Abstract

Mir wëlle bleiwe wat mir sin?
Language ideology in Luxemburgish language history

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Submitted in July 2015

The aim of this bachelor's thesis is to examine language ideology in Luxemburgish language historiography. The material used for the analysis comprises the following three books about Luxemburgish language history: 1) Grundlegung einer Geschichte des Luxemburgischen (1953), by Robert Bruch; 2) Sprachen in Luxemburg: Sprachwissenschaftliche und literaturhistorische Beschreibung einer Triglossie-Situation (1979), by Fernand Hoffmann; and 3) "Mir wëlle bleiwe, wat mir sin": Soziolinguistische und sprachtypologische Betrachtungen zur luxemburgischen Mehrsprachigkeit (1993), by Guy Berg. These publications have been chosen because of the similar professional backgrounds and target audiences of the authors. This thesis consists of two main parts, namely a theoretical framework and an analysis of the three aforementioned language histories.

Luxemburg's triglossic language situation, in which Luxemburgish, French and German coexist in public use, is a result of the Grand Duchy's history. Due to its central position between Germany, France and the Low Countries, Luxemburg has been influenced heavily by neighbouring linguistic and cultural areas. Even though Luxemburg has been triglossic by law since 1984, different ideologies on language and language use continue to clash in public debates. According to linguists Horner and Weber (2011), two identification strategies (or ideologies) have dominated these debates: 1) monolingual identification with the Luxemburgish language and 2) trilingual identification with Luxemburgish, French and German, the three languages that were recognised by the language law of 1984. They assert that these language ideologies are the result of profound demographic and political changes that have
taken place in the Grand Duchy over the last 50 years. They also argue against the "myth" that World War II was the key historical moment that enabled the acceptance of Luxemburgish as a language.

Through critical discourse analysis this study aims first to figure out whether the two dominant language ideologies are represented in Luxemburgish language historiography and second to determine potential differences between the three considered works.

The analysis of the books by Hoffman (1979) and Berg (1993) shows that the dominant language ideology in both publications is the one-nation-one-language ideology. Hoffmann and Berg join the discourses that underpin the ideology of Luxemburgish being a national language. They portray Luxemburg as a homogenous linguistic community with a common mother tongue. In this context, language is seen as an essential criterion for the determination of Luxemburgish identity. In addition, both authors refer to World War II as the key historical moment that enabled the acceptance of Luxemburgish as a national language. However, Hoffmann and Berg do not completely disregard French and German. Hoffmann advocates the assimilation of French loanwords to protect Luxemburgish from the influence of too many loanwords from German. These purist discourses are supposed to mark a clear boundary between French and German. Berg, however, does not echo these purist discourses. He recognizes the trilingual reality of the Grand Duchy, but he places the three languages in a hierarchical order. The authors differ in their attitudes towards Luxemburgish as a standard language. Hoffman views Luxemburgish as an essential part of Luxemburgish identity, although he completely ignores its potential as a standard language. In this regard, he consistently describes Luxemburgish as a dialect. In contrast, Berg does not refer to Luxemburgish as a dialect, but rather as a fully independent standard language.

The analysis of Bruch's work (1953) yields different results. According to this author, Luxemburgish does not have the status of a national language. He writes about Luxemburgish as a dialect or koiné (in this case, a contact variety of German and French), which adds to his understanding of Luxemburg being a country between two cultures. Bruch elaborates that French and German are an essential part of the "Luxemburgish soul" and the country's national character. Instead of the one-nation-
one-language ideology, he proposes a “one-nation-two-languages ideology” (the two languages being French and German). In this regard, it is incorrect to assume that Bruch identifies Luxemburgish as a national language, because he equates the terms “German” and “Luxemburgish” and views Luxemburgish as a German dialect.

My findings provide support for the hypothesis of Horner and Weber, who argue that the two dominant language ideologies in Luxemburg are the result of profound demographic and political changes that have taken place in the Grand Duchy over the last 50 years. The analysis of the three considered works has shown that the ideology of Luxemburgish as a national language is the dominant ideology in the publications of Hoffman (1979) and Berg (1993). In contrast, the ideology of Luxemburgish as a national language cannot be found in the publication of Bruch (1953), which helps deconstructing the myth that World War II was the key historical moment that enabled the acceptance of Luxemburgish as a language.

Considering that popular and professional discourses still refer to those language histories and the ideologies within, I argue that it is crucial to highlight these ideologies and to deconstruct the myths about language that appear as "natural." It is therefore important to do more research about language ideology in Luxemburg, considering that certain beliefs about language and language use are highly influencing policy making in the Grand Duchy.