

## Luxembourgish

When analysing the linguistic landscape of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg it becomes visible that it does not feature minority languages in the correct sense of the term. Luxembourg uses French, German and Luxembourgish as official languages, and English, Portuguese and Spanish are often spoken (Government of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, n.d.). Additionally, Italian, Polish, Swedish, Finnish and Romanian are spoken in certain communities. While those languages count as minority languages in Luxembourg, they are however institutionalised and widely spoken official languages of other European countries. Therefore, they cannot be described as minority languages that are only spoken by a smaller and geographically restricted community. Instead, we are focusing on Luxembourgish. Although it is an institutionalised language generally spoken by the Luxembourg population, its use is geographically restricted to Luxembourg and thus a minor language when compared to its European counterparts.

Luxembourgish is the native language of Luxembourg, usually serving as the first language of communication that children learn. In accordance with the languages spoken around Luxembourg, Luxembourgish shares many similarities with Dutch, German, and also French. Luxembourgish is classified as a West Middle German language, belonging to the Germanic family of languages (Ethnologue, n.d.). German in turn is classified as an East Middle German language, while Dutch counts as a Low Franconian language. Exemplary similarities between these three languages can be found in pronunciation, sentence structure and tenses, as well as vocabulary.

When listening to an audio recording of Luxembourgish (e.g. [Wikitongues, 2013](#)) one can identify certain characteristics of its pronunciation, such as the variety of vowels - despite there being only 5 letters in the Luxembourgish alphabet that signify vowels, there are 19 different clusters and as many as 23 ways of pronouncing them. For instance, the letter "e" can be realized in three variants -  $\varepsilon/\text{œ}/\text{ə}$ . These variants can also be found in French. Apart from the Latin alphabet letters, there are also three letters with diacritics: "é", "ä", and "ë". While "é" is important in French, "ä" is in the German language. Furthermore, for a non-trained ear, Luxembourgish pronunciation can be mistaken with German or Dutch. For the French, Luxembourgish is unintelligible.

When it comes to sentence structure, Luxembourgish follows primarily Germanic patterns. Luxembourgish is a V2-SOV language, like German and Dutch - it means that the verb is typically second in the word order. Moreover, Luxembourgish has three genders (masculine,

feminine, and neuter), a similarity shared with German. While Dutch also has three genders, it lost the masculine-feminine distinction throughout the years; French only has feminine and masculine genders (Colanguage, n.d.). Furthermore, Luxembourgish shares three cases (nominative, accusative, and dative) with German and Dutch. The latter two languages use the additional genitive, whereas French does not have a strict case system.

<p>All Mënsch kënnst fräi a mat deer selwechter Dignitéit an dene selwechte Rechter op d'Welt. Jiddereen huet säi Verstand a säi Gewësse krut an soll an engem Geescht vu Bridderlechkeet denen anere géintiwwer handelen.</p>	<p>All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.</p> <p><i>(Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights)</i></p>
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*An example of Luxembourgish in written form (Omniglot, n.d.).*

On the topic of time and tenses, Luxembourgish is identical with German and Dutch. All three can express actions in present, present perfect, past, past perfect, futur I and futur II (Verbix, n.d., Colanguage, n.d., Lingola, n.d.). French uses an additional tense for present perfect, the past progressive tense, the recent past tense and the short future tense (Lingola, n.d.).

Luxembourgish also has a plethora of German and French borrowings. For example:

<p>French</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Avion ('plane')</li> <li>- Bougie ('candle')</li> <li>- Cabillaud ('cod')</li> <li>- formidabel ('formidable')</li> <li>- Kadaster ('cadastre')</li> <li>- Soumissioun ('submission')</li> <li>- Tournevis ('screwdriver')</li> </ul>	<p>German</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Appell ('appeal')</li> <li>- Biber ('beaver')</li> <li>- Erëffnung ('opening')</li> <li>- Pennen ('to sleep')</li> <li>- schliisslech ('after all')</li> <li>- Waasserstoff ('hydrogen')</li> <li>- Wab ('wab')</li> </ul>
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*(Wiktionary "German", n.d., Wiktionary "French", n.d.)*

Finally, these pictures offer the opportunity to connect the Luxembourgish language with the region it is spoken in:



*A view of the idyllic side of Luxembourg city (Erdinc Ulas, n.d.)*



*The mountainous countryside of Luxembourg invites to wander and wonder (TNT Magazine, n.d.).*



*The Place Guillaume II Square in Luxembourg City (Glazier, 2018).*

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