

# Lost in Translanguaging? Practices of Language Promotion in Luxembourgish Early Childhood Education

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## Abstract

Luxembourg maintains by far the largest proportion of foreign immigrants in Europe. This is also reflected in the population of children. About 50% of children under the age of four are foreign nationals. Accordingly, the question of how to deal with linguistic diversity represents one of the biggest challenges in the professional debate about early childhood education in Luxembourg. The article will refer to this issue on the basis of several insights stemming from an ethnographic study in Luxembourgish daycare centers which was conducted between 2009 and 2012 by the working group *Early Childhood: Education and Care* at the University of Luxembourg. The study explored practices professionals apply to come up with the superdiverse and translingual environment in order to meet the political expectation of promoting foreign children's competences before they enter school. Based on the empirical investigations of everyday language use in center-based early childhood education, the article will not only characterize two different modes of language promotion (*institutional monolingualization in one language* and *institutional monolingualization in several languages*) but also highlight the ambiguities of those language promotion practices which, although facing a translingual environment, are still based on a multilingual standard.

## Keywords

early childhood education, diversity, language promotion, translingual, multilingualism, monolingualism, ethnography, inequality

## Introduction

The last ten years in Luxembourg have brought an enormous increase of non-familial care for children prior to and alongside the school just as in many other member countries of the European Union (EU) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The expansion of the child care system in Luxembourg has been part of the national effort for the implementation of the Lisbon

Strategy of the EU which was set up in the early 2000's. It became effective in Luxembourg around the year 2005 with the establishment of the regulations for the so-called *maison relais pour enfants* (MRE) [daycare center]. This development of expanding extracurricular and

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non-familial early childhood education institutions serves about 79,000 children from birth to 12 years of age, of about 549,000 inhabitants in total (Le portail des statistiques, 2014). Compulsory schooling starts at the age of four. Around 31,000 children in Luxembourg are currently not yet of school age (Le portail des statistiques, 2014). In 2013, there were about 12,859 (places allocated to several children in crèches and MREs (Ministère de la Famille et de l'Intégration [MFI], 2013, p. 122).<sup>1</sup> More than 70% percent of the three year olds are attending the half-day, facultative *éducation précoce* [preschool] (Honig & Haag, 2011, Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale et de la Formation Professionnelle [MENFP], 2012a). In just the five years between 2005 and 2010, the number of places for children under four in state operated childcare centers has increased *thirty-fold* (Honig & Haag, 2011).

The system of non-familial care and pre-school education in early childhood education in Luxembourg is based on a dual structure in several regards. Whereas pre-school education forms a part of the state-organized system of educational institutions, the field of non-familial care is divided according to a mixed economy into a smaller public and a bigger private sector, which in turn includes *non-profit* and *for-profit* organizations. The respective share of childcare places in for-profit daycare institutions varies depending on the age group of the children: For children up to the age of four years, commercial crèches and family daycare homes (*assistants parentaux/dageselteren*) provide more than half of the daycare places (Honig & Haag, 2011, MFI, 2011). Even though the government has made considerable effort to increase the public provision of daycare facilities during the last years, the current availability of public daycare places, in particular for children under the age of four, does not come close to meeting the need. At the same time, the number of private daycare places supplied by for-profit providers has increased rapidly: According to the report of the

Luxembourgish Ministry for Family Affairs, the percentage increase was 87% in 2010 in comparison to the previous year (MFI, 2011, p. 194) and by about 28% between 2011 and 2012 (MFI, 2013a, p. 125). The rising number of commercial daycare providers is not least a consequence of the system of care vouchers (*chèques-services accueil*) introduced in 2009 which relieves parents of the costs for extrafamilial care depending on their income.

The rapid expansion of the childcare sector resulted in considerable doubt concerning the quality of these institutions (Kurschat 2009a, b). Because of the public controversy, the ministry of family affairs began to define key elements for a quality development strategy. In the context of this quality development strategy the ministry of family affairs is currently working on a new law for the sector of early childhood education institutions, the intent of which is to establish a uniform standard for the non-profit and for-profit sector of early childhood education in order to create a consistent and independent field of non-formal learning before school age. This is accompanied by and directly linked to the development of a national curriculum for early childhood education practice to be entered into force in 2015. Within this curriculum the question of how to deal with (linguistic) diversity in Luxembourgish society plays a major role.

