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## **Language regimes and acts of citizenship in multilingual Luxembourg**

Kristine Horner

University of Sheffield

Linked to global processes and the reconfigurations of ‘outer’ and ‘inner’ European Union (EU) borders are attempts at harmonizing migration policies across EU member-states as well as introducing an additional layer of EU citizenship to that of the state. At the same time, discourses on citizenship in many EU member-states continue to be informed by the ideal of nation-state congruence and the dogma of social and linguistic homogeneity. Combining research on regimes of language and acts of citizenship, this paper provides an analysis of discourses on language, integration and citizenship in Luxembourg. The analysis shows how disputes concerning the introduction of the formalized testing of Luxembourgish as part of the 2008 law on *la nationalité luxembourgeoise* ‘Luxembourgish nationality’ are intertwined with contestations over transformations of long-standing language regimes and with the issue of whether the authority of Luxembourgish is bound up with notions of anonymity or authenticity.

**Keywords:** language politics, language ideologies, language testing, acts of citizenship, Luxembourg.

## 1. Introduction

Linked to global processes and the reconfigurations of ‘outer’ and ‘inner’ European Union (EU) borders are attempts at harmonizing migration policies across EU member-states as well as introducing an additional layer of EU citizenship to that of the state (Delanty and Rumford 2005). At the same time, discourses on citizenship in individual EU member-states continue to be informed by nationalist discourses, bound up with the ideal of nation-state congruence and often underpinned by the dogma of social and linguistic homogeneity (Blommaert and Verschueren 1998). Over the past decade, multiple EU member-states have introduced new forms of citizenship legislation that in many cases include language and/or civics tests; sociolinguistic research has begun to explore the motivations and consequences of these recently implemented language requirements and/or testing procedures (Extra et al. 2009, Hogan-Brun et al. 2009). Given the gate-keeping dimension of these measures as well as the related valorization and stigmatization of certain linguistic repertoires and identities, it is productive to analyze the ways in which this recent legislation is justified and contested by social actors at the level of individual states.

In Luxembourg, a new law on *la nationalité luxembourgeoise* ‘Luxembourgish nationality’ was ratified in 2008 and went into effect in 2009, which allows for a much broader interpretation of dual nationality than was previously the case but also stipulates that applicants must complete civics courses and pass a formal test in the Luxembourgish language.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand, discussions linked to this shift in policy in Luxembourg bore similarities to those in other EU member-states, for

example with regard to disagreements concerning the required level of achievement as per the *Common European Framework Reference for Languages* (CEFR). On the other hand, debates on language testing and citizenship in Luxembourg were dissimilar to those in other EU member-states due to a degree of uncertainty concerning how to test a language that has been and continues to be used predominantly as a means of oral rather than written communication. Moreover, the implementation of the formal testing of Luxembourgish has implications for the positioning of Luxembourg as a country that officially recognizes three languages: Luxembourgish, French and German. This paper provides an analysis of discourses justifying as well as challenging the legitimacy of Luxembourgish language testing in connection with the 2008 law on Luxembourgish nationality. As a basis for analysis, the following section develops a theoretical framework linking parallel developments in language politics and citizenship studies.

## **2. Bridging the gap between language politics and citizenship studies**

Because citizenship is a central concept in scholarship broadly extending across the social sciences and humanities, it is unsurprising that it is explored and theorized in rather diverse ways. According to Faulks (1998: 2-4), citizenship tends to be understood in relation to legal, philosophical and socio-political criteria. Legal interpretations focus on the formal link between the individual and the state, including in particular the territorial right to residency. Philosophical lines of thought grapple with questions concerning which normative models of citizenship are fair and just with regard to the myriad relationships between individuals as well as the link

between the individual and the state. Socio-political approaches zone in on issues of identity and power, providing an analysis of social practices and ideological processes in relation to state infrastructures. These three strands of research overlap in various ways; in this light, many researchers assert that citizenship involves the dynamic interface between rights and duties and also that citizenship is best understood as both legal status and social practice (see Isin and Wood 1999).

In comparison to the work of scholars in political science, law and sociology, just to name a few key fields of activity, the participation of sociolinguists in the academic discussion on citizenship does not have a lengthy tradition. However, the recent introduction (or reformulation) of language requirements and/or formalized language testing as part of citizenship legislation in many countries has prompted critical sociolinguists to explore this shift in language policy, especially in European countries (Horner, in press). The case studies in Extra et al. (2009) and Hogan-Brun et al. (2009) on testing regimes – predominantly dealing with EU member-states – situate their analyses largely in relation to Kroskrity's (2000) framework on regimes of language. This line of scholarship shows how the introduction of language requirements and/or formalized tests is underpinned by intersecting language ideological clusters that inform beliefs about the way that language and society 'should' be organized, and enable the positioning of speakers of certain languages and varieties at different points on linguistic hierarchies. In this vein, multiple researchers maintain that the introduction of language requirements and/or formalized tests constitutes – in Blommaert's (1999) terms – part and parcel of a broader language ideological debate (see Piller 2001, Blackledge 2005, Stevenson 2006, Milani 2008). By positioning the debate as the focus of analysis, we gain valuable insights on the

ways in which this policy is justified, negotiated and contested in multiple sites and also on how the dynamics of language policy are bound up with broader forms of social change.

