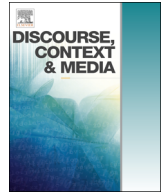




ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Discourse, Context and Media

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/dcm

Digital superdiversity in Luxembourg: The role of Luxembourgish in a multilingual Facebook group

Luc Belling^{a,b,1}, Julia de Bres^a^a *Institute of Luxembourgish Linguistics and Literatures, University of Luxembourg, Luxembourg*^b *Université du Luxembourg, Campus Walferdange, Bâtiment X, route de Diekirch/B.P. 2, L-7201 Walferdange, Luxembourg*

ARTICLE INFO

Available online 27 March 2014

Keywords:

Superdiversity
Luxembourg
Facebook group
Language practices
Language policies
Group administration

ABSTRACT

The concept of superdiversity (Vertovec, 2007) is useful for describing the linguistic and demographic situation of Luxembourg. Luxembourg has a historically trilingual language situation incorporating Luxembourgish, French and German. In addition to this, the growth of the financial sector has increased the presence of English as a lingua franca. In addition to changing migration patterns, new online phenomena also influence language and communication practices in Luxembourg. This paper analyses digital communication practices related to superdiversity in a Facebook group associated with Luxembourg. Although the main purpose of this group is to facilitate the gifting of consumer goods, it has the side-effect of promoting intercultural and multilingual contact among diverse residents of Luxembourg. The paper focuses on how communication is organised between the diverse members of the group, based on a quantitative and qualitative analysis of language practices over the first eighteen months of the group's existence. The analysis illustrates how language became an issue with the growth of the group, shows how members' language practices changed over time, and highlights the role of the group administrators, who intervened to regulate incidents within the group and facilitate group communication. The paper also considers how technical features of this particular digital environment impact on communication practices within the group. The results of the analysis show that language practices of group members tend inexorably towards homogenisation rather than diversification, putting into question the relationship between a superdiverse context and superdiverse communicative practices.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

"GIVE: plastic broom, green and grey"

15 February 2011 at 12:57

"I'm at the point that if a post from me gets translated into English I delete it out of protest. I don't adapt to those people, because they also don't adapt to our country, where they live and where they earn Luxembourgish euros!"² (Translated from Luxembourgish)

4 November 2011 at 15:29

"Hello, we have the problem that we have no admin anymore on our group. Could you please fix this? It is a big group and we have sometimes big problems which maybe could be solved if we would have an admin again."

12 June 2012 at 18:16

The three excerpts above represent member posts on "Free your stuff Luxembourg", a Facebook group that facilitates communication between individuals of highly diverse national and language backgrounds in a national context characterised by superdiversity (Vertovec, 2007). The varied content of these posts gives a preview of the wide range of topics covered within this group over the course of its development from a simple platform of exchange into a complex, multilingual digital environment. This paper analyses the development of language and communicative practices within the group, based on a longitudinal analysis over 18 months, from the group's creation in February 2011 to August 2012. The focus of the analysis is on how members negotiate language choice in a superdiverse digital environment. In addition to the linguistic diversity of the members of the group, technical features of the Facebook group environment have a significant impact on communication practices. Accordingly, the analysis takes into account the digital literacy practices evident in this context. The analysis includes a mix of both quantitative data, showing overall patterns of communication within the group, and qualitative data, illustrating specific events that have an impact on language and communication practices within the group.

¹ Tel.: +352 46 66 44 9683.

² Original quote in Luxembourgish: "Ech sin op dem Punkt soubal main Post op englesch iwersaat gin as, get meng Sach aus Protest gelöscht. Ech passen mech souweineg denen Leit un wei sie sech an dem Land unpassen wou se liewen an lëtzebuerger Euroen verdingen!"

We begin by introducing the concept of superdiversity, the national context of Luxembourg as a small but superdiverse country, and the significance of social media for analysing language and communication patterns. We then present the data collection and the methodology we use to investigate digital superdiversity in the context of a specific case study. The presentation of the case study is divided into two sections. In the first section, we present the overall development of the group concerned over the 16 months, with a special focus on leadership structures, the introduction of new policies, technical malfunctions and a changing tenor of interactions within the group. We examine escalating discussions relating to language choice and how members tried to resolve these. We also consider the role of the group's administrators, a distinctive feature of Facebook groups, which has a decisive influence on the group's development. In the second analytical section we focus more explicitly on patterns of language practices over the 16 months, correlating them with the changing administrative structures that operated during the period of analysis. To conclude, we summarise the overall results of the case study and their implications for research on superdiversity and digital communication practices.