In Luxembourg, nearly half of the children have another than the Luxembourgian citizenship (Honig & Haag, 2011). This also affects the everyday reality in the educational system. The proportion of immigrant pupils in Luxembourgish schools amounts to 43.2 percent (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse [MEN], 2014a, p.16). For the school year 2012/2013, 60.2 % of the students in primary school admitted to speaking a language other than Luxembourgish at home (MEN, 2014a, p. 102 ). Against this background, it is hardly surprising that language promotion is intended to be one of the key elements of the

educational and linguistic policy in this country. Since early childhood education has entered the focus of national as well as supranational political and professional discussions, challenges of dealing with linguistic diversity have gained a firm position in these debates (see e.g. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2001, 2006, Saracho & Spodek, 2010, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2006, 2008). This also applies to Luxembourg and is reflected in the new national curriculum for the non-formal sector of education before and alongside the school (MFI, 2013b, MFI & Service National de la Jeunesse [SNJ], 2013). Because of the tremendous diversity and heterogeneity of their clientele, an inclusive and constructive management of differences is also expected from the early educational institutions and particularly from the MREs (Baltes-Löhr, 2009).

The article takes up this issue by drawing attention to practices of language use in Luxembourgian daycare centers. The empirical findings the paper refers to are from an ethnographic research project conducted in MREs which, at first, will be introduced in terms of its general objectives. After that, the argument of the article will be developed in three steps. First, the paper aims to illustrate the background of the general linguistic setting in Luxembourg and discusses the various attitudes towards the situation of multilingualism in this country. Here, the argument draws attention to how the situation of linguistic diversity is empirically reflected in the political discourse on education and especially on early childhood education. Second, the paper will demonstrate how the institutions of early childhood educations try to meet the political agenda of early language promotion in a linguistically diverse society. This will be done by reconstructing how the complex linguistic situation of the country is reflected in different modes of language use and language promotion

in institutional everyday life. The third step will, finally, provide some points of reference for discussing the political implications of the current institutional practices of language promotion in Luxembourgish early childhood education.

### **The Research Context: An Ethnographic Study on Language Promotion in Luxembourgish Early Childhood Education**

The reconstruction and reflection of language use practices in Luxembourgian early childhood education refers to empirical observations and analyses in the framework of the project titled, *Realities of Early Childhood Education and Care: The Pedagogy of the Maisons Relais pour Enfants* (MRE). It was carried out by the research axis *Early Childhood: Education and Care* at the University of Luxembourg and financed by the university's research fund and the Luxembourgish Ministry of Family Affairs. In general, the study dealt with the practice of education and care for children under the age of four in the publicly funded daycare sector of Luxembourg by examining local institutional everyday life with the methods of ethnographic fieldwork. It started in August 2009 and ended in December 2012.

The general political environment of the study must be seen in the vast expansion the daycare sector in Luxembourg was witnessing since 2005. In the wake of this vast expansion, the MREs were created as a new type of institutions. The MRE daycare centers in Luxembourg, and particularly the MRE-crèche for children under the age of four we were investigating, were both meant to be a general means of increasing the number of places in childcare facilities and to provide a high quality of education.<sup>2</sup> Against this background, the project can briefly be characterized as a sort of accompanying research, which was settled in the so-called *research and development* as well as in

the area of basic research on educational phenomena. On the one hand, the project was expected to give some indication for the ministry to evaluate the success of their institutional expansion strategy. On the other hand, from the vantage point of the researchers the project was also linked to the objective of basically investigating the phenomenology of the pedagogical in early childhood education and the different forms and practices of its representation towards various stakeholders. In this sense, the research interest of the project was to describe the realities of care, focusing on the question how professionals account for their educational significance in light of heterogeneous and at times also contradictory expectations of their services. Thus, the study intended to contribute to debates on the educational quality of daycare facilities. In contrast to most other studies on this subject, however, it did not presuppose what *education* is or should be. Rather, we understood education as a task that educational practice has to confront in order to assure as being educational and to represent itself as such in front of its audience. Empirically, the study is about practices of pedagogicalization. Theoretically, it is about aspects of the institutionalization of non-familial childcare. In this context, our research project also paid special attention to linguistic practices in early education institutions which, in Luxembourg, are regularly characterized by a “pluriglossic” language ecology that has a strong influence on the institutional everyday life (Kühn & Reding, 2007, p. 31). As already pointed out in the introduction to this paper, the biggest challenges (early childhood) education in Luxembourg faces are the question of language promotion and the more basic question of how to deal with linguistic diversity at all. So, the request for quality in early childhood actually cannot be separated from the question of language, because language competencies count as one of key factors to the future educational success of

children. As linguistic diversity is not only a societal fact, but also regarded as a pedagogical challenge, it is quite evident that linguistic practices can also function as an important medium through which the institutions in the daycare sector will be able to account for their quality in the sense of ethnomethodology, which means to make high quality reportable and observable for the members inside the institutions as well as to audiences from the outside.