The centrality of discourse in language ideological research is akin to the so-called discursive turn in language policy, which characterizes what Ricento (2000) refers to as the third phase of language policy and planning (LPP). In an influential article sketching three phases of LPP – roughly divided into the 1960s, the 1970s to the late 1980s and the late 1980s to the present – Ricento (2000) underlines the shift away from the dominance of structuralist paradigms towards approaches foregrounding social processes. Unpacking the ways in which languages and varieties are valorized and stigmatized in various contexts is viewed with increasing urgency, particularly in relation to transformations on a global scale, albeit in a non-homogenizing way (Blommaert 2003). Moreover, poststructuralist approaches to language policy informed by insights from critical theory have served as an impetus for researchers to grapple (more intensely) with three key concepts: agency, ideology and ecology. Ricento (2000, 208) maintains that it is agency or “the role(s) of individuals and collectivities in the processes of language use, attitudes and ultimately policies” that distinguishes many recent studies on language policy from previous work in the field. Shohamy (2006) also encourages us to explore further the interface between policy and practice as well as the multiple devices used to implement language policy. She broadens the scope of inquiry to encompass more than the analysis of legal policy documents by introducing the concept of language policy “mechanisms” which among others include language testing. In this way, sociolinguists have productively studied the mechanisms of language testing in

addition to ideologies and debates linked to the ratification of language requirements, which constitute a key aspect of many new forms of citizenship legislation.

Horner (in press) points out that the discursive turn in language policy as well as the engagement with acts of compliance and resistance to language policy resonates with contemporary research in citizenship studies. In this vein, Isin (2008) sketches how critical approaches to citizenship studies can be mapped out onto a similar trajectory as LPP, consisting of three phases. There has been a gradual shift from regarding citizenship purely as legal status to also including a set of social practices. Some of the more recent research has focused on acts that disrupt normative practices. In his discussion of acts of citizenship, Isin (2008, 38) underlines the need to explore the question of “what accounts for subjects refusing, resisting or subverting the orientations, strategies and technologies in which they find themselves implicated, and the solidaristic, agonistic and alienating relationships in which they are caught”. In other words, we need to account for the “forms and modes of being political” and explore how subjects become actors.

Although not explicitly addressed in the work on acts of citizenship, it is worth pointing out that language itself constitutes both a “form and mode” of being political. In this way, constructive links can be made with recent scholarship in LPP and, perhaps most notably, with work on linguistic citizenship (e.g. Stroud 2001). As a challenge to the linguistic human rights paradigm vying for the rights of minority groups on the basis of particularistic criteria, Stroud (2001) argues that it is necessary to consider the ways that minority language speakers (can be enabled to) use their linguistic repertoires as resources and engage in forms of democratic participation. Interestingly, research on linguistic citizenship has dealt predominantly with

postcolonial contexts whereas that on testing regimes has been conducted primarily in relation to policies of EU member-states. It is beneficial to bring together these two streams of research in language policy and also to link them to cognate work in citizenship studies, including that on acts of citizenship. Likewise, research in citizenship studies stands to benefit from considering links between language issues and democratic participation and also from grappling with language ideologies and testing regimes to better understand the timing and nature of recent changes to citizenship legislation.

Recent comparative work has sought to identify trends in citizenship legislation by schematically mapping out the criteria for regulating citizenship policy. This activity has been particularly prominent in relation to studies on citizenship in EU member-states over the past decade and Goodman's (2010) civic integration index (CIVIX) constitutes an interesting case in point. The innovative aspect of her work is that, unlike cognate studies, she does not treat so-called civic integration requirements directly alongside the more tangible requirements of citizenship. Instead, she plots two intersecting continua with the vertical axis representing a continuum consisting of thick-thin barriers as conditions to be fulfilled in the process of naturalization and the horizontal a continuum consisting of restrictive-liberal barriers to access to citizenship status. The latter continuum represents tangible access requirements such as residency duration and citizenship by birth. The former continuum is based on research in citizenship studies that conceptualizes thin notions of citizenship as those based primarily on legal aspects as opposed to thick notions of citizenship as those more deeply embedded in forms of cultural practice. Goodman refers to the fulfilment conditions along this thick-thin axis as civic integration, which includes include



language proficiency, country knowledge and value commitment requirements. This dual-axis framework highlights the ways in which policy makers in many EU member-states have significantly thickened the conditions for obtaining citizenship status, mainly by introducing language requirements and/or formalized tests. This constitutes a highly significant contribution to our understanding of shifts in citizenship policy and the relationship to testing regimes.

Goodman's (2010) study is one of the few that links up closely with cognate research on testing regimes as it provides a "dynamic understanding of state citizenship strategies, where policies define not only the rules but also the content of national membership" (753). This point resonates with Stevenson's (2006, 147) claim that discourses of citizenship are "subsumed in discourses of national identity". In many EU member-states, the denotation of citizenship status as 'nationality' refracts the ways in which perceptions of national group membership based on shared ethnicity are intertwined with legal ties to the state (cf. May 2001, 75). However, the modernist conflation of nationality and citizenship that has been salient in many EU countries is being renegotiated in the context of shifting 'outer' and 'inner' European borders. The discourse of integration plays a key role in balancing layers of citizenship at the level of the state (integration of the 'Other') and the EU (European integration) (Horner 2009a). Goodman refers to "thick-thin barriers" interchangeably as "civic integration", acknowledging that the latter terminology potentially reproduces dominant discourse on migration and perpetuates social inequality. In a related vein, Milani (2009) argues that moves to embed language requirements and/or tests in the framework of citizenship legislation may be regarded as part and parcel of a broader neo-liberal agenda, which casts migration barriers as just and rational

against the backdrop of a free market economy that enables certain individuals to profit from these policies.

