Eng flott Diskriminatioun?: Experiences of language testing and citizenship policies in Luxembourg

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In the context of harmonizing migration policies across EU member-states, multiple EU member-states have recently introduced new forms of citizenship legislation that in many cases include language and/or civics tests. In Luxembourg, a new law on la nationalité luxembourgeoise 'Luxembourgish nationality' was ratified in 2008 and went into effect in 2009, which stipulates that applicants must complete civics courses and pass a formal test in the Luxembourgish language. Informed by Kroskrity’s (2000) work on language regimes and framed by what Ricento (2000) refers to as the third wave of language policy research, recent studies have critically analyzed the discursive justifications of these language requirements and/or testing procedures in various EU member-states (e.g. Extra et al. 2009, Hogan-Brun et al. 2009).

Based on the analysis of semi-structured interviews with applicants for Luxembourgish nationality, this paper will explore the interface between discourses justifying and challenging the legitimacy of Luxembourgish language testing. The implementation of the formal testing of Luxembourgish – underpinned by the positioning of it as the 'language of integration' in dominant discourse – has particular implications in Luxembourg where there are three officially recognized languages of the state: Luxembourgish, French and German (Horner, forthcoming). The analysis shows how disputes concerning the introduction of the formalized testing of Luxembourgish are intertwined with contestations over transformations of long-standing language regimes. On a broader scale, this paper stresses the importance of broadening the scope of language policy to encompass research on the experiences of social actors who are directly affected by formal language policy mechanisms (Shohamy 2009).

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