Methodologically, the study was based on an ethnographic research style using participant observation and videography as data collection strategies. In accordance with a theoretical sampling, examinations of the major study took place in six selected crèches and MRE during several research phases. All phases included six weeks of intensive fieldwork in which three ethnographers placed themselves approximately three times a week at different sites within the institutional setting of the daycare centers. The data referred to in the following is based on observation in five different classrooms in three different childcare institutions. Data analysis was based on field notes and protocols, video recordings, photographs, documents, and artifacts. A detailed overview of the methodology and different findings of the whole study has been published in Honig et al. (2013).

### **Linguistic Diversity and Language Policy in Luxembourgian Early Childhood Education**

With about 45%, Luxembourg has by far largest proportion of foreign nationals in the European Union (Statistical Office of the European Union [EUROSTAT], 2013). The main foreign national minority groups in Luxembourg are the Portuguese (16.5% of the total population), French (6.7%), Italians (3.4%), Belgians (3.2%) and Germans (2.3%) (Service Central de La Statistique et des Études Économiques [STATEC], 2014). Additionally, there are also

about 150,000 frontier workers from France, Germany and Belgium crossing the Luxembourgish border day by day. In addition, Luxembourg is also one of the few officially *multilingual* states in Western Europe. This means that the (often multilingual) migrants find themselves in a situation of historically evolved trilingualism (Berg, 1993). This trilingual setting was already codified in the official Luxembourgish language law passed in 1984, which in addition to Luxembourgish as the *national language*, identifies German and French as official legal and administrative languages (*langues administratives et judiciaires*) (Chambre des Députés, 1984). These three languages are also represented in different forms and weighting in the national education system.

But, in response to significantly increasing migration since the late 1990's the language situation in Luxembourg has also *changed* (Horner & Weber, 2008). Alongside the three official administrative languages there has been a growing importance of English as the language of international business and the financial sector. Continuing immigration increased the importance of other immigrant languages as well, primarily Portuguese. In addition, the role of French has changed since it shifted from the language of the societal elites to an everyday language among immigrant groups, as well as between residents and cross border commuters from France and Belgium. Furthermore, the use of the Luxembourgish language has also increased in the last decades even though the government did not take any special effort to encourage its dissemination after the language law has passed (such as implementing Luxembourgish as a major subject in schools for example). Due to the growing use of Luxembourgish in the context of traditional and new (social) media, which also pushes forward its standardization as a written language, it is no longer limited to the area of oral communication.

The complexity and differentiation of everyday language practices in Luxembourg would be underestimated if one conceived of the language setting to be a diverse realm of separate language domains brought to live by, without exception, perfectly trained multilingual speakers. What one encounters in Luxembourg, however, is rather a situation of linguistic *super-diversity*. It is helpful to refer to Steven Vertovec's (2007) concept of *super-diversity* here as it was designed to describe the dynamics and complexity of diversification processes in social spaces which are characterized by a high degree of migration. In this sense, *linguistic super-diversity* refers to conditions under which different languages do not merely co-exist independently from one another, but rather are affected by a complex interplay of foreign and indigenous languages (Bloomaert, 2010, Creese & Blackledge, 2010, Gogolin, 2010). This is, in fact, the case in Luxembourg. Besides the fact that multiple languages are spoken, the language setting in Luxembourg is characterized by spontaneous and permanent changes in the languages coupled with a mixture of different languages. To what extent this varies depends on the differing domains of language behavior (politics, media, private conversation, etc.) (Berg, 1993) in which one may find a more or less open competition of different languages (Unité de Recherche Identités, Politiques, Sociétés, Espaces [IPSE], 2010, p. 67). Against this background, it becomes quite clear that the linguistic situation is not purely bi- or multilingual. This means, that speakers do not communicate with each other by using different languages separately. Instead, they interact in different languages, simultaneously operating between them and crossing their borders. In other words, the speakers are acting as *translinguals*. The terms *translinguality* and *translanguaging* as defined by García (2009) describe practices of language use in which the boundaries of different languages are constantly crossed in communication by a so-called *code-*

*switching* and even a *code-mixing* to such an extent that a detached observer is no longer able to identify them in proper separation from each other. The term *translanguaging* has been deployed by García to denote the actual language practices of multilingual speakers, not from the perspective of language as a system, but as an everyday experience where diverse linguistic and non-linguistic resources are combined in dynamic and fluid ways in order to make meaning and achieve understanding. In this sense, following García, *translanguaging* means “the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, in order to maximize communication potential” (García, 2009, p. 140).