In order to understand how languages in particular are positioned as authoritative in the context of Western Europe, it is useful to return to language ideologies. This body of scholarship explores how the conceptualization of languages as clearly definable objects at the onset of the long nineteenth century is interrelated with the presupposed naturalness of the associated nation-states that gained prominence during that same historical period. According to Gal and Woolard (2001, 4), it is because languages “were understood to be prior to intentional human political activity [that] they could be called on to justify and legitimate political actions, such as the formation of nation-states”. Gal and Woolard go on to explain that this “socially locatable” means of establishing a sense of objectivity can be juxtaposed with a more “aperspectival objectivity”, stressing that either perspective may be invoked to construct authority and that the relationship between the two perspectives is often complex. Woolard (2008) applies this two-pronged means of constructing authority directly to named languages, mapping the former “socially locatable” aspect onto authenticity and the latter “aperspectival objectivity” onto anonymity. She shows how in Catalonia, the authority of the Catalan language has shifted in part from being more rooted in its perceived authenticity as a marker of in-group membership to its anonymity as “the language from nowhere” since the late 1980s. Woolard explains how Catalan has been increasingly constructed as everybody’s language and yet nobody’s language in particular, while also highlighting the tensions inherent to this process with regard to regional languages. Even though Luxembourgish is one of the officially recognized languages of the state, related tensions apply to attempts to

position it as the language of integration and subsequent moves to legitimate Luxembourgish language testing. Thus, the official and/or national language is often portrayed as an acultural instrument of social integration – as everybody’s language – rather than solely as a cultural symbol of national identity in an endeavor to justify the ratification of language testing procedures within the framework of citizenship policy.

### **3. Language ideological debates and citizenship legislation in Luxembourg**

Since Luxembourg was established as an independent state in the nineteenth century, nation-building has hinged upon the practice of indexing the institutionalized use of both French and German as written languages and, increasingly over the course of the twentieth century, the use of the language referred to nowadays as Luxembourgish. As demonstrated elsewhere (Horner 2007a, 2007b), there exists a two-pronged language ideological schema that facilitates the construction of iconic links between Luxembourgish nationhood and 1) the use of Luxembourgish as the presupposed ‘mother tongue’ of the national core and 2) the mastery of the standard, written varieties of German and French together with the presupposed (consistent) use of spoken Luxembourgish.<sup>2</sup> The latter, trilingual prong is often drawn upon to portray Luxembourg as embodying high levels of linguistic capital and therewith constituting a model for other EU member-states, which resonates with discursive strategies to propagate similar, valuable forms of parallel monolingualism under the rubric of multilingualism in the contemporary European Union (Gal 2012). Discourses focused on perceived threats to the presupposed Luxembourgish ‘mother tongue’ core population tend to draw upon the former prong focused on Luxembourgish. These

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two historically entrenched language ideological prongs have developed predominantly in a manner of complementary distribution, sometimes with them both being drawn upon in the same line of argument.

In response to pressures for more official support of Luxembourgish in the 1970s and coinciding with accelerated globalization and consolidation of the EU, the 1984 language law largely refracts this two-pronged schema by designating French and/or German as legal, judicial and administrative languages, precisely the state of affairs prior to the ratification of the law even if it was previously *de facto* rather than *de jure* policy. The 1984 law also officially recognizes Luxembourgish as the national language and, in theory, as an administrative language (see Hoffmann 1987, Newton 1996). As the first such language law ratified at the level of the modern Luxembourgish state, it constitutes the basis for potential shift in language policy because it is the first form of legal recognition of Luxembourgish as the national language. With Luxembourgish declared as the *langue nationale* ‘national language’ in Article 1 of the law and no clearly designated *langue officielle* ‘official language’ – in spite of the fact that German and/or French are recognised in legislative, judicial and administrative capacities in the very same law – the wording provides a flexible springboard for language ideological debates. These debates frequently revolve around the status and function of Luxembourgish, including whether or not it should be propagated more widely as a standardized written medium, in addition to its long-standing and widespread use as a means of oral communication.

Tensions concerning the status and function of Luxembourgish have become particularly salient in relation to broader debates on education and citizenship (Horner and Weber 2010). Given the fact that 43.2% of the total 511,840 inhabitants in

Luxembourg are resident foreigners (Statec 2011), it is not surprising that there exists a great deal of linguistic diversity in present-day Luxembourg (Fehlen 2009). In addition to the use of languages such as Portuguese and English, French is used as a (supplemental) home language – as opposed to a (written) school language – by a larger segment of the resident population than ever before (Weber 2009). A new Education Act was ratified in 2009, replacing that of 1912, but there have not (yet) been fundamental changes to the language regime of the educational system. For example, optional French-medium literacy programs have not been introduced and the practice of obligatory German-based literacy continues to be maintained, together with the introduction of French as a subject at the end of year two in primary school. In addition, a centrally regulated, formalized manner of teaching written Luxembourgish has not been implemented in state schools, so that the language is not fully bound up with the processes of linguistic standardization. In this way, the value of Luxembourgish continues to be linked with the notion of authenticity, whereas the combined use of standard German and French as ‘everybody’s languages’ has functioned in a similar way to that of the standardized national and/ or official language in neighboring EU member-states (cf. Woolard 2008).

Nevertheless, recent changes to citizenship legislation potentially position Luxembourgish similarly to other standard languages as “embodiments of national identity and state-endorsed social inequality” (Kroskrity 2000, 28), even if Luxembourgish does not function in the latter respect within the framework of the state educational system. It was when the 1968 law on Luxembourgish nationality – amended in 1975, 1977 and 1986 – was modified for the last time in 2001 that the first ever explicit language clause was introduced in the legislation on Luxembourgish

nationality (Scuto 2006, 92-94).<sup>3</sup> There was a previous attempt to introduce explicit language requirements with the 1986 amendments but this did not come to pass. Scuto (2006, 94) maintains that the language requirements were introduced in 2001 due in large part to the extreme politicization of Luxembourgish by the right-wing populist party, the *Aktiounskomitee fir Demokratie a Rentegerechtegheet* (ADR) ‘Action Committee for Democracy and Pension Equality.’<sup>4</sup> However, this interpretation does not take into full consideration the multifaceted nature of the promotion of Luxembourgish that has been gaining momentum steadily since the 1970s. Furthermore, the European and global contexts are crucial to understanding the timing and formulation of new forms of citizenship legislation (Faist 2007). Indeed, the ratification of new citizenship legislation – often coupled with language requirements and/or formalized tests – mushroomed in EU member-states in the wake of the Bosnian War in 1996, the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997 and the EU summits of Tampere in 1999 and Nice in 2000, in the context of preparations for the (then upcoming) EU expansion phases in 2004 and 2007 (Horner 2009a).

