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Multilingualism in Luxembourg: (Dis)empowering Cape Verdean migrants at work and beyond

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Abstract: This paper explores the entanglement of language with issues such as discrimination and the reproduction of social hierarchies. It unpacks this interplay to show how the use and abuse of language serve as the main mechanism of inclusion, exclusion and limitation of migrants in the labour market, contributing to certain migrant groups and their descendants remaining in the bottom stratum of society. It investigates how language use can both empower and disqualify migrants, creating ethnic pools of work. This paper draws on interviews with a successful middle-aged Cape Verdean man, Pedrinhu, to illustrate this language impact. He came to Luxembourg at a young age and his sports skills helped him to be fast-tracked to acquire Luxembourgish citizenship. He talks about his migration trajectories, his sociolinguistic life and his job interactions with Cape Verdean workers at a private employment enterprise where he now holds a high position. He seeks “to empower” Cape Verdean migrants, challenging some of the institutionalised linguistic demands of the state employment agency he collaborates with; at the same time, he is aware of the reproduction of inequality and the ethnic stratification of his enterprise. The paper concludes by highlighting the ambivalences of multilingualism and empowerment interventions in accessing resources, such as work, in the condensed migration contexts of Luxembourg.

Keywords: Cape Verdean, inequality, Luxembourg, migration, multilingualism

1 Introduction

This paper illustrates the ambiguous effects of the management of multilingualism at both the nation-state and societal levels. It draws on a case study of Cape Verdean migration in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. Within the EU,

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Luxembourg is the country with the highest proportion of foreign residents (47.9%) and cross-border workers (48% of the country's workforce). Most of its residents have a migrant background (Callens et al. 2014; Horner and Weber 2008; Kremer 2014; Statec 2017; Weber 2009). Luxembourg is officially a trilingual country, where German, French and Luxembourgish are officially recognized languages. For many decades, multilingualism has been a self-celebratory slogan of the country. Policy makers, society, media and individuals have been branding and celebrating Luxembourg as the European champion of multilingualism (cf. Horner 2011). The linguistic regime has been changing over decades, with spoken French gaining currency and, more recently, the use of English in many sectors (De Bres and Franzisku 2014; Pigeron-Piroth and Fehlen 2015). Even though "Portuguese has become one of the most widely spoken languages in Luxembourg [...] it does not enjoy any legal safeguards" (Sharma 2018: 87). Still, it dominates in certain job sectors, as we shall see below.

Luxembourg is often celebrated for its management of multilingualism, but as Duchêne and Heller (2012: 19) highlight, "language in late capitalism remains a fraught terrain, with high stakes for increasing numbers of players." For example, the labour market runs on specific linguistic demands, tending to discriminate against speakers of non-official and minoritized languages. Therefore, even if multilingualism is officially (economically and socially) valorised, only certain forms (i.e. combination of languages) seem to fit these expectations. For others, their specific form of multilingualism is devalued, leading to the creation of specific workspaces for certain migrant groups who thereby remain in the bottom stratum of the host society. I propose to call this process the "ethno-stratification of the labour market."

This paper illustrates this ethno-stratification of the labour market by exploring the complex nexus between language, discrimination and (dis)empowerment, which creates inequalities and reproduces the social order. In order to demonstrate this, the paper draws on the analysis of interviews with *Pedrinhu*,¹ a professionally successful middle-aged Cape Verdean man, who migrated to Luxembourg more than two decades ago. He holds a high position in a private employment agency, KPS,² which now employs mostly Lusophone³ workers. Cape Verdeans form the majority, and to a certain extent, this is due to *Pedrinhu*'s role as a coordinator/recruiter. He seeks to employ and empower his compatriots by challenging

1 *Pedrinhu* is a pseudonym.

2 KPS is a pseudonym.

3 What I mean by *Lusophone workers* are those migrant workers who are originally from Portuguese-speaking countries (i.e. from Portugal and its former colonies of Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Angola, Mozambique, Sao Tome and Principe, Brazil and East Timor).

restrictive institutionalised linguistic ideologies and assumptions. However, although he employs his compatriots to challenge institutional linguistic demands, those demands do not disappear, and his intervention may actually contribute to locking those migrants in the lower rungs of work in the long run, as will be shown below. The analysis demonstrates that this combination can serendipitously lead to the creation of “alternative language regimes” (Piller, 2016: 89), which apply to ethnic job markets and are defined beyond the official language regime of a given (destination) country. Unfortunately, policy makers often devalue and overlook these alternative language regimes, contributing to the reproduction of inequalities. These regimes are usually allocated in “survival employment” (Piller, 2016: 76), which requires, for economic necessity, one to take a job below one’s level of qualification. This is common for (new) migrant workers, further entrenching their exploitation and exclusion socially, politically and economically.

