Renegotiating language policies and practices: multilingual Luxembourg in late modernity

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Keywords
language policy, multilingualism, globalization, Europeanization, Luxembourg, discourse analysis, identity and power dynamics

Topic in relation to conference themes
Taking fluctuations in Luxembourgish language policy as the starting point for our discussion, this workshop is informed by two key theoretical points that have been flagged in recent language policy scholarship. The first is the move to view language policy as encompassing much more than documents declaring ‘official’ and ‘national’ languages, which in turn is connected to the assertion that language policy is never absent and that it is necessary for scholars to grapple with both explicit and implicit dimensions of policy. The papers in this workshop explore the dynamics of language policy in a wide range of settings, dealing with top-down implementations as well as practices ‘from below’ ranging from compliance to resistance. The focus on the interrelationship between social structures and linguistic practices resonates well with the conference theme seeking to highlight connections between the micro and macro dimensions of social life. Building on the micro-macro interface in a further sense, the second point that will be stressed is that research on language policy needs to take into account dynamics on the global, regional and local levels in addition to those at the state level.

Research background and workshop objectives
In Ricento’s (2000) influential article sketching three stages of language policy and planning scholarship, he maintains that there has been a shift away from the dominance of structuralist paradigms towards approaches foregrounding agency and social processes. This has raised new questions concerning traditional distinctions such as language vs. dialect and monolingualism vs. bilingualism. Unpacking the ways in which language varieties are valorized and stigmatized in various contexts is now viewed with increasing urgency. Given the historical trajectories and present-day manifestations of multilingualism in Luxembourg (see Davis, 1994), it provides a fruitful location to explore questions situated at the cutting edge of sociolinguistic inquiry. The central aim of this workshop is to advance language policy scholarship as it relates to the ways in which social actors are responding to the processes of Europeanization and accelerated globalization in the late modern period.
Discussion questions

- What can be gained by studying both implicit and explicit language policy (Shohamy, 2006)? In what ways are corpus and status planning bound up with one another? How do linguistic practices impact upon social structures rather than merely reflect them?
- How do we locate the critical historical moments central to language ideological debates (Blommaert, 1999)? What role do various social actors, e.g. media producers, ministry officials and politicians, play in relation to the mediation and circulation of language debates, as well as shaping language varieties that are valorized and/or used? In what ways do individuals cooperate with or resist top-down policies in the course of their everyday lives?
- How can language policy scholarship be reconfigured to deal with the processes of accelerated globalization (Coupland, 2003)? In what ways do social transformations bound up with late modernity underline the need to go beyond the state as the unit of analysis? How can researchers better grapple with the multidimensional and potentially negotiable nature of language policy?

Organization of workshop

The workshop will be three hours and will consist of four presentations, each of which will be 20 minutes in length followed by 10 minutes for questions and focused discussion. The session will commence with a 20 minute introduction and 10 minute question forum to provide the overarching framework for the remaining four papers, all of which deal with aspects of language policy and practice in multiple settings in Luxembourg. The analyses are qualitative in nature, thus underlining the centrality of discourse as a means to understanding the negotiation of language policies and practices. Specialists in the field of language policy will provide two 10 minute responses and the workshop will close with an open discussion of 10 minutes.

Timetable

1. Introduction: Luxembourgish language policy in late modernity, Kristine Horner (30 min)
2. Letter-writing practices during World War II: language values then and now, Melanie Wagner (30 min)
3. Integrating language – language for integrating: Luxembourgish in development within pre-primary and primary schooling, Gudrun Ziegler and Charles Max (30 min)
5. Language policy and use in multilingual banks in Luxembourg, Leilarna Kingsley (30 min)
6. Responses, Kathryn Davis and Elana Shohamy (20 min), followed by open discussion (10 min)

References