of different languages in schools, which means that the medium of instruction gradually changes as pupils move to higher stages of school-level education. The medium of instruction in the first year of primary education is Luxembourgish, while the medium of instruction in the second, third, and fourth years of primary education is German.¹¹ The use of Luxembourgish, French, and German is allowed for explaining certain subjects, but written explanations are given in German.¹²

Such a language policy is disadvantageous to pupils who do not speak Luxembourgish (or German or French) at home. It should be noted that Luxembourg’s school population is marked by a huge diversity when it comes to languages. Although Luxembourgish is still the majority language in school, the difference between the number of pupils speaking Luxembourgish and Portuguese as their first language has reduced significantly over the years (from 18.4% to 9.8%; see *Table 3*). On the other hand, the other two official languages, French and German, are spoken as a mother tongue by only 12.6% and 2% of the pupils respectively.

Table 3. *Mother tongue spoken by pupils registered in the Luxembourgish school system*

Mother tongue	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014
Luxembourgish	45.9%	41.5%	39.9%	38.7%
Portuguese	27.5%	28.2%	28.7%	28.9%
French	11.1%	11.5%	11.9%	12.6%
Serbo-Croatian	5.2%	5.5%	5.6%	6.4%
German	2%	2%	2%	2%
Italian	1.8%	1.9%	1.9%	1.9%
Other	8.3%	9.3%	9.8%	9.5%

These data reflect the structure of the Luxembourgish population. After Luxembourgish, the main nationalities are Portuguese and French. The first third-country language is Serbo-Croatian, which is consistent with the large population originating from the western Balkans living in Luxembourg (Dionisio 2015).

A study conducted in the early 1990s by Kathryn Davis showed that the students from the Romanophone group are disproportionately represented in technical secondary schools (Davis 1994: 112–116). This trend has not changed much since then, as is clear from *Table 4* in the following, which shows that 85.6% of the students of Portuguese nationality attend technical secondary schools, while for Luxembourgers this proportion is only 53.5%.

11 *Règlement grand-ducal du 11 août 2011 fixant le plan d’études pour les quatre cycles de l’enseignement fondamental.*

12 See Art. 4, *ibid.*

Table 4. *The proportion of students who completed schooling in different streams in the year 2007–08*

	Nationality					Total
	Luxembour- gish	Portuguese	Ex- Yugoslavian	Other EU	Other non-EU	
ES	46.5%	14.4%	17.6%	42.9%	51.9%	42%
EST	53.5%	85.6%	82.4%	57.1%	48.1%	58%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Ministère de la Famille et de l'Intégration (2010: 63)

ES stands for ‘*enseignement secondaire*’ (secondary education), while *EST* refers to ‘*enseignement secondaire technique*’ (technical secondary education).

Furthermore, the percentage of students who complete the higher secondary level is relatively low. In 2012, the percentage of upper secondary school students who completed their education in the expected time was 40, which is significantly lower than the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) average of 72% (Luxemburger Wort 2014b). It is interesting that in 2005 this number was even lower, as only 16.7% of young people obtain successfully the secondary school leaving diploma (Horner & Weber 2008: 88). The performance of Luxembourgish has remained consistently ‘below average’ in the international assessment known as the Programme for International Student Assessment (Luxemburger Wort 2013). Such consistent poor performance led the former Minister of Education Mady Delvaux-Stehres to understand the drawbacks of the rigid trilingualism practised in Luxembourgish schools, as she noted that ‘[...] we have yet to adapt our system to the heterogeneous population in our schools [...] to get better results, we must take the different language profiles into consideration early on and offer instruction better suited to each individual’ (Chrillesen 2013).

However, the views expressed by Delvaux-Stehres have yet to be translated into reality. Weber (2009: 48) points towards contradictions of two kinds of discourses practised in Luxembourg. While many of the discourses on the international level project an image of the Grand Duchy as inhabited by a homogenous population with Luxembourgish as a home language and German, French, and English as additional languages, the domestic discourses present a completely different picture (cf. Weber 2009: *ibid.*). In the domestic discourses, as Weber (2009: *ibid.*) elucidates, cultural and linguistic diversity is portrayed as being at the root of the problem (i.e. the poor performance of Luxembourg in PISA). Immigration patterns rather than pedagogical concerns are seen as being more directly connected to the results of Luxembourg (Horner & Weber 2009: *ibid.*). According to Carey and Ernst (2006: 12), the authorities have long been aware that trilingual education creates a more challenging learning environment for many students, and the authorities even considered creating a two-track literacy system with a choice between

German-language literacy and French-language literacy. However, following a debate in 2000 on the language education and integration of immigrant children, the parliament rejected this option out of the concern that it would undermine social unity by creating two distinct linguistic communities, i.e. German-speaking and French-speaking (Carey & Ernst 2006: *ibid.*).

Finally, talking of inclusive pedagogy seems problematic, when, for example, there are cases of children being punished for using their first language in the classroom. According to a ‘Luxemburger Wort’ report from 2014, Portuguese children in Luxembourg are being punished and separated from the group if they speak Portuguese in some kindergartens (Luxemburger Wort 2014a). The prohibition on the use of the mother tongue is a violation of the language rights of immigrant communities living in Luxembourg. Furthermore, Weber (2009: 113) offers the example of a Lusophone student who has been sometimes told by his classmates to stop speaking Portuguese (*‘Hal op Portugiesesch ze schwätzen, mir sinn hei ze Lëtzebuerg’*, translation: ‘stop speaking Portuguese, we are here in Luxembourg’). The Luxembourgish utterance indicates an essentialist position because it links a given language to a certain territory (*ibid.*). The interesting aspect of the interview with this Lusophone student is that he speaks French for the most of the interview and uses Luxembourgish only when referring to the discriminatory remarks made by his classmates: such differentiated use of languages to represent contrastive ideological positions means that the aforementioned student distances himself from the ‘one nation – one language’ ideology, which underpins the discriminatory remarks made by his classmates.¹³

7. Conclusions

An analysis of Luxembourg’s language policies shows that the policy mechanisms are devised in a way that brings the rights of different communities into conflict. The Luxembourgish-speaking community has the right to protect and promote its language; however, such protection and promotion has impact on the interests of other linguistic communities. The case of language testing used for determining naturalization stands for the violation of language rights of the people as it tries to ‘de-legitimize’ people on the basis of them not knowing a given language. Moreover, the use of language testing as a selection criterion for highly-ranked government positions reveals how language is instrumentalized to maintain the

13 An important perspective that can contribute to discussions on language rights of minorities would be taking into account what the interests and ideologies of these minority groups are. In Luxembourg’s context, one can refer to works such as Beirão (1999), who conducts interviews with Portuguese or Portuguese-origin workers. I have preferred Weber (2009) to Beirão (1999) to refer to interviews with minority groups because the latter tends to evaluate the linguistic resources of immigrants negatively by describing their linguistic varieties as a ‘mixture’.

hegemony of the Luxembourgish language and the community that commands this language, as officials working in powerful government positions can influence the language policies and policymaking processes.

As far as the language-in-education policy is concerned, it is problematic because it does not take into account the needs and interests of the people who do not speak any of the official languages at home. This has led to Luxembourgish students performing below average in international assessments. While certain officials have come to realize the drawbacks of Luxembourg's policy, domestic discourses see immigration as the main cause of unimpressive PISA scores of Luxembourg's students. The forced integration policy, which can be described as being driven by the ideology of the dominant, needs thorough revisions.

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