This paper is a clarion call to raise awareness about the social consequences of language and multilingualism as a criterion for access to work and in the creation of inequalities. It helps to unveil how, contrary to expectations, official multilingualism, combined with other social variables, may contribute to hinder certain migrants and their Luxembourg-born descendants from accessing better-paid jobs. This official multilingualism also jeopardizes the possibility of educational attainment for them, thus further disempowering them. In this paper I argue that disadvantage and discrimination on the basis of language need to be recognised in order to make positive change possible. With this goal in mind, the following section introduces the notion of multilingualism from critical perspectives, exploring its links to migration and (dis)empowerment. Section 3 then introduces the research context and historicises Cape Verdean migration into Luxembourg more specifically. Section 4 presents an overview of the methodology used in generating and analysing data. Section 5 analyses Pedrinhu’s narratives about his interactions with workers at KPS and with the state employment agency and education stakeholders. As such, this section mirrors the linguistic production of inequalities and the ethno-stratification of the labour market in Luxembourg. Section 6 concludes the paper and points to the uncertainties of Pedrinhu’s attempt to empower migrant workers.

2 Multilingualism, migration and (dis)empowerment

Multilingualism has traditionally been understood as “competence in multiple languages – where this competence is itself understood as the ability to keep the

languages apart” (Wee 2017: 138). This has been challenged by many scholars who remind us that it “should not be seen as a collection of languages that a speaker controls, but rather as a complex of specific semiotic resources, some of which belong to a conventionally defined language, while others belong to another language” (Blommaert 2010: 102). (Piller, 2016: 9–11) argues that

it is not always easy to know where one language ends and where another language begins [...] terms such as bilingualism, trilingualism or multilingualism can be misleading because they suggest that languages are clearly separate and can be easily counted and compartmentalized [...] in real life and everyday usage languages are not usually as neatly compartmentalized as our usage of language names suggests.

Further, multilingualism is often seen as a double-edged sword; that is, it is seen as both a strength and a big problem, especially in the school system. For instance, Weber (2009) critically analyses the construction of multilingualism in Luxembourg in the media and in official documents, as well as in “popular discourses” and even in “academic discourses.” According to him, individual multilingualism, or how one learns and uses languages, is seen as a strength, while societal multilingualism, the result of having transnationals in a host country and cross-border workers with different linguistic resources, is seen as “language chaos” that threatens the preservation of “national interests and traditions” (Weber 2009: 23). Societal multilingualism is often composed of the “vernacular multilingualism of ethnic minorities and migrant groups [...] that is not circumscribed as part of the nation,” and thus is framed as a problem (Luchtenberg 2002; Lorente 2017: 489).

Nation-states tend to manage multilingualism through monolingual ideologies, nurturing homogenisation of many spheres of public life, instead of exploring its “bridge-building potential” (Auer and Wei 2007: 12). The labour market and the education system are common terrains of this management. The multilingual resources of migrants and their children are often ideologically “erased” in public discourse (Irvine and Gal 2000), which contributes to the reproduction of social hierarchies. It is important to stress that it is not multilingualism per se that constrains the lives of people. Rather, this is an outcome of what people, institutions and policy makers can do with “language as a proxy” (Weber 2015: 105). That is to say that language intersects in complex ways with other variables such as class, gender, race, age, country of origin, etc. (cf. Flubacher et al. 2018: 108), leading to unequal struggles among social actors. Thus, as Horner and Dailey-O’Cain (2020: 15) suggest, “it is crucial to engage with privilege and the ways that it underpins systemic structures that empower some and disempower others.”

Disempowered subjects are constantly struggling to gain control over their lives. Empowerment has been seen as “the process of acquiring power, or the

process of transition from lack of control to the acquisition of control over one's own life and immediate environment" (Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba 1991: 138, cited in Lamb 2001: 10). This is fundamentally a political concept that can be applied to other disciplines across the humanities and social sciences. The empowerment vision can be well situated in critical sociolinguistics for its activist potential, helping to redefine and change the existing unequal (linguistic) relations of power (Goldstein 1997).

