An app-based language survey for Luxembourgish: regional variation and language contact

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This presentation will share some insights into the language variation of Luxembourgish. As the national language of Luxembourg, Luxembourgish fulfills crucial functions as the spoken language for formal and informal situations as well as the written language in the social media. However, especially at the workplace and as a written language, French, German (and increasingly English) play an important role. Luxembourgish itself is experiencing since WW2 considerable Ausbau and standardisation with regard to orthography and the lexicon. This historically developed, multilingual and triglossic situation has led to a large amount of language variation, originating from regional variation within Luxembourg and language contact (Conrad 2017, Gilles 2019, Gilles submitted).

In order to study this language variation a smartphone application ("Schnëssen") has been developed, letting participants recording their own speech. Users can participate in different kinds of audio recording tasks (translation, picture naming, reading, question) as well as in sociolinguistic surveys (Entringer et al. 2021). By using this crowd-sourcing method, over 320,000 audio recordings have been collected for some 3,000 speakers. This large audio database allows to analyse language variation on various linguistic and sociolinguistic levels, e.g. phonetics, morphology, lexicon and language contact with French and German. One central outcome of the project is an online atlas ("Variatiounsatlas") to provide maps and other visualisations of the quantitative analyses and also to give access to the data (Gilles 2021).

After this historical background and methodological considerations, the second part of the talk will be devoted to specific case studies of variation phenomena coming from regional variation and language contact. Concerning the former, one can observe a further reduction of Luxembourg-internal regional variation, as opposed to older dialectological surveys. Regarding language contact, one can observe a steady increase of German(ic) variants at the expense of French variants.

Bibliography

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