In the case of Luxembourg, debates on citizenship at the turn of the twenty-first century were also situated in relation to two specific, localized issues: 1) a widespread discourse of endangerment (cf. Duchêne and Heller 2007) concerning implications of demographic shift for the future of the Luxembourgish language and continuity of the nation, reinforced by Prime Minister Juncker’s 2001 reference to a projected future resident population of 700,000 inhabitants and 2) the so-called ‘democratic deficit’ as the segment of the resident population without the right to vote in national/ legislative elections was approaching the fifty percent mark.<sup>5</sup> As suggested previously (Horner 2009a, 112), the 2001 amendments to the law on

Luxembourgish nationality appear to “simultaneously entail the opening and closing of the nation” (see also Anderson [1983] 1991, Spizzo 1995, Horner 2007a). However, it is preferable to apply Goodman’s (2010) multidimensional framework, which illuminates the ways that *access* to legal citizenship started to become more liberal whilst the *conditions* for naturalisation began to thicken or become more densely formulated. On the one hand, access opened somewhat in light of the fact that the residency period was reduced from ten to five years (and to three years for the *option*, for example in the case of marriage to a Luxembourgish national), though neither a broad interpretation of dual nationality nor *jus soli* was introduced (yet) at that time. On the other hand, the language clause stipulated that applicants must demonstrate a “basic knowledge” of Luxembourgish. Article 7, Paragraph 3 of the 1968 law remained unchanged in the 1986 series of amendments: “Naturalisation will be refused to the foreigner [...] if he [*sic*] does not demonstrate sufficient assimilation” (*Mémorial* 1986). The 2001 modifications to Article 7 of the 1968 law include a detailed paragraph that stipulates language requirements – with Luxembourgish as *the* obligatory language – and the word “assimilation” has been replaced with the word “integration”:

(1)

*La naturalisation sera refusée à l'étranger: [...] lorsqu'il ne justifie pas d'une intégration suffisante, notamment lorsqu'il ne justifie pas d'une connaissance active et passive suffisante d'au moins une des langues prévues par la loi du 24 février 1984 sur le régime des langues et, lorsqu'il n'a pas au moins une*

*connaissance de base de la langue luxembourgeoise, appuyée par des certificats ou documents officiels. (Mémorial 2001).*

[Naturalization will be refused to the foreigner [...] if he [*sic*] does not demonstrate sufficient integration, notably if he [*sic*] does not demonstrate sufficient active and passive knowledge of at least one of the languages stipulated by the language law of February 24 1984 and, if he [*sic*] does not have at least a basic knowledge of the Luxembourgish language, supported by certificates or official documents.]<sup>6</sup>

Scuto (2006, 94) notes that this clause was controversial and points out that the previous amendments to the 1968 law were passed unanimously by the Parliament. Representatives of left of center parties (i.e. the Socialists, the Greens and the Left) voiced opposition to the language clause of 2001, but they were defeated by the 1999-2004 coalition of the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats together with votes from ADR representatives. A close look at these debates reveals that it was the specific requirement of the ‘basic knowledge’ of Luxembourgish that constituted the focal point of contestation rather than the move to explicitly introduce any language requirements for the first time point blank. Horner (2009b) shows how proponents of diverse political agendas – arguing for and against the language clause of 2001 – largely drew on the same language ideological clusters and prioritized the ideal of social cohesion, an objective underpinned by the dogma of homogeneity (Blommaert and Verschueren 1998). The following analysis of discourses on language and integration as well as attempts to shift the discursive focus from integration to



citizenship illustrates how disputes concerning the introduction of formalized language testing are intertwined with contestations over transformations of long-standing language regimes.

#### **4. Discourses on language, integration and citizenship in Luxembourg**

Drawing upon the theoretical framework of language regimes and acts of citizenship as discussed above, this section provides an analysis of discourses on language, integration and citizenship in Luxembourg. The data forms part of a larger corpus of over 1000 media and policy documents that were published during the first decade of the twenty-first century. The data shows that language ideological debates in Luxembourg during this period cluster into three broad themes: the promotion and legitimation of Luxembourgish, language-in-education policy and language and migration. One fourth of these documents also thematize citizenship and/or nationality, which has been a highly salient and cross-cutting topic in the data due to major changes to the law on *la nationalité luxembourgeoise* ‘Luxembourgish nationality’ during this timeframe.

The first part of the analysis focuses on the construction of Luxembourgish as the language of integration. The second part grapples with recent attempts to shift the discursive focus from integration to citizenship and illustrates how, following the ratification of the new law on Luxembourgish nationality in 2008, the conditions for citizenship status are being challenged and how such challenges constitute acts of citizenship. The analysis also shows how discourses legitimating and contesting recent changes in policy are bound up with tensions as to whether the authority of

Luxembourgish is situated in relation to notions of authenticity or anonymity (cf. Woolard 2008).

