7 Myths about Lëtzebuergesch

Cedric Krummes
Bangor University

Luxembourg Heritage Weekend
August 11-14, 2011
Information about this presentation

• This talk was kindly sponsored by the Luxembourg Ministry of Culture.

• The original slides contained some copyrighted images; no images will be used in order to share these present slides.

• 7 Myths about Lëtzebuergesch by Cedric Krummes is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License.
Luxembourg

- Western Europe
- 1,000 sq mi
- 500,000 inhabitants
- 43% foreigners
Myth #1
Lëtzebuergesch is a pointless language

• Fallacious thinking: language learning is only valid if used for business and diplomacy.
• Not all language learners are business people and diplomats.
• Knowing (some) Lëtzebuergesch is an asset on the Luxembourgish job market.
• Literature and music industry in Lëtzebuergesch.
• Long-standing tradition of comedy theatrical entertainment.
• Taking British students of Lëtzebuergesch to Luxembourg allowed them to experience the language first-hand.
Myth #2
Lëtzebuergesch is a German dialect

• Lëtzebuergesch emancipated from a West Central German dialect.
• The 1984 Luxembourg Languages Law states that Lëtzebuergesch is the national language of Luxembourgers.
• Linguistically speaking, Lëtzebuergesch can be considered as both a dialect and a language.
• “A language is a dialect with an army and a navy”. (Luxembourg has no navy, but it does have a river police.)
Myth #3
Lëtzebuergesch has no grammar

• Just because Lëtzebuergesch grammar is not taught does not mean it has no grammar nor people speak ungrammatically.
• There are indeed grammar books.
• Unlike German or French, however, there is no authoritative grammar book people look up (to).
Myth #4
Lëtzebuergergesch has no spelling

• Just because pupils are not taught Lëtzebuergergesch orthography (and grammar) does not mean that there are no spelling conventions.
• Every major Luxembourgish dictionary brought its own orthography.
• Whereas other languages use dictionaries as the standard orthography, I believe that Lëtzebuergergesch has its own 21st century standard: the spellchecker.lu
Myth #5
Lëtzebuergeois is a blend of French and German

• Like English (kingly, royal, regal), Lëtzebuergeois has a lot of doublets, where there is a choice between the French word and either the German word or a Luxembourgish word.

• The blend myth is perpetuated on the YouTube lessons by Luxpaul where users comment how Lëtzebuergeois reminds them of language blends.

• Those blends (e.g. German with French) are approved; comparisons to German only are disapproved.

• Luxembourgers just like thinking themselves as a blend (of the best) of their French-speaking and German-speaking neighbours.
Myth #6
Lëtzebuergesch is only spoken in Luxembourg

• In the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, people from Luxembourg emigrated to the USA, taking their Lëtzebuergesch variety with them.
• Lëtzebuergesch in the USA developed separately from European Lëtzebuergesch.
• For shop/store, in the USA it’s “Schtor” and in Luxembourg it’s “Buttik” or “Geschäft”.
Myth #7
Lëtzebuergesch is dying

• There is an increased desire to learn and research Lëtzebuergesch.
• Lëtzebuergesch is flourishing on-line: emails, Facebook, YouTube, blogs, etc.
• If it wasn’t for on-line communication (including cell phones), Lëtzebuergesch would not be written as much today!
• Lëtzebuergesch is indeed growing.
Message to take home

• Lëtzebuergesch is a real language.
• Lëtzebuergesch is a living language.
• Lëtzebuergesch is a growing language.

Lëtzebuergesch Language Resources

http://www.multiurl.com/la/lhw2011