

Mapping English in Luxembourg

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The social and cultural environment of Luxembourg is famously marked by its multilingualism, intercultural contact, and cross-border movements, within the Grande Région and beyond. In this very diverse cultural environment a multitude of languages are intertwined and associated with competing social and political positions. English – or rather the many Englishes of speakers with complex linguistic, regional, national, cultural and professional backgrounds – appears to be gaining in importance. It is, however, important to realise that awareness of and interest in the English-speaking world in terms of language, politics and culture has existed in Luxembourg since the origins of the Grand-Duchy in the nineteenth century.

In order to understand the development of English in Luxembourg, the Institute of English Studies and the Institute of Luxembourgish Language and Literatures (University of Luxembourg) organised an interdisciplinary conference on 10 June 2017 (Organising Committee: Agnès Prüm, Anne-Marie Millim, Katrien Deroey, Julia De Bres, and Jeanne E. Glesener). The conference explored the development of the varieties of English spoken, written, read, and heard in Luxembourg and examined the role of English in Luxembourgish politics, society, education and literature. The interdisciplinarity of the event was fruitful; diachronic and synchronic studies productively informed each other and, as a whole, the contributions of the delegates complicated more traditional representations of Luxembourgish culture and history as predominantly shaped by its geographical location between France, Germany and Belgium. The research produced in the context of this pioneering input conference touches on a dimension of intercultural contact that represents a necessary innovation to English Studies and Luxembourg Studies.

The articles published in this issue of *forum* examine the role of English in contemporary society, taking a

sociological approach to gauge the numbers of speakers of English, their occupation in the professional world, and their reasons for speaking, or not speaking, English. Fernand Fehlen's study in the July-August edition, „Englisch als erste Fremdsprache? Die paradoxe Stellung einer Weltsprache innerhalb der Luxemburger Mehrsprachigkeit“, began by asking questions as to the meanings the English language occupied in the past. The three articles featured in this edition examine contemporary relationships between language, status and region:

- Nuria Garcia: “What Place for English in Luxembourg’s Trilingual Language Regime? Continuities and Changes”
- Fernand Fehlen & Andreas Heintz: “A Demolinguistic & Sociolinguistic Approach to English in Luxembourg”
- Volha Vysotskaya (et al.): “Internationalisation and youth mobility in Europe: Why do young working people find Luxembourg attractive?”

While the study of English in Luxembourg is a new research field, it is not a phenomenon that goes unnoticed and uncommented in society. Julia de Bres's article “Friend or Foe? Perceptions of the Rise of English in Luxembourg”, to appear in the next edition of *forum*, will demonstrate that various discourses have formed around the use of English in different contexts; some perceive English to drive out other languages, such as French and Luxembourgish, while others embrace English as a helpful *lingua franca* that facilitates intercultural communication. Together, these articles show the complexity and importance of critically analysing the phenomenon of English language use in Luxembourg and the diverse perspectives surrounding it. ♦

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