#### 4.1 Language regimes and the duties of integration

The ratification of the 2001 amendments to the 1968 law on Luxembourgish nationality – with the first ever explicit language conditions enshrined in Article 7, Paragraph 4 of the law – paved the way to establishing the Luxembourgish language testing regime that forms part of the new law of 2008. In the years between 2001 and 2008, a great deal of discursive work was done to establish Luxembourgish as *the* “language of integration”, which later would in turn serve as the basis for justifying language testing in Luxembourgish rather than allowing for testing in French and/ or German too.<sup>7</sup> Discourses constructing an iconic link between the Luxembourgish language and Luxembourgish (national) identity circulated widely in the mainstream media during the months preceding the introduction of the explicit language conditions set out in the October 2001 amendments to the law, for example:

(2)

*Le Grand-Duché est [...] une **société d'intégration**, compte tenu de son histoire, dans laquelle la composante pluriculturelle est devenue une forme de marque nationale. Cela dit, prise sans considération de **son idiome principal** – qui plus est reconnu depuis bientôt vingt ans comme **langue officielle** -, **l'identité luxembourgeoise perd largement son sens.** (La Voix du Luxembourg in *Luxembourger Wort*, 7 July 2001, 1, my emphasis)*

[the Grand Duchy is [...] a **society of integration**, due to its history, in which the pluricultural element has become a national characteristic. Nonetheless, if deprived of **its principal idiom** – which moreover has been recognized as an **official language** for almost twenty years – **Luxembourgish identity** loses virtually all its meaning.]

(3)

*D’CSV, déi dat neit Nationalitéitegesetz, ageleet huet, schléit e Lëtzebuenger Sproochentest vir. Dat liicht engem och an, well wann een **eng Nationalitéit** wëll unhuelen, da muss ee sech och kënne **mat hir identifizéieren**, an dat geet nëmmen, wann een **d’Sprooch vum Land** versteet an och schwätze kann. [...]*  
*Et geet awer och ëm de Respekt vis-à-vis vum “echte” Lëtzebuenger, fir him ze weisen, datt een déi Nationalitéit aus Iwwerzeegung ugeholl huet, an net aus Pragmatismus [...]* *Well wéi seet och de René Kartheiser a sengem Gedicht “Eis Sprooch”: “Franséisch an Däitsch däerf iech gefalen, mä wat dir musst an Éiren halen, dat ass **eis Sprooch**, well si ass **d’Muerch vum klenge Ländche Lëtzebuerg**.”* (letter to the editor in *Luxemburger Wort*, 30 June 2001, 38, my emphasis)

[The CSV, who drafted the new nationality law, proposes a Luxembourgish language test. That makes sense because if one wants to acquire a **nationality**, then one must be able to **identify with it** and that is only possible if one can understand and speak **the language of the country**. [...] It is also about respect vis-à-vis the “real” Luxembourgish, to show him that one acquired the

nationality out of conviction and not out of pragmatism [...] Because as René Kartheiser also says in his poem “Our Language”: “You may like French and German, but what you must honor is **our language** because it is **the [bone] marrow of the little country of Luxembourg.**”]

Written by the editor of the (then) French-language insert *La Voix du Luxembourg* in the major newspaper the *Luxemburger Wort*, Text 2 is aimed at an international readership living and/or working in Luxembourg and is informed by civic nationalism. Characterizing Luxembourg as a welcoming and open country to outsiders, the editorial constructs a historical trajectory of Luxembourg that is “pluricultural” and positions it as a country of integration as opposed to assimilation. At the same time, there is no attempt to position Luxembourg as a tri- or multilingual country as is often the case in texts similarly portraying Luxembourg as a pluri- or multicultural place. Aimed at a national readership, Text 3 is based on an ethnolinguistic interpretation of nationalism. Linking “our language” to the biological metaphor of “bone marrow”, Luxembourgish is positioned as central to the (ethnic) national core. Notably, the authoritative text underpinning the line of argument in Text 3 is a poem by a renowned Luxembourgish author while in Text 2 it is the language law of 1984 (where Luxembourgish is officially recognized as the national language). In this way, the authority of Luxembourgish is rooted in anonymity in Text 2 whereas it is rooted in authenticity in Text 3. Differences of orientation notwithstanding, Texts 2 and 3 both prioritize the role of the Luxembourgish language as the defining feature of Luxembourgish identity and national group membership.

Over the course of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the discourse of integration increasingly has served to position Luxembourgish as an instrument of civic participation as well as a marker of national group membership. Aligned with a problem-solution scenario, the discourse of integration enables the national language to be positioned as the solution to the perceived problem of augmented societal and linguistic heterogeneity bound up with broader currents of demographic shift. Moreover, there is a tendency for the discourse of integration to foreground the need for a certain degree of cooperation between (long-term) Luxembourg nationals and non-nationals to achieve the purported goal of social cohesion. Consider the following excerpts from official governmental discourse:

(4)

*D'Integratioun vun den Net-Lëtzebuenger ass eng Offerte déi d'Lëtzebuenger  
musse maachen. An d'Net-Lëtzebuenger mussen dës Offerte unhuelen: **et gëtt  
keng Flicht zur totaler Assimilatioun mee et gëtt eng Flicht zur  
Integratioun.** Ouni dës Offer an ouni d'Unhuele vun dëser Offer, ouni eise  
Respekt virun deenen aneren hirer Eegenart an ouni hire Respekt virun eise  
fundamentale gesellschaftleche Wäerter gëtt et weder Integratioun nach  
Kohäsioun. [...] Dofir wëlle mer d'duebel Nationalitéit aféieren. Si bréngt eis  
méi no zesummen, féiert zu méi Mateneen ouni datt deen deen de lëtzebuenger  
Pass kritt den net-lëtzebuergeschen Deel vu sengem Liewen ewech geholl kritt.  
[...] Dofir bidde mer méi Lëtzebuergesch-Couren un. Vill Net-Lëtzebuenger  
**géife gär eis Sprooch** – déi esou schéin an esou wäertvoll ass wéi all aner  
Sprooch – **léiere fir sech besser z'integréieren: zur Offer vun der***