Multilingualism can be empowering, but it can also contribute to inequalities among speakers or groups of people in a given society. As Duchêne (2019) posits, "multilingualism is not neutral, but rather intrinsically embedded in social processes that inform who and what counts as a legitimate speaker, language, and practice. As such, multilingualism represents a site of struggle for access to and distribution of knowledge, resources, and status." Not all forms of multilingualism are considered productive and experienced as empowering. Many forms of it are unwanted, disqualified or actively endangering to people (Blommaert et al. 2012; Stroud 2009). That is, undesired multilinguals are neutralised and marginalized by "elite multilingualism" (Barakos and Selleck 2019: 1), thus being "consigned to the backroom" (Duchêne et al. 2013: 11). Being a desired multilingual may empower people, facilitate their access to resources and make them more mobile both geographically and socially. However, as Duchêne et al. (2013: 7) highlight, "the lack of valued linguistic resources does not render migrants as passive subjects under the control of powerful social agents [...] Strategies to contest and resist [are] always an option open to migrants." Yet, migration often leads to disempowering people: socially, economically and politically, as this process is deeply imbued with the question of citizenship and language competence; the latter is used as perhaps the most "blanket explanation for exclusion" (Piller, 2016: 95) of migrants from well-paid jobs or as an explanation for their sub-employment.

The mere fact of being accidentally born in a certain geographical area of the globe, and/or speaking certain languages, having a specific accent and colour of skin, attending certain kinds of educational spaces, rituals and religions, entitles or denies people access to resources and to certain parts of the world. Indeed, a lot of people on Earth are somehow "stuck" before, in or after mobility (Baynham 2013: 274). The territoriality of the first appearance of one's body marks one's life in terms of struggles and privileges over multilingualism, mobility, power and knowledge (Tavares and Juffermans 2020). Taking the context of Luxembourg as an example, I stress that it is salient how "acceptable ways of speaking" seem to be often and by themselves "valued over a person's actual qualifications or job experience" (Duchêne et al. 2013: 13). Nowadays, language requirements are omnipresent as a proxy (Weber 2015) or/and legally circumscribed in most domains of society and straightforwardly linked to inequality and economic, political

and social exclusion. This is a serious matter in a country in which the majority of the population has a migrant background.

3 The research context: Cape Verdeans in trilingual Luxembourg

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg started to become a migrant-receiving country at the end of the nineteenth century. Migrants initially came from Germany, France and Belgium, and shortly thereafter from Italy, to work in the expanding steel industry after the discovery of iron mineral deposits; later they came from Portugal and former Yugoslavia (Beirão 1999; Kollwelter 2007; Scuto 2010). For this reason, the country is particularly complex and diverse in terms of population, language and workforce. The majority of migrants in Luxembourg are originally from EU-member states and other European countries. Today, the second-largest ethnic group in Luxembourg (after ethnic Luxembourgers) hails from Portugal; according to the official statistics (Statec 2017), 16.4% of the population hold Portuguese passports. The second-largest migrant community hails from France, followed by Italy, Belgium, Germany, former Yugoslavia and Cape Verde, as well as China, Brazil, the US, Canada and several African countries (cf. Scuto 2010; Statec 2017). Although considerable research has been done on Italian and Portuguese immigration to Luxembourg, very little research has been conducted to date on Cape Verdean and other African migrant groups in Luxembourg (but see Jacob and Mertz 2010; Tavares 2018).

Cape Verdean migration to Luxembourg started indirectly via Portuguese colonisation. Cape Verde was a Portuguese settlement colony from the fifteenth century until its independence in 1975. Many Cape Verdeans migrated to Portugal from the mid-1960s to the 1980s. As there was a huge demand for labour force at the time, Luxembourg recruited Portuguese *Gastarbeiter* (guest workers) to come and work in construction when the formerly stable influx of Italian guest workers began to decline. Agreements of work mobility between Portugal and Luxembourg were signed, and as Cape Verdeans had Portuguese citizenship at that time, they started to re-emigrate from Portugal to Luxembourg. However, later on, the Luxembourg government and the Portuguese fascist government signed an agreement to stop Cape Verdean migration to Luxembourg (Laplanche and Vanderkam 1991), leading to the consolidation of Cape Verdean migration to Luxembourg in the 1970s and 1980s. More recently, since the economic crash of 2008, there has been an intensification of Cape Verdean re-emigration from Portugal to other European countries, including Luxembourg (Pereira 2012). This

new Cape Verdean migration pattern is composed mostly of those holding Portuguese citizenship. This has contributed significantly to the increase of the Cape Verdean presence in Luxembourg; however, reliable numbers are missing (Tavares and Juffermans 2020). Mobility directly from Cape Verde to Luxembourg is ongoing but under tightened conditions.

Reports by Jacobs and Mertz (2010) and Jacobs et al. (2017) are among the few sources that offer insightful knowledge concerning non-EU migrant groups, with a particular focus on Cape Verdean migrants in Luxembourg. Their mixed qualitative-quantitative studies recognise the difficult situation of Cape Verdean and former Yugoslavian communities in juridical terms, especially compared to migrants of other non-EU communities (Americans, Chinese, etc.). Most importantly, the reports highlight that education, training and employment are important indicators of integration; however, immigrants face difficulties in getting their certificates recognized. Both reports demonstrate the bottom strata of the social, educational and employment spheres that Cape Verdeans in Luxembourg do occupy compared to other migrant groups.