Though the *translingual* management of linguistic diversity belongs to the ordinary everyday experience of people living in Luxembourg, the societal discourse about the language situation displays a split into two different and opposing positions (IPSE, 2010, Péporté et al., 2010). On the one hand, there is a strong commitment to multilingualism, which is considered both as a special feature of the Luxembourgian society as well as offering an added value for its economy and the cultural life of its inhabitants. In this sense, multilingualism is even often regarded as the ‘true’ *mother tongue* in Luxembourg (Berg & Weis, 2007, p. 19). On the other hand, multilingualism is also perceived as a risk for the social cohesion and the preservation of the nation’s identity. In this context, the role of Luxembourgish as the ‘true’ national language in the narrowest sense is emphasized and it is launched as an effective means to establish the nation’s cultural integrity. The perspective on multilingualism, however, has to be further differentiated, since there are different practical forms of multilingual repertoires and different ideas of multilingualism at stake (Fehlen, 2009). On the one hand, there is a more commonsense-oriented vision of multilingualism which is

established within the school system. It is based on a monolingualist view of language use in the sense of aspiring to a nearly native-like level of linguistic performance in every official language as well as in English. Following this idea of *monolingual multilingualism*, different socially approved languages are to be learned and used separately while the corresponding competencies should each be applied as perfectly as possible in the appropriate sociolinguistic domain (family, friends, job, public space etc.). But, on the other hand, there is also an illegitimate form of multilingualism. Here different languages seem to interfere, no language is supposed to be spoken ‘properly’ and in a correct manner, and the speaking of socially disapproved and economically less profitable languages, for example Portuguese, is reflected as a symbol of failed integration, backwardness, and an impediment to social cohesion. From this perspective, the everyday practices of *translanguaging* are rather regarded as a *problem* than a *solution* for dealing with multilingualism in the Luxembourgish society.

Considering the governmental perspective of how to deal with issues of linguistic and cultural heterogeneity in early childhood education, Luxembourg does not really differ very much from other central European countries like Germany, Switzerland, or Austria. In Luxembourg, migration-related inequality of opportunity in the educational system is also a big issue. This is reflected in the relevant documents informing educational policy as well as in the (few) governmental statements available on this topic. So, for example, the national report concerning the situation of youth in Luxembourg (MFI, 2010) confirmed once again what the studies of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) had indicated previously; namely, that young people with a lower socioeconomic status, migration backgrounds, and foreign-language parents are most affected by origin-related inequality of opportunity in the educational

system (see MENFP, 2010, 2012b). Especially in light of a highly segregating school system which has repeatedly been shown to re-produce social inequalities as well as high repetition and dropout rates, *language promotion in early and preschool education* in Luxembourg is politically assigned with a strong preventive and compensatory function (Achten, Horn & Schronen, 2009, Delvaux-Stehres, 2011).

In terms of promoting early language acquisition it is especially the Luxembourgish language, which as one of the three official languages, is considered an essential ingredient in the formation of *a national identity*, and also as an important step in accomplishing a *successful school career* and, importantly, for the *integration of immigrants* into a multilingual and culturally diverse social environment (Berg & Weis, 2007). The emphasis is put on the promotion of Luxembourgish with the argument that it – once established as a common language – not only eases classroom communication in general, but also prepares children for their alphabetization in German later on, in the first class of primary school (Neumann & Seele, 2014). In other words, the function ascribed to the Luxembourgish language is manifold, which means that the promotion of Luxembourgish must be regarded as an attempt *to kill several birds with one stone*, rather than as a clear and powerful political strategy, for example, of assimilation or stratification. This is especially true since, from the perspective of the government, the goal of promoting the Luxembourgish language in order to preserve the national cultural identity does not contradict the aim of fostering the social integration of foreign immigrants. As a historically evolved “upgrade language”, or language to be developed, (in German: *Ausbausprache*), which is characterized by a high disposition to adapt to other languages (Scheidweiler, 1988), Luxembourgish is considered as a kind of a *langue véhiculaire* (vehicular language) that facilitates access to the

diverse linguistic situation and to functional literacy during the early school years. With this in mind, the promotion of the Luxembourgish language should not be seen as an effort to assimilate immigrants into the mainstream society, but should rather be understood as a reaction to the undeniable situation of linguistic super-diversity.

This multiplicity of purpose explains why the promotion of language skills in Luxembourgish is supposed to be one of the key priorities in early childhood education (Freiberg, Hornberg & Kühn, 2007, p. 210f.), a vision which guided the establishment of the MRE daycare form since 2005. Their educational mission is, as the ‘founding father’ of the MRE in the Luxembourgish Ministry of Family affairs, Mill Majerus, has pointed out for several times, to provide a “*common colloquial language*” (Majerus, 2008, p. 294) between children of different national origin. Accordingly, one of the main programmatic aims and declared educational tasks of the MRE is “to foster the use of Luxembourgish as the language of everyday communication and as an expression of a common identity” (Majerus, 2009, p. 32). Promoting Luxembourgish as the so-called “language of integration”, therefore, does not only serve communication and understanding inside the institutions, it also contributes to the cohesion of a heterogeneous society as a whole as well as to the preservation of the nation’s identity.