1.1. Background: Luxembourg as a superdiverse country

The concept of “superdiversity” (Vertovec, 2007) was developed to refer to increasingly diverse forms of migration in global cities such as London. For Vertovec (2007: pp. 1), superdiverse processes are “distinguished by a dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants”, which lead to a so-called diversification of diversity. Among many other effects, this unsurpassed diversity in migration processes has effects on language and communication, so that “mobility, mixing, political dynamics and historical embedding” become “central concerns in the study of languages, language groups and communication” (Blommaert and Rampton, 2011: pp. 3). In some cases, not only societies within a global city but the population of an entire state can experience the language-related effects of superdiversity. This is the case for Luxembourg, a highly-industrialised and globalised – but in geographic and population terms very small – state, where rising social, cultural and linguistic diversity affects the language practices of the entire population.

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg (not to be confused with Luxembourg the capital city) has a geographical size of 2586 square kilometres and a population of around 525,000. Migration processes over recent decades have had an important influence on Luxembourg's socio-demographic profile. The main waves of migration for most of the twentieth century included Italians (beginning in the 1920s and 1930s) and Portuguese (from the 1970s onward) but, after the collapse of the steel industry and the rise of the financial sector in the 1970s, migration became both more numerically significant and more nationally diverse. Today, the resident population is very heterogeneous, composed of nearly 44% (230,000) residents of non-Luxembourgish nationality. Table 1 gives an insight into the multitude of inhabitants of different nationalities living in Luxembourg, pointing to the superdiverse nature of the population.

The highest number of migrants are of Portuguese origin (82,363), followed by French (31,456), Italian (18,059), Belgian (16,926) and German (12,049). Next to the long-standing migrants drawn to Luxembourg due to the rise of the steel industry or the geographical proximity of Luxembourg, Luxembourg also accommodates a great variety of migrants of different nationalities. A total of 178 different nationalities were counted in Luxembourg in 2011, including people from as far away as the Philippines

Table 1
Population of Luxembourg in 2011.
(Source: Statec, 2013).

Population by nationality in 2011	
Nationality	Total
Luxembourg	291,831
Portugal	82,363
France	31,456
Italie	18,059
Belgique	16,926
Allemagne	12,049
Royaume-Uni	5471
Pays-Bas	3891
Monténégro	3814
Espagne	3657
Pologne	2709
Cap-Vert	2472
Bosnie-et-Herzégovine	2261
(156 other nationalities)	35,394
Total	512,353

($n=289$), India ($n=569$) or Brazil ($n=1203$). In addition to the high proportion of residents of different national origins, Luxembourg attracts nearly 300,000 cross-border workers resident in Germany, France and Belgium, who come to work in Luxembourg on a daily basis and now make up 43% of the workforce. On an average working day, this means that Luxembourgish nationals are actually outnumbered by non-Luxembourgish residents and cross-border workers.

These high levels of migration have brought additional complexity to an already complex language situation, where Luxembourgish is the national language, Luxembourgish, German and French are languages of administration, and all three of these languages are used for different purposes in everyday life. Luxembourgish, a Central Franconian variety linguistically close to German (Gilles and Trouvain, 2013), has traditionally been used in mainly spoken domains, and German and French in written domains. The common linguistic repertoire of residents of Luxembourgish nationality is generally composed of Luxembourgish as a first spoken language and knowledge of written and spoken French and German acquired through the education system. The use of Luxembourgish as a written language has been rising since the 1980s (Horner and Weber, 2008), but skills are highly varied, as standard Luxembourgish is not taught within the official education system. As English is a compulsory subject at high school, many Luxembourgish nationals also have some competence in English, depending on their education level. English is also emerging as a lingua franca in some sectors of the job market, particularly in multinational companies and in the European institutions located in Luxembourg. In addition to the established multilingual repertoire of Luxembourgish nationals (which is, albeit, diversely achieved in practice), Pütz (2004: pp. 227) focuses on the influence of a heterogeneous society on the development of individual linguistic repertoires. Thus, the superdiverse nature of Luxembourg society also impacts on the language practices of both residents of Luxembourgish nationality and migrants. Horner and Weber (2008) highlight a number of sociolinguistic changes currently underway in Luxembourg as a result of changing migration patterns. These include the rising use of “the rise of French as a lingua franca within the Grand Duchy, as well as the growing importance of English in an increasingly globalised world” (Horner and Weber, 2008: pp. 106), in addition to a decrease in the importance of German in some contexts, including the workplace (see also Klein, 2003). Table 2 presents results from the 2011 census relating to the language and communication patterns of the

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1100587>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1100587>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)