In what concerns languages, many Cape Verdeans strategically come to Luxembourg because they idealise Luxembourg as a reservoir of languages – a multilingual country where they can choose certain language(s) to navigate their lives. Thus, they believe that since they speak Portuguese and Cape Verdean Creole, they will find a way to manage, at least to a certain degree, their migrant lives along with their ethnic ties in Luxembourg. Many also have French in their repertoires and the existence of a significant presence of Portuguese migrants appears promising. Both of these factors influence their decision to come to Luxembourg, and they see Luxembourg's societal multilingualism as an opportunity (cf. De Bres 2014). However, even French can be a barrier for them, especially in a case where they aspire to jobs in a stratum where, even if they have the required professional qualifications, there is a higher demand for linguistic and literacy competencies; this will be detailed in Sections 5.1 and 5.2, below.

The current societal multilingualism is much more diverse and dynamic than the official one that consists of Luxembourgish, French and German. Portuguese especially forms an ever-increasing counterweight to the official status of multilingualism in Luxembourg. It is far more commonly used on the main city's corners and streets, at several branches of work and in everyday interactions than German, one of the country's official languages (cf. Manço et al. 2014; Sharma 2018). However, Portuguese remains at the bottom of the language hierarchy in Luxembourg, while German, which is the least used official language outside the classroom and in society in general (cf. Decamps and Monthéard 2020), remains the main gatekeeping tool for the majority of migrants, as we shall see. Furthermore, it is worth pointing out that the official trilingual "package" does not hold

much, if any, weight in the private sector where many so-called “expats” work, often in finance. Workers in this pool usually need English and many such individuals do not know German, let alone any Luxembourgish (Decamps and Monthéard 2020; Pigeron-Piroth and Fehlen 2015). So, the labour market is segmented along various lines.

There is a salient tendency for the official multilingualism of Luxembourg to promote differences between people in terms of income and power. Most government jobs, which are stable and well-paid, require a combination of high competences in French, Luxembourgish and German (cf. Pigeron-Piroth and Fehlen 2015: 8–9). In terms of social and economic mobility, this demand reproduces social stratification among Luxembourgers, certain European migrants, and Lusophone and African migrants. This differentiation starts in the very beginning of the school system and escalates throughout the adulthood of citizens and foreign residents, as will be illustrated in Section 5, which shows the complex intersections between language, citizenship and race in the labour market. First, a description of this study’s methodology is in order.

4 Methodology

The data under consideration in this paper is part of a multi-sited ethnographic sociolinguistic project – an investigation of Cape Verdean migration trajectories into Luxembourg – that I conducted from 2014 to 2018. The methodology consisted in following people, their objects and ideas throughout their sites of interactions (in both their country of origin and their host country), which are linguistically and materially marked. This helped me to posit the logic of relationships and associations among those sites (Marcus 1995) and to see the consequences of those sites for migrants’ lives. I mostly collected data through biographic interviews, participant observation, and linguistic landscaping; this included collecting every kind of information about objects and people in public and private spaces that index Cape Verdean migration or other kinds of mobility to Luxembourg, including semiotic resources such as photographs, advertisements, scripts in the streets, semiotic artefacts, and others.

The interviews were conducted by me, as a doctoral researcher of Cape Verdean origin. I shared many positionalities with the research participants, so I reflected on my position and how it affected the data collection and analysis in important ways (cf. Tavares 2018). I immersed myself in the social and cultural activities of the participants to understand their aspiring or ongoing migration trajectories to Luxembourg. Being Cape Verdean myself facilitated my immersion and accelerated trust between us. When the researcher does not share such

positionalities with participants, their narratives may be conditioned differently. In my case, the participants might have omitted some information, taking for granted that I would be aware of it, since I am also Cape Verdean. However, projecting me as an insider may have also made participants feel more comfortable and express more criticality towards their migrant conditions in the host society.

The interview excerpts⁴ presented below are taken from three open-ended interviews I conducted with Pedrinhu, as one of the focal participants. The excerpts are chosen in light of their relevance to making us reflect on and unpack the links between language, work, race and education in a migration context. They shed light on the role of language as a facilitating, limiting or excluding tool for migrants in general, and for Cape Verdean migrants and their descendants in particular, in the labour market of officially trilingual Luxembourg. Pedrinhu talks about his migration trajectories, his sociolinguistic life and his job interactions with Cape Verdean migrants at KPS and beyond in Luxembourg. On the one hand, his narrative focuses on the exaggerated linguistic demands that shut down avenues of work/social mobility for Cape Verdean migrants, irrespective of their qualifications. On the other hand, he addresses the situation of Luxembourg-born children of migrant parents, who are also disadvantaged by linguistic demands that lead to their school failure. Consequently, some of them feel the need to take the survival employment that KPS offers, as we shall see below (Section 5.2).