Against this background, to promote linguistic competencies in Luxembourgish within the given multilingual environment is a key challenge to be taken up by the publicly funded daycare institutions in order to prove the politically and professionally ascribed value of early childhood education. This is reflected in the everyday practice of professionals to meet the demands and expectations of parents as well as political and administrative stakeholders in terms of developing outstanding educational ‘quality’ (see Honig et al., 2013, p. 22). The

interesting empirical question is, however, how do early childhood institutions and their professionals actually cope with this linguistically diverse environment, and which strategies do they use in order to meet the demand to establish Luxembourgish as the *lingua franca* for communication as well as a subject of early language learning?

### **Between Societal Multilingualism and Institutional Monolingualism: Language Promotion Practices in Early Childhood Education**

An examination of what really takes place in the context of language use in institutional everyday life enables one to draw a more differentiated picture of how the educators deal with the expectation of language promotion in a linguistically diverse environment. In order to come straight to the point, a first important finding of our field observations is that the *linguistic landscape* in Luxembourgish daycare centers is much more diverse and complex than the programmatic narrative of promoting Luxembourgish as a common language may suggest. From the perspective of a participant observer, the use of language in the daycare centers is quite similar to the use of language in social everyday life, so that the determination of Luxembourgish as *lingua franca* appears to apply only selectively. Such an observation is hardly surprising as the situation of linguistic diversity in Luxembourg does, of course, not stop in front of the gates of daycare institutions.

Based on a questionnaire for the parents, which was also part of our fieldwork, we found up to 14 different home languages that children bring into the everyday life of the MRE. Among these languages were not only the three official languages of the country (French, German, and Luxembourgish) or English but also many others as Portuguese, Italian, Polish, Swedish or Chinese. The speakers in the early childhood education settings cope with this situation by

adapting their language use to the preferences of their communication partners, by switching to English or by acting *translingual* in terms of allowing more than one language in conversation or switching between different languages. For example, parents' evenings are regularly offered in a mixture of at least two or three languages. The entries in the so-called 'walking-diaries' of children are written in each child's mother tongue or in English. Notices with information for the parents are written in one of the three official languages or in English. Notices issued by state authorities (i.e. information on flu vaccination) are displayed in the source language of the documents, which in Luxembourg is normally French. In the case of emergency instructions, these are sometimes supplemented with handwritten explanations in Luxembourgish to avoid possible misunderstandings. What can also be observed is a frequent use of meta-linguistic artifacts, such as handmade 'traffic lights' which signal the start and the end of pick-up and delivery times for children in front of the classrooms.

Considering such forms of communication, one can observe that *translanguaging* is a kind of a lived principle. In contrast, the determination of Luxembourgish as *lingua franca* seems to be quite artificial, particularly since even educators communicate in several different languages, depending on their individual skills. *Translanguaging* is even present in communication with children and among the children themselves. Furthermore, the so-called 'familiarization phase' with the parents and their child regularly takes place in the parents' mother tongue or in English. From the perspective of a participant observer, all the linguistic differences seem to disappear through the diversity of language practices. The corresponding oral translingual practices we observed were especially characterized by frequently switching between different codes or even by mixing them so that the speakers were nearly operating between different languages.



This is, for example, reflected in the following statement of a caregiver during a conversation with the researchers (see also Neumann & Seele, 2014, p. 359):

“I actually always try to speak Luxembourgish with the children. But sometimes, when they answer in French, I just keep talking in French, without realizing it at all. Then, I notice later on: Oh, yes I'm actually talking French...It is always so messed up”.

How this looks like in the context of everyday interactions can be illustrated by the following sequence during lunch time in a MRE:

I sit with a group of four children and an educator at the lunch table. Laetitia and Elena, who are both waiting for their meals, sit to my left. The educator, Ingrid, sits next to them on the other side. Ingrid asks me in German, if I would also like to eat something: *Möchten Sie auch etwas essen?* I say: *Nein, danke, im Moment lieber nicht* (No, thanks, not right now). After that, the meals are served onto the plates of the children and they begin to eat. A few minutes later, Natalie notices that Laetitia's plate is nearly empty. She asks in Luxembourgish, *Wëlls de nach e bësselchen?* ('Do you want a bit more?') Laetitia looks at her with a smile in her face and replies in French: *Oui!* (Yes).

This sequence displays a typical example for language use practices in which several languages are applied without any particular attention to their original distinctiveness. However, such situations are not restricted to the communication between adults or between adults and children but can also be observed during the conversations among children themselves:

Annabelle opens a picture book and slides her fingers over the animals depicted there. She looks at Pierre, points to one of the pictures and tells him

excitedly and in French: *C'est un cochon!* (French, That's a pig!). Pierre looks at her with big eyes and says in Luxembourgish: *Weider!* (Luxembourgish, Go further!) Annabelle slides her fingers a bit further, points to the next picture and says: *Une chèvre!* (French, A sheep!). Pierre laughs and says, again in Luxembourgish: *Nach weider!* (Luxembourgish, More further!).