*Integratioun gehéiert och d'Offer vum Lëtzebuergeschen.* (J-C. Juncker,

<http://www.gouvernement.lu/gouvernement/programme-2009/>

[programme-2004/declaration2004/index.html](http://www.gouvernement.lu/gouvernement/programme-2004/declaration2004/index.html), my emphasis)

[The integration of non-Luxembourgers is an offer that the Luxembourgers have to make. And the non-Luxembourgers have to accept this offer: **there is no duty to fully assimilate but there is a duty to integrate.** Without such an offer and without acceptance of the offer, without our respect for the others' particularities and without their respect for our fundamental social values, there is neither integration nor cohesion. [...] Therefore we want to introduce double nationality. It brings us closer together and leads to more living together; moreover, the person who gets the Luxembourgish passport does not have the non-Luxembourgish part of his [*sic*] identity taken away from him [*sic*]. [...] Therefore we offer more Luxembourgish courses. Many non-Luxembourgers **would like to learn our language** – which is as beautiful and as valuable as any other language – **in order to integrate themselves in a better way: the offer of Luxembourgish is an integral part of the offer of integration].**

(5)

*À l'arrivée, nous ne pouvons cependant que faire une offre; pour ceux qui veulent la nationalité nous pouvons en faire une condition, puisque l'État leur donnera quelque chose en contrepartie. [...] J'ai constaté dans mon cercle de famille et d'amis que **ceux qui font l'effort d'apprendre la langue sont mieux***

*intégrés, parce que l'on apprécie leur efforts.* (Interview with Luc Frieden in *Forum* 257, June 2006, 5, my emphasis)

[Upon arrival, we cannot do more during that time than make an offer; for those who want the nationality we can set a condition, because the state is giving them something in exchange. [...] I have observed in my circle of family and friends that **those who make the effort to learn the language are better integrated**, because one appreciates their efforts.]

Rather than underlining links between the Luxembourgish language and national group membership, official governmental discourses tend to position the learning of Luxembourgish as central to the vaguely formulated process of integration. In Texts 4 and 5, there is no mention of the other languages officially recognized by the 1984 language law (French and German) and it is the Luxembourgish language alone that is portrayed as the key to integration, with the granting of Luxembourgish nationality as marking successful completion of the integration process. Despite calls for cooperation between (long-term) Luxembourg nationals and non-nationals, the discourse of integration squarely places the onus on non-nationals. In other words, the offer has been made, the conditions have been set and applicants have the duty to alter their linguistic abilities and practices to demonstrate “sufficient integration” as stipulated by the law. Recalling Goodman’s (2010) CIVIX schema and related attempts to define the content of citizenship, it may be argued that “civic integration” bears a strong resemblance to imposed or ascribed identity. Representations of Luxembourgish as the key to civic participation are combined with attempts to

portray legal citizenship status and ethnic group membership as potentially separable. Such attempts construct the authority of Luxembourgish in relation to anonymity rather than authenticity. The following section reveals that this latter point – together with perceived contradictions in contemporary language policy – remains contentious.

#### **4.2 Acts of citizenship and democratic participation**

The new law on Luxembourgish nationality was ratified in October 2008 and came into force in January 2009. This form of legal status is now open to a larger number of residents and it includes the provision that naturalized Luxembourgers may retain their original passports, thus extending the right of dual nationality, which previously was only possible in the case of children born to one parent with and the other without a Luxembourgish passport. The main difference related to language issues between the 2001 amendments and the new law of 2008 is that for the first time the latter also includes formalized language testing procedures and defines the levels to be achieved in terms of the CEFR. The definition of CEFR levels and formalized testing procedures of the new law apply only to one language, namely Luxembourgish. Like with the 2001 amendments to the 1968 law on Luxembourgish nationality, there was a lack of consensus concerning the language requirements as part of the 2008 law.<sup>8</sup>

The main point of contention among politicians was the required CEFR level of achievement; the dispute between Conservatives and Socialists – forming a coalition during the 2004-2009 period – lay between achievement levels B2 and A2. The major opposition parties then, the Liberal Democrats and the Greens, campaigned for A1, which would have made Luxembourgish nationality accessible to a much wider range of residents; for this reason they voted against the law when it was passed



by Parliament on 15 October 2008. The final compromise adopted in the new law defined the level B1 for listening comprehension and A2 for oral production:

(6)

*La naturalisation sera refusée à l'étranger lorsqu'il ne justifie pas d'une intégration suffisante, à savoir: [...] lorsqu'il ne justifie pas d'une connaissance active et passive suffisante d'au moins une des langues prévues par la loi du 24 février 1984 sur le régime des langues et lorsqu'il n'a pas réussi une épreuve d'évaluation de la langue luxembourgeoise parlée. Le niveau de compétence à atteindre en langue luxembourgeoise est celui du niveau B1 du Cadre européen commun de référence pour les langues pour la compréhension de l'oral et du niveau A2 du même cadre pour l'expression orale. (Mémorial 2008)*

[Naturalization will be refused to the foreigner if he [*sic*] does not demonstrate sufficient integration, namely [...] if he [*sic*] does not demonstrate sufficient active and passive knowledge of at least one of the languages stipulated by the language law of February 24th 1984 and if he [*sic*] does not pass an evaluative test in spoken Luxembourgish. The level of competence to be achieved in the Luxembourgish language is that of level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for languages for oral comprehension and level A2 of the same framework for oral production.]

Although debates on the required CEFR level and the ultimate decision to implement language tests as part of citizenship legislation resemble policies in many other EU member-states, the decision to require a predominantly oral/ aural test constitutes an attempt to negotiate the perceived incompatibility of Luxembourgish with the standard language ideology and related language-in-education policies. Indeed, many Luxembourgish speakers do not use the language as a written medium in a wide range of domains. Moreover, official governmental discourses and dominant media discourses tend to keep educational issues separate from those concerning citizenship – denoted as nationality in most instances – since overt linkages would highlight this discrepancy in policy and practice. This set of issues plays a crucial role in challenges to the language tests and required CEFR levels as stipulated by the 2008 law.