5 Pedrinhu: In service of (challenging) the linguistic production of inequality

Pedrinhu was in his late thirties when I first met him in Luxembourg. He is originally from Santiago Island and came to Luxembourg in 1995, aged 17, via family reunification. He is the eldest of four siblings. At that time, he could speak Cape Verdean Creole and Portuguese and he had already started to study French as part of his high school education in Cape Verde. During the first year of his stay in Luxembourg, he took an intensive full-year course in French, going to class 4 h per day, and started a part-time job cleaning trains at night and during school holidays. His aspiration was to take an advanced course in the car industry. So, he took a mechanics module, but was not allowed to sign up for the electronics one, because it required German competences at that time. About this, Pedrinhu commented: “so it changed my trajectory of work.” After this, he took a technical

4 All interview excerpts are translated by the author, from Cape Verdean Creole to English.

training course for management, commerce and marketing. This course was offered by the *Chambre de Commerce*, and he had a post-work schedule; that is, he attended the course after his workday as a mechanic in a garage.

I heard about Pedrinhu from mutual acquaintances and contacted him on Facebook, explaining my PhD project to him. We met for the first time in my apartment for a formal interview. We had four interviews in total. In the first interview, he highlighted that after only one year, he was short-tracked to acquire Luxembourgish citizenship because of his achievements in sports. This allowed him to develop his network and to gain socio-cultural capital through his sports interactions with local people. Apparently, it was difficult for him to keep working in a garage and to train for sports at the same time. His coach found him a job in the department of logistics at KPS, a company of professional reintegration (for migrants who just arrived in Luxembourg) that provides services for cleaning and maintenance of public buildings, highways and railroads.

In the meantime, due to his training course in management and his network, Pedrinhu became a coordinator for this company. He is part of the HR department, which is responsible for interviews, training and job orientations. KPS provides services to the administration of *Ponts et Chaussées* (Bridges and Roads), a department of the Ministry of Durable Development and Infrastructures of Luxembourg. In terms of the ethnic origin of workers, Pedrinhu described KPS as a door for newcomers into the job market in Luxembourg. Many Cape Verdean first-time job seekers apply to work for this company after registering at the *Agence pour le développement de l'emploi* (ADEM), a public state employment agency. KPS works in collaboration with ADEM; the company exclusively recruits job applicants who are registered at ADEM.

Pedrinhu explained that the workers are first given one-year contracts, but that many of them end up staying on the company's roster permanently. Today, Cape Verdeans form the majority of the company's workforce; in addition, there are Portuguese and Bissau-Guinean workers. The Cape Verdean majority is due to Pedrinhu's position as a coordinator/recruiter and instructor, as well as to the networking process among Cape Verdean workers in the job search. Pedrinhu pointed out that in the beginning of his function as a recruiter at KPS, some colleagues higher in the hierarchy of the company complained that he was hiring mostly Cape Verdeans. However, when they witnessed the workers' productivity, they stopped complaining. It is important to note that these jobs are not considered "prestigious" by society at large, but are very common among Cape Verdeans in particular and also among other African migrants, including Bissau-Guineans. This can cast more light on the interconnections between ethnicity and social class in Luxembourg.

5.1 Challenging restrictive language ideologies

Pedrinhu's professional position allows him to see many Cape Verdeans seeking jobs and struggling with language. The gatekeeping effect of the "restricted construction of multilingualism" (Garrido 2017: 9) can be even higher in Luxembourg, because job applicants are usually asked to master three named languages at once. For example, when discussing the role of languages in Luxembourg in the first interview, Pedrinhu remarked that "the problem is the quantity of languages in the country that creates barrier." Here, he is rebuking the official trilingualism of Luxembourg (Luxembourgish, German and French), which can exclude access to resources in a similar way to that of official monolingual nation-states. He went on explaining the load of the trilingual situation. Pedrinhu narrated:

Excerpt 1 (Interview 1, Pedrinhu)

One goes there they say: you don't speak German, you go there another one says: can you speak Luxembourgish? you go there they say: can't you speak French? [...] you can't speak that, no eh [...] no I can't speak French, oh that mister doesn't understand French very well, can't you speak Luxembourgish? no I can't speak Luxembourgish. This is a big difficulty for migrants, of migration in Luxembourg.