All this, however, changes fundamentally when language use is no longer solely based on the objective of mutual understanding, but also directly associated with ambitions of language promotion. This means in general, that two different institutional modes of language use in the multilingual environment of early childhood education institutions must be distinguished. The main line of differentiation runs between such daycare facilities which do not pay any particular attention to linguistic diversity in their pedagogical approaches on the one hand, and such facilities mentioning the task of language promotion and linguistic diversity explicitly in their mission statements. The latter are characterized especially by the fact that they meet the demands of language promotion in the context of a diverse linguistic environment by monolingualizing the language use in institutional everyday life. Nevertheless, the enforcement of a monolingual standard of language use also depends situationally on *who is actually talking to whom*. In light of this, one can recognize that monolingualization also implies a practice distinguishing between children and adults. When adults talk to each other, then tolerance for translingual and linguistically diverse conversation is still predominant. In the communication between adults and children, however, and also in communication among children in the presence of adult professionals, this may not only be completely different, but also dependent on the particular institution and special local

conditions. In this context, two main variations can be described.

### **Speaking Luxembourgish:**

#### **Monolingualization in a single Language**

Monolingualizing communication with and among children towards a consequent performance of Luxembourgish is the most widespread form of so-called *language promotion* in the publicly funded non-profit sector of preschool early childhood education in Luxembourg, and especially in the MRE. It is characterized by the fact that at the level of the pedagogical concepts of these daycare centers, the challenge of how to deal with linguistic diversity becomes redefined to the general use of Luxembourgish as *lingua franca* in the communications with children and of children with children. Although this is not prescribed by any official law, commitments to the Luxembourgish language can be regularly found in the conceptual frameworks of the publicly funded sector. According to these conceptual frameworks, the caregivers are expected to speak Luxembourgish with the children and to take care that it is pronounced correctly. This is, however, not about a lack of competence of the caregivers as nearly all of them are themselves multilingual. It rather means that the educational mission is conceptually taken up with trying to meet the diverse language ecology at the institutional level by monolingualizing the linguistic intercourse. For the daily life in childcare institutions, this has the consequence that the family languages are displaced in the domestic private sphere while German and French are left to the responsibility of the school.

With the claim of an exclusive promotion of Luxembourgish, the daycare sector simultaneously creates its separate educational mission with which it can distance itself from both the school on the one hand side and the family on the other hand side. In these institutions to speak Luxembourgish does not only mean to use a specific language –

Luxembourgish is rather *the* language which has to be learned and in which should be taught.

However, in trying to monolingualize the linguistic intercourse the educators do not pursue a regular plan or an official curriculum. Moreover, this kind of language promotion is embedded in everyday interactions between children and adult professionals. This represents the common practice of the *promotion of Luxembourgish* which can be understood as a kind of linguistic naturalization. The educators apply a habit of ‘teaching’ which relies on requesting children to perform their Luxembourgish language faculties. If it is spoken by those children who do not do so natively, then it becomes a language *through which children are educated*. This happens as they are *made to* ‘learn’ through it in a way that allows the educators to continuously observe the effectiveness of their own interventions. In the end, this leads to intensive practice of language promotion where children are repeatedly admonished to speak Luxembourgish, and not only when they speak with professionals in the supposedly ‘wrong’ language, but also when they communicate among themselves in a multilingual way or in different foreign languages. The professionals use an implicit and intuitive *didactic* whose guiding idea is: *Luxembourgish is taught through speaking it*. This strategy is similar to the experience of indigenous Luxembourgish people with their own language acquisition. They learn ‘their’ language not in the classroom, but in everyday family life. In this sense, the use of Luxembourgish language is both the aim and the means of language promotion. Against this background, it is telling that the use of the Luxembourgish language is not intended as serving to solve a problem of understanding at all. Put another way, the use of this language is always oriented to the language-promoting effectiveness of its use, and effort to bring it in line with a performative evocation of the children’s ability really to speak Luxembourgish.

This means that the demand to promote Luxembourgish, and to foster its use in daycare settings, is a demand that is targeted especially on *children* and positions them as those who need to be educated. Against the background of the diverse linguistic environment represented in the daycare centers this also means that professionals have to intervene frequently in order to prove the effectiveness of their own practice.