In light of the fact that people of Portuguese descent constitute the largest minority group in Luxembourg, we will take the seventh meeting of the *Confédération de la communauté portugaise* ‘Confederation of the Portuguese Community’ (CCPL) in February 2010 as a significant case in point. Under the slogan *Ensemble vers l’avenir: de l’Intégration à la Citoyenneté* ‘Together into the future: from Integration to Citizenship’, a series of action points was put forward that would become part of a program of action to be sent on to relevant Ministries. In addition to discussion of the new 2008 law on Luxembourgish nationality, key issues included the (high) failure rate in state secondary schools, the rising unemployment rate during the economic crisis and also the concern about the continuing low status of Portuguese women. In line with the slogan, there was an explicit attempt to shift away from the discourse of integration and focus on citizenship as democratic participation, as signalled in the following press release:

(7)

*Für die CCPL gehört innerhalb der EU die **Integration** zur Vergangenheit. Heute spreche man vielmehr von **Staatsbürgerschaft**, denn man müsse sich bewusst werden, dass man zu dem Land gehöre, in dem man lebt.*

*(Luxemburger Wort, 20 February 2010: 28)*

[For the CCPL, **integration** within the EU is a thing of the past. Nowadays, one speaks much more about **citizenship**, because one must be aware that one belongs to the country in which one lives.]

Representations of this meeting from two different media sources show how important language issues are foregrounded or backgrounded in the public sphere:

(8)

*Elle a surtout exigé que l'enseignement et la formation professionnelle prennent en compte les difficultés de tous les résidents afin de construire une école capable de remplir son rôle d'intégration sociale, de formation civique et humaine et de préparation à la vie professionnelle. **La langue, entre autres, ne doit pas être un facteur d'exclusion pour près de 20 pour cent de la population luxembourgeoise.** (Luxemburger Wort, 1 March 2010, 17)*

[She [one of the speakers at the CCPL meeting] demanded above all that education and vocational training take into account the difficulties of all the

residents in order to build a school system that can fulfill its role of social integration, civic and human development and preparation for professional life. **Among others, language must not be a factor of exclusion** for almost 20% of the population of Luxembourg.]

(9)

*“La double nationalité est un bon instrument pour nous d’être citoyens tout en gardant notre culture qui n’est plus la même qu’au Portugal”, a jugé José Coimbra, président de la Confédération de la communauté portugaise (CCPL). “Mais, par les retours qu’on a eus, on juge que les exigences linguistiques pour y accéder sont exagérées.” [...] “Parler luxembourgeois est difficile dans un environnement où on en a rarement l’occasion”, précise José Coimbra. (L’Essentiel, 1 March 2010, 3)*

[‘Double nationality is a good instrument for us to become citizens while keeping our culture, which is no longer the same as in Portugal,’ said José Coimbra, president of the Confederation of the Portuguese Community. ‘But, based on what we have heard, we consider that the language requirements for double nationality are too high [...] **Speaking Luxembourgish is difficult in an environment where one rarely has the opportunity to use the language,**’ he added.]

In Text 8, taken from the dominant newspaper the *Luxemburger Wort*, there is recognition that language (read German) can act as a barrier within the context of the

trilingual educational system and that schools have a role to play in fostering “societal integration”. What is backgrounded in Text 8 is the point that the Luxembourgish language does not necessarily play a central role in the everyday life of all residents, nor is even accessible to everyone in Luxembourg, a key issue that is erased consistently in official governmental discourse and the *Luxemburger Wort* because it would destabilize the construction of Luxembourgish as *the* language of integration which allegedly also helps foreign pupils acquire German in schools. The ambiguous role of Luxembourgish is however foregrounded in Text 9, taken from the more left-wing tabloid format newspaper *L’Essentiel*, and the principal demand of the CCPL to lower the required CEFR level of Luxembourgish is not portrayed as unfair or unreasonable. In this way, the challenge of the CCPL not only to shift the focus away from the vague concept of integration – on the claim that Portuguese citizens are already Europeans, just like Luxembourgish citizens – but also to question the presupposed centrality of Luxembourgish in daily life enters the public sphere. The statement by the President of the CCPL and the mediation of his comments by *L’Essentiel* may be understood in relation to acts of citizenship because the conditions for citizenship status are challenged in the public sphere. In this way, the onus of duty potentially shifts to Luxembourgish speakers to make the language more accessible and to use it in a wider range of (written) domains. Despite attempts in dominant discourses to keep separate language ideological debates concerning the standardization of Luxembourgish, language-in-education policy and language and citizenship, the CCPL action points and the coverage of the meeting in *L’Essentiel*, albeit in an implicit way, lay bare the way in which these language ideological issues

are intertwined. This form of challenge can disrupt hegemonic views on the organization of language in society in Luxembourg, even if it has not done so yet.

## **5. Conclusion: language and citizenship in 21<sup>st</sup> century Luxembourg and the EU**

The widespread discourse of integration in the public sphere and the related policy of introducing Luxembourgish language tests facilitated a certain degree of consensus on the new law on Luxembourgish nationality – including the controversial step of introducing a broad interpretation of dual nationality – amongst Luxembourgish nationals. The national language, albeit a small language in the case of Luxembourg, is constructed as the means to homogeneity, ensuring the “integration of Others” and the related ideal of social cohesion at the level of the state (Horner 2009a). In this way, citizenship legislation continues to be informed by nationalist ideologies. As Stevenson (2006, 160) puts it, “discourses of language and nation have then not been abandoned but rather recontextualized and reformulated in terms of the relationship between language and citizenship”. Due to the pervasiveness of the discourse of integration at the level of the state, attempts to shift the focus towards an understanding of citizenship as democratic participation – in relation to the notion of EU citizenship – have not (yet) had great impact in Luxembourg.