The trilingual requirements, as invoked by Pedrinhu, increase job applicants' risk of failing to get access to the job while increasing the interviewer's or employer's reasons for excluding them. The excerpt above shows that multilingualism is not always sufficient. One may be multilingual in a variety of languages, including official languages, but low proficiency in one language can cause one to be or feel stuck. Yet, other aspects of applicants' identity may count more or less than their multilingual repertoire, even when language is loosely declared to be the root cause. For example, a growing number of studies has shown that language can be used as a proxy for race and other social variables (Flubacher et al., 2018; Heller and Martin-Jones, 2001; Piller, 2016; Weber, 2015, etc.), as a legitimated or "polite" excuse to deny job seekers access, even if those high linguistic demands are not necessary for doing the job.

Pedrinhu's awareness of those exaggerated linguistic demands in the three official languages, even for "unskilled jobs," has led him to also include Portuguese and Creole in job posts at KPS. He did this in order to counteract the above stated demands and to facilitate job entry for speakers of those languages. He recounted how he usually communicates with ADEM in order to receive unemployed workers registered at this state institution: "from ADEM, when they tell me: ah this mister here can't speak French, I say: no, you can send him to our company, I can also speak Creole and Portuguese." He declared to ADEM that it suffices for a

job seeker to speak Portuguese or Creole in order to sit the KPS entrance interview, because Pedrinhu himself, as a coordinator, can also speak those languages. To a certain extent, his action here contributes to the value of these languages and their speakers, even if it is limited to the KPS work environment. This exceptional introduction of these languages is a way to facilitate the job entry for certain migrants considered “low-skilled” workers or those who are “de-skilled” (Allan 2013: 73) through language. Pedrinhu pointed out that this introduction has, in turn, led him to translate all the French documents into Portuguese. He simultaneously uses French and Portuguese when giving information to the workers. But he stressed that he often does not even need French, because the workers mostly speak Creole (of Cape Verde or Guinea-Bissau) and Portuguese. At the same time, he remarked that this could be a problem for the workers when they want to move to another company with stricter language requirements, where they are required to complete paperwork, for example.

The exaggerated linguistic demands of ADEM tend to accentuate the exclusion of certain migrants even from the “unskilled” labour market. Through his role in the recruitment process, Pedrinhu is able to define a new linguistic order, taking agency and creating positive flexibility in terms of language requirements (cf. Duchêne et al. 2013; Vigouroux 2013). To a certain extent, this can be seen as a reaction to the powerful linguistic order of the official political economy of language in Luxembourg. However, this may also reinforce “the negative and the social inequality-creating side of resistance” (Duchêne et al. 2013: 17–18); Pedrinhu’s company is only able to offer “cheap labour” to which migrants end up accommodating, irrespective of their qualifications. As Pedrinhu noted:

Excerpt 2 (Interview 2, Pedrinhu)

there are a lot arriving who have already school, school, school [...] from the beginning we have that platform there that allows people to come and try, show them the company, jobs that they can find that allow them to continue studying, what they should do, give them help [...] unfortunately that structure doesn’t exist at the Embassy of Cape Verde [...] they tell you where they had worked, then they tell you the qualification they have [...] there are guys who came to work there with me who are three times more qualified than me.

In Pedrinhu’s eyes, among the current Cape Verdean migration pattern to Luxembourg, one can find many qualified young people with university degrees. On the one hand, Pedrinhu’s role in contracting workers (mostly his co-ethnics) is very profitable for the company. These workers meet the company’s interests, so it can be suggested that they serve Pedrinhu’s interests as a coordinator himself. On the other hand, many of these qualified workers become disqualified by the host country’s language regimentation, leading to their sub-employment. They are

supposed to demonstrate high competence in French, German and Luxembourgish, while in fact, they mostly have no contact with the latter two languages and loose contact with the former before migration. In addition, as Pedrinhu's narrative shows, in condensed migration contexts like Luxembourg, the ethnic lens and agency of recruiters can impact the segmentation of the labour market in important ways.

According to Pedrinhu's narrative, KPS has a platform to orientate their workers and seeks to offer them jobs that nurture a flexible schedule for attending language and after-work training courses. Pedrinhu shared with me that many Cape Verdeans are now work supervisors at KPS, giving rise to another question: does their task as supervisors allow them to move from low-paying jobs into higher-paying, more skilled positions? Or does it provide them with more control over their working and living conditions in a radical way? If not, it is possible to suggest that KPS and Pedrinhu himself cannot help being part of this disqualification and disempowerment, considering that the company may be operating within the existing work and social order and limited by capitalist logic. More positively, Pedrinhu is very aware of the sub-employment that migrant workers face by working for this company. In light of this, he even encourages them to take another step in order to have jobs commensurable with their qualifications.