### **“Promoting Multilingualism”: Monolingualization in Multiple Languages**

In addition to the claim of promoting the Luxembourgish language, there is also a second claim for promoting linguistic diversity in the institutions of early childhood education and care. This argument is not based on legal requirements, but reflects just the other side of the discourse on multilingualism in Luxembourg. On one hand there is the reference to Luxembourgish as the common language of the nation, on the other hand there is the *mother tongue* of multilinguality itself which most of the people in Luxembourg routinely use in a more or less intensive manner in everyday life (Berg & Weis, 2007, p 19, IPSE, 2010). Institutions regarding the promotion of multilingualism as a standard for their educational ambitions work with concepts such as *one face - one speech* and establish an expert for one of the several languages to be promoted in each classroom. In such conceptual frameworks, French, Luxembourgish, German and English are the most preferred ones. The professionals explain that they use the concept to meet the linguistic heterogeneity of children, and also “to introduce some order in the linguistic chaos”. This refers to another, more general dimension of the quality-related practices we reconstructed during our investigations in the field: The *production of order* in the inner everyday life of the institution displays one of the professionals’ key strategies in terms of making their own practice

accountable in terms of making it understandable as ‘good’ practice ‘to the outside’ (Honig et al., 2013, p. 18). In this respect, the practice of *one face - one speech* has the function of making the claim of language promotion visible in the institutional life. Although this approach explicitly promises to foster multilingualism, the strategy of language promotion is, also in this case, associated with the strategy of monolingualizing the children’s use of language. In other words, it is not only about having spoken different languages, it is also about the children having to prove, that they are willing and able to behave in the respective languages in a monolingual way. In consequence, these institutions respond to the challenge of language development in a multilingually structured social environment by monolingualizing the communication with the children. The difference compared to the monolingual promotion of Luxembourgish is just that communication opportunities are not obviously limited to one language. However, the professionals pursue a similar attitude: Languages are learned through speaking them, which means at the same time that educational success and its professional production can be documented directly *in action*.

### **Conclusions**

The study of the everyday practice of language use in the state-funded MRE has revealed that the challenge of how to deal with linguistic diversity in early childhood education varies in practice in locally different and hardly predictable ways. Although the centers which are conceptually engaged in language promotion clearly opt for a strategy of monolingualization, the actual everyday practices are much more diverse and complex. In other words, even if Luxembourgish is defined as the one single target language to be promoted, there are always multiple languages at stake. This, in turn, reveals the constitutive tension between the

programmatic aim of promoting language acquisition as effectively as possible and the *in vivo* strategies of communication in an environment which is ineluctable multilingual. Caregivers are always challenged to reconcile the political goals and public expectations with the practical needs of mutual understanding in every day interactions. Depending on whether they intend to promote language learning or rather communicative goals, in any given situation the tension between monolingual agendas and translanguaging practices will be resolved towards either one side or the other (Neumann & Seele, 2014). This again reveals impressively the real cascade of contingency lying between everyday language use in society, the political agenda of education towards integration, and the established practices of language use on the institutional level. In other words, one can say that the given linguistic landscape in early childhood education reflects nothing else than the ambiguity of the societal discourse on multilingualism itself.

However, what does all this mean in regard to the initial question of this article? Do the efforts to prepare children for integration in a multilingual social environment by a monolingual approach of early language promotion in the end effectively avoid that children get *lost in translanguaging*? If this question is to be answered it is also necessary to ask, "Who will be likely to become *lost in translanguaging*?". Considering the everyday practices of language use, one can say, that it is not the children who are threatened to become lost in translanguaging but professional practice itself. As caregivers are constantly forced to adopt language use to the given circumstances of linguistic diversity by applying ambiguous rules and contradictory routines, it is likely to fail its own concept and linguistic policy. Furthermore, and in respect to the children, it should be

considered that the modes of language promotion discussed above are characterized by certain ambivalences in respect to their possible consequences, both for the children of indigenous Luxembourgish people and for those growing up in foreign-language families. Despite the fact that the monolingualistic promotion of Luxembourgish provides the opportunity to establish a common language in the everyday institutional context, and also prepare children for the linguistic environment of the first school year, it also creates a special monolingual pedagogical world apart which stands in sharp contrast to the multilingual social reality. One of the consequences of promoting Luxembourgish is that institutions unnecessarily miss using for their own pedagogical practice the various resources children bring from their own cultural and linguistic background. Another side effect and implication of this strategy is that it separates indigenous from immigrant children in a more strictly than a state with three official languages must do. This means that children with different home languages, or sometimes children from multilingual homes, have to learn to use a second or even a third language actively and regularly at a very early stage in their development. However, these practices are ambiguous for indigenous children, too. That is because, although children of Luxembourgish speaking families are supported in learning their home language, all children regardless of their origin only learn to speak Luxembourgish and not how to use the language in the Luxembourgish linguistic environment of translingual social interactions. This increases the risk for children in Luxembourg to get *lost in translingualism*, not as an effect of translingualism itself but as a consequence of *monolingualistic* educational practices. What is meant by this is not that children do not learn anything about languages, but