Related claims that one can take a step towards civic integration by learning French – which newcomers from Portugal were encouraged to do during the 1970s – have also not bought purchase in relation to debates on language and citizenship in Luxembourg. Drawing on the trilingual prong of the historically entrenched language ideological schema has been unsuccessful because the trilingual prong – akin to

official EU rhetoric promoting multilingualism – is based on an idealized and fixed linguistic repertoire, in this instance consisting of Luxembourgish, German and French, acquired in that sequence. At the same time, positioning Luxembourgish as *the* language of integration and setting successful completion of a Luxembourgish test as *the* key condition for Luxembourgish nationality remains open to challenges, as illustrated in relation to the 2010 CCPL meeting, because the authority of Luxembourgish is not derived from the notion of anonymity. The positioning of the national and/ or official language of a country as a universal tool and key to civic integration has been central to the justification of language testing procedures in multiple EU member-states.

Unlike residency and other tangible aspects on the horizontal axis of her EU typology of citizenship legislation, Goodman (2010, 756) points out that civic integration requirements on the vertical axis require the creation of measuring devices that transform non-tangible aspects into something that appears tangible. She also points out that civic integration theoretically could consist of anything but I would add that language has functioned as a ‘logical’ choice in the context of many EU member-states. Indeed, a language test may be applied to select groups with others being deemed exempt on the basis of presupposed linguistic heritage. Additionally, language tests can be largely open to interpretation, especially if they are oral. It appears that the authority of the language needs to be rooted in the notion of anonymity and universality in the context of the nation-state if the testing procedure is to be deemed legitimate. Research on testing regimes coupled with Goodman’s (2010) CIVIX typology highlights the ways in which policy makers are defining the content of citizenship, in particular in the context of the EU, and how this may serve as a gate-

keeping mechanism within an overall neo-liberal framework. Luxembourg constitutes an interesting case study because challenges to this policy can be understood potentially as acts of citizenship: as “actual moments that shift established practices, status and order” (Isin 2008, 10). Such challenges show that the content of citizenship is not understood in the same way by all social actors but hegemonic language ideologies and the dogma of homogeneity have prevented these challenges from having impact as of yet. Research on language and citizenship must bring together paradigms from multiple disciplines as they enable us to discover how real people define, redefine and contest the meaning of contemporary citizenship.

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### **Notes**

1. It is the case in Luxembourg that the term ‘nationality’ rather than ‘citizenship’ is used in official legislation and this will be retained in instances where there is specific reference to the law on Luxembourgish nationality as well as Luxembourgish citizenship status. At the time of writing, a series of amendments to the 2008 law are being discussed.



2. Luxembourgish language varieties are Germanic and bear strong affinities to Moselle Franconian varieties spoken in adjacent parts of Belgium, France and Germany; this relationship provides part of the rationale for basic literacy skills to be taught via standard German in state schools in Luxembourg.

3. Despite the fact that language requirements of any kind were not explicitly stipulated by law until 2001, procedures for dealing with applicants for Luxembourgish nationality involved the foregrounding of their proficiency in Luxembourgish to varying degrees; the 1940 clause requiring the applicant to demonstrate ‘sufficient assimilation’ – which was retained in the law of 1968 – served as a means to justify this practice.

4. The *Aktiounskomitee fir Demokratie a Rentegerechtegheet* (ADR) was renamed *Alternativ Demokratesch Reformpartei* (Alternative Democratic Reform Party) in 2006.

5. In this context, the voting rights of resident EU and non-EU citizens in national/ legislative and local/ communal elections have also constituted the focus of debate in Luxembourg.

6. All translations from the original French, German and Luxembourgish texts are my own.

7. Similarly, the discourse of integration and social cohesion informs controversies in Luxembourg concerning language-in-education policy in relation to migration and augmented linguistic diversity in the home environment (see Weber 2009). With the exception of preschool education, the status and role of Luxembourgish is not normally prominent in these discussions.

8. In contrast to the 2001 amendments, the residency period has been increased from five to seven years and the ‘option’ – e.g. in the case of marriage to a Luxembourgish passport holder – has ceased to exist. The 2008 law obliges applicants to complete three civic instruction classes in addition to passing the Luxembourgish language test. Three groups of applicants are exempt from the classes and test: people who completed seven years of schooling in Luxembourg, people who can trace their ancestry to a relative with Luxembourgish nationality as far as the year 1900 and people who immigrated to Luxembourg before the 1984 language law. The third exemption was subject to debate in the public sphere in 2008, with the second exemption gaining attention in 2009. The first exemption remains uncontroversial.

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*Author's address*

Kristine Horner  
University of Sheffield  
Centre for Luxembourg Studies  
School of Languages and Cultures  
Sheffield S3 7RA, UK

[k.horner@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:k.horner@sheffield.ac.uk)

*About the author*

**Kristine Horner** is Reader in Luxembourg Studies and Multilingualism at the University of Sheffield, where she is Director of the Centre for Luxembourg Studies.

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She has published widely in the areas of language politics, language ideologies, multilingualism and migration studies, including special issues of *Language Problems and Language Planning* (Benjamins, 2009) and the *Journal of Germanic Linguistics* (CUP, 2011). Her most recent major publications are *Introducing Multilingualism: A Social Approach* (co-authored with J-J. Weber; Routledge, 2012) and *Multilingualism and Mobility in Europe: Policies and Practices* (co-edited with I. de Saint-Georges and J-J. Weber; Peter Lang 2014).