5.2 Linking the reproduction of workers with the school system and beyond

In our last interview, Pedrinhu added more about KPS and expressed his worries about some changes in the recruitment process. He pointed out that ADEM had changed the age limit for workers that could be hired by his company. Whereas in the past they could hire workers who were only in their 30s, two years ago they were asked to hire applicants between the ages of 18 and 30 to facilitate young people's access to work. He stressed that these younger workers were not migrants but had migrant backgrounds – most of them with Portuguese, Cape Verdean and Bissau-Guinean parents. He questioned the systemic reproduction of workers for the “unskilled” labour market and explained the detrimental effect of the German-only literacy programme in state primary schools on this reproduction of workers, as shown in Excerpt 3 below. These youngsters were able to speak the three official languages (including German, but in a much less competent way compared to Luxembourgish or French), as well as Creole and/or Portuguese. As he pointed out:

Excerpt 3 (Interview 4, Pedrinhu)

now we have more [...] young people who are not migrants, they are from here [...] two years ago they changed the system [...] we were obliged to work with much more younger people [...] so one asks why one finds in all administrations in a country, one finds mostly Francophone people, why? [...] Those young people don't manage certain things [...] because of that education, language stereotype; you are not good at German. Those exigencies [...] complexities of languages lead them to have negative grades at school, it demotivates them [...] one learns language to communicate [...] so those young people will have no job, without school results, they come to work here without any motivation [...] a job you didn't choose.

This recent ADEM recruitment demand is leading KPS to replace a “fully” migrant labour force with a labour force composed of Luxembourgers of migrant background – those who failed in the German-literacy system, as Pedrinhu stated. This echoes (Piller, 2016: 98) assertion that “schools play a key role in facilitating – or blocking – [...] dreams and aspirations. Where schools fail linguistically diverse populations, migrant disadvantage can easily become entrenched in the next generation and lock out some groups in the long term.”

The social class of those Luxembourg-born youngsters of migrant parents Pedrinhu referred to, and their failure in the German literacy school system, contributes to their struggles for access to better-paid jobs. Thus, some of them feel obliged to work at KPS. Restrictive language ideologies in the educational system may push descendants of migrants to follow similar job pathways as their parents. (Piller, 2016: 73) reminds us that “linguistic barriers to employment and linguistic discrimination at work do not operate in isolation. Rather, language intersects with other forms of disadvantage or privilege.” Language is just another piece of the puzzle, as it often comes combined with non-linguistic indicators of ethnicity such as accent, race or country of origin. Pedrinhu's narrative is insightful in informing us about these axes of differentiation between migrants and Luxembourgers and between migrant groups, making certain groups more desirable than others. “So, one asks why one finds in all administrations in a country, one finds mostly Francophone people, why?” Pedrinhu rhetorically asked. Here, he referred to those white Francophone people who can probably speak only French in Luxembourg. Thus, it can be suggested that it is not always a question relating only to language.

As mentioned above, Pedrinhu himself has experienced linguistic gate-keeping; he suffered a denial because of German when he wanted to advance in his electronics course. His two decades of residence in Luxembourg have allowed him to gain awareness of discrimination in both the labour market and the education system, two sectors of society that are intrinsically intertwined. His rhetorical question in the paragraph above connects to Gerstnerova's (2016: 424) insightful study on migrant associations in Luxembourg. She points out that “the precarious socioeconomic situation of Cape Verdean and ex-Yugoslav immigrants on the

Luxembourgish labour market has encouraged them to create self-help groups: migrant associations.” Her findings show that “if we count one white collar worker for two blue collar workers in the general Luxembourgish population (aged 15–35 years), the score is one white collar worker for five blue collar workers in case of ex-Yugoslav and one white collar worker for 17 blue collar workers in the case of Cape Verdean immigrants” (Gerstnerova 2016: 424).

Pedrinhu went on expressing his disagreement with the latent paradox of keeping German as the main language of instruction in state primary education at the national level in Luxembourg, when German is in reality the least socially used of the three official languages. Many pupils with a migrant background barely have exposure to German outside the classroom, where they communicate mostly in French, Luxembourgish and/or another language they use in their family context. These German requirements have real-life consequences. He recounted a situation in which, in an attempt to help a student of migrant background enrol in a professional course, he had to argue with a school director; the student was rejected because she did not understand German well. He said to the director:

Excerpt 4 (Interview 4, Pedrinhu)

do you know how many people work at the hospital in Esch? Do you know which language they speak the most there? Do you know how many French people work at the EU Parliament? Why? because of your system [...] they don't speak Luxembourgish, they don't speak German [...] at school we don't need only communication, but we need knowledge in other disciplines [...] you shouldn't tell a person that you can't be a mathematician because you can't speak German [...] you find many young people who were born here, who can speak those three languages [...] who could have access to those functions, jobs, they don't have it [...] we have more and more young people who are dropping out of school because of your system here [...] so they stay with nothing, then you need qualified people, you go and search them outside, this policy everybody sees it [...] people are economically stable, so nobody contest anything, but if everybody stops in the corner, they see that we have a problem [...] when you have a person who was born in the country who has a qualified professional training this will have stronger impact ... when you come to a country where even people who are from here don't manage [...] it is not a good example.