monolingualization implies that they first and foremost learn something about how they have to use these languages in the institutional setting of early childhood education. In a similar, albeit less intense manner, this also applies to the promotion of a kind of *multilingually oriented monolingualism* following the principle of *one face - one speech*. Although this principle focuses on the provision of learning different languages, and this is why it at a first glance goes better with the surrounding social reality of linguistic diversity, it also creates a special pedagogical world apart, as it also separates the different languages from each other in institutional everyday life and, in addition, excludes, as well as devaluates, the many other languages existing besides those selected as the 'official' ones of an institution. So, if children really become lost in *translanguaging* (e.g. in terms of linguistic disintegration in the institutional environment or even in the own family), it will not be because of their competencies as individual speakers or because of societal translanguaging. It will rather be caused by the monolingualistic treatment of the situation of linguistic diversity as it is established within the educational institutions and the corresponding disregard of the translanguaging skills of the children. This is also the case with respect to language tests in pre-school age as, for example, the so-called *Bilan 30* [Balance 30] in Luxembourg, which although available in different languages, is based on a monolingualistic paradigm of language acquisition. The same argument would not least also apply to a strategy of promoting *bilingualism* (French and Luxembourgish) in early childhood education as it recently has been envisaged from the 2016/17 school year by the new Luxembourgish government (see MEN, 2014b). This is because bilingualism will as well exclude the many other languages at stake in

early childhood education and, in this sense, would also represent no more than an extended version of monolingualism. In contrast, translanguaging practices, as mentioned above, deal with diversity by not transforming it into heterogeneity but by an equal treatment of people with different linguistic behavior which manifests itself in an open and indiscriminate handling of distinctions. For children this would not only give the opportunity to learn that people might be different in terms of the language they speak, but would also provide the chance to experience that diversity is not necessarily an obstacle for mutual understanding.

Against this background, it becomes quite clear that there is a paradoxical relationship between the idea of early language promotion and its pedagogical implementation through the monolingualization of the children's language use. Here, monolingualization does not turn out to be a medium of balancing capabilities and opportunities, but rather a mechanism of producing difference. And it is the idea of monolingualism in language promotion itself which creates the preconditions it assumes. Paradoxically, however, in making the children's different backgrounds and language skills more obvious, it also causes the problems it intends to solve (Neumann, 2011, 2012). In other words, institutions of early childhood education do not only deal with *diversity*, but also produce *difference*. This is because, on the one hand, there are different strategies of dealing with linguistic diversity present in the field, and on the other hand, the respective strategies also encounter different conditions, depending on the origin of the children. The professional practices of language use and language promotion in early childhood do not only reflect the diversity of the Luxembourgish society, but also create further potential sources of

increasing inequality. This is not least the case, as other studies have shown, that children of parents belonging to language minority groups are less likely to attend center-based early childhood education (Ishizawa, 2006). Finally, the politically intended integration function of early childhood education in Luxembourg is more likely to fail than to be fulfilled. By contrast, it would be more promising, following Makoni & Pennycook (2006), to adapt the mode and the objectives of language promotion to the general sociolinguistic ecology and to the linguistic practices which are common in a respective society. What does this conclusion imply in respect to the further development of language promotion in early childhood education? Obviously, the guiding model of monolingualization has its roots first and foremost in traditional language teaching and learning practices in school, and school also seems to provide an abstract but important reference point for language promotion in early childhood education. This means that the more early childhood education understands itself as preparing for school, the more it would tend towards a monolingual norm, and this even in a multilingual country. Another implication is that we cannot expect early childhood education to abandon monolingual norms in language promotion when school does not. So the probability of *practicing diversity* in early childhood education instead of *doing difference* is more than just a question of the professional skill of caregivers. It is rather a question of designing an educational system which takes seriously into account the societal reality by which it is surrounded.

### Notes

1. The main difference between *crèches* and *maisons relais pour enfants* is, that care service offered by *crèches* just covers the children aged

0 to 4 whereas *maisons relais* offer care services for children between 0 and 12 years. But there is also another difference: Since 2005 *maisons relais* were established alongside or even competitive to the traditional form of ‘pure’ *crèches* in order to offer more flexible arrangements of stay and children’s enrolment, what in effect means that they are less expensive for the parents and also provide a more efficient instrument for the strategic management of the intended fast expansion of the daycare sector. At least 80 % of the contact hours with the children in *maisons relais* must be provided by staff with professional training in early childhood education or social work (Oberhuemer, Schreyer & Neuman, 2010, p. 297).

2. See Majerus (2009) for a detailed explanation of the official goals of the MRE.

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