The above excerpt indexes that migrants from non-EU countries “have to face fierce competition from European citizens to whom the European Union guarantees advantageous access to the local labour market” (Gerstnerova 2016: 426). According to Pedrinhu's narrative, Luxembourg-born young people of Lusophone background have consistently failed at school because of their weak performance in German (Sharma 2018; Weber 2014). They run the risk of following the same work pathways as their parents (who had received low formal education) due to the German-literacy requirements in the educational system in Luxembourg. This is one of Pedrinhu's worries as a (migrant) father; as he points out, “it is not a good example,” neither for the host country, nor for the newcomers – it is demotivating. Pedrinhu is projecting

blame for the reproduction of inequality upon the education system through the German-literacy at the national level, while at the same time, even he cannot help but participate in this reproduction. Their company now receives those who failed at this school system and Pedrinhu may serendipitously benefit from it, given his central role as a coordinator/recruiter. The excerpt above also points to the possibility that school failure leads to a short supply of qualified workers. Thus, more qualified European workers who can speak only French are recruited, for example, with disregard for their lack of proficiency in German and/or Luxembourgish.

6 Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated the double side of multilingualism, as a restricting language regime on the one hand, and as an empowering intervention on the other; further, it has demonstrated the intersection of multilingualism with social and labour market stratification. Pedrinhu's interview data demonstrates the tensions that migrants live in integrating into the labour market of Luxembourg, and the impact of multilingualism on those tensions. While Pedrinhu seeks to "empower his compatriots" by challenging the official language regime of ADEM in order to facilitate job entry for his "co-ethnics," he is still forced to reproduce social class. His "loyalty" towards his co-ethnic job seekers also contributes to the ethno-stratification of the labour market. Furthermore, Pedrinhu's position helps KPS to capitalise on migrant workers by offering them survival employment that usually becomes their permanent employment, even if they have high formal education. The systemic linguistic barriers, combined with other forms of disadvantage, leave workers with little room for social mobility.

Pedrinhu's narrative about his interactions with ADEM, the process of hiring job seekers and his knowledge of the education system is very insightful in revealing "the linguistic production of social inequality" (Duchêne et al. 2013: 4) in Luxembourg. This inequality starts early with the German-literacy system, in which Luxembourgish or Germanophone students are at an advantage. If we compare Pedrinhu's educational, work and social trajectories with those of the young people of migrant background he receives at KPS nowadays, one can see different temporalities of the linguistic production of inequalities at school and in the labour market. There is a persistent intersection of language with social class, discrimination and segmentation of the market. It is also possible to suggest that the intersection of language with regimes of migration has reproduced "long-standing hegemonies and inequalities" (Deumert 2020: 236).

One should not forget that a nation-state that brands itself as multilingual can be just as exclusionary and oppressive to foreign-born/migrant-descended

and racialised speakers as one that is strictly monolingual, for multilingualism is also an ideological regime that produces difference and potential inequalities (Duchêne 2019). If it can empower certain migrants, it can also be used to disempower others and create inequalities. Empowerment demands a political and collective transformation that breaks the prevailing dominance, so that those who have been excluded or silenced can come into being (Fandiño, 2010: 113). To a certain extent, Cape Verdean workers may feel comfortable in KPS. They may feel a “pinch of empowerment” as a result of the fact that large majority of workers of KPS are Cape Verdeans. They can secure a job there speaking only Creole and/or Portuguese, and some can become supervisors. However, they can also get “stuck” and become disempowered by the official multilingual regime, especially those who hold high formal education levels. As Pedrinhu mentioned, outside KPS they may face more struggles due to their low or lack of proficiency in the official languages, a situation that the work environment at KPS does not enhance. Pedrinhu’s narrative is full of his awareness of inequalities produced on the basis of language combined with race. It calls for the need for changes of language ideologies in the labour market, in the educational system and beyond in order to have a more just society in Luxembourg. However, his role as a coordinator/recruiter shows us the ambivalent side of such an empowering intervention, often making it unclear who empowers whom. Pedrinhu profits from the new language requirements that he introduced at KPS and his ethnic lens that facilitates the recruitment process. These have strengthened his position in the company, while offering workers survival employment, irrespective of their educational background, to a certain extent contributing to sub-employment and the ethno-stratification of the labour market.

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