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Monolingual cringe and ideologies of English: Anglophone migrants to Luxembourg draw their experiences in a multilingual society

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ABSTRACT

This article uses reflective drawing to explore representations of multilingualism by Anglophone migrants in Luxembourg. Analysing twelve interviews in which participants drew and described their language experiences, we examine the language ideologies Anglophone migrants adopt in response to the ideologies of English they encounter. Participants adopt various ideologies, sometimes aligning with the ideology of global English, sometimes with counter-ideologies of resistance to it, and sometimes a mix of the two. Visual features indexing affective states include colour, gesture, facial expression, and composition. Monolingual cringe – expressed as shame, embarrassment and being ‘bad at languages’ – performs several functions for the participants. Sometimes it serves as an affective disclaimer, allowing them to lean on their privilege in a more socially acceptable way. Sometimes it appears to express genuine distress, in the form of searing linguistic insecurity. Sometimes it performs a distancing function, enabling them to oppose themselves to the stereotype of the monolingual English speaker. The affective intensity of the drawings suggests the ideology of global English does have costs for Anglophone migrants. Fundamentally, though, monolingual cringe reinforces privilege, allowing participants to apologise for their monolingualism even as they continue to benefit from it.

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Introduction

Anglophone migrants¹ in multilingual societies like Luxembourg are generally viewed as occupying a privileged position, given the power attributed to English worldwide (Crystal 2003; Doerr 2009). They may be constructed as bearers of envied linguistic capital, as bumbling linguistic tourists, or as ‘foreigners’ unwilling to adapt. In this article we seek to build a fuller view, examining the language ideologies of twelve Anglophone migrants to Luxembourg. While some research has investigated the language ideologies of migrants to Luxembourg (de Bres 2014; Franziskus 2013) or the sociolinguistic positioning of Anglophone temporary workers (Lovrits and de Bres 2020), our research is the first to our knowledge to focus on the language ideologies of Anglophone migrants who have settled here.

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Luxembourg is a small country between France, Belgium and Germany, with four official languages – Luxembourgish, French, German and German sign language. The first three have long been widely used, and linguistic diversity continues to increase through high levels of migration. People with non-Luxembourgish nationality made up 48% of the resident population of 602,000 at the time of our research (STATEC 2018). This includes historical migration of Italians and Portuguese (the latter comprising 16% of the population), alongside more recent arrivals working in multinational companies and European institutions. In addition, cross-border workers from France, Germany and Belgium accounted for 45% of the workforce (STATEC 2018). The presence of migrants has a significant impact on the languages used. As most cross-border workers come from France and French-speaking Belgium, French has become the main lingua franca (Horner and Weber 2011). Luxembourgish, meanwhile, is increasingly a marker of group membership within the Luxembourgish population (Horner and Weber 2011). English has high prestige in Luxembourg and is widely believed to be on the rise (de Bres 2017a). In this complex language situation, people have varied language skills and views on multilingualism (de Bres 2014).

The term Anglophone can be interpreted broadly (e.g. anyone who can speak English to any degree), but we focus more narrowly on those socialised via English as their first and only language in the home. This group might be conflated with the term ‘native speaker of English’, but this term is notoriously vague, variously referring to the language of parents, language of education, duration of exposure, acquisition in childhood, and other features (Davies 2006; Doerr 2009). Our goal was to capture the perspectives of people who had begun their lives in first-language monolingual English-speaking environments and later moved to multilingual Luxembourg. Just how many such people there are is difficult to determine, as the data is not collected. It is likely to be a small group, however. According to the latest census (2011), 21% of residents used English at their workplace, school or home, but only 2.1% considered English the language they knew best. Much of the Luxembourg population has some English language skills, and English is widely used in the public domain. Hence Anglophone migrants are likely to be able to use their first language more than migrants of other language backgrounds can. The reason for this is the global status of English and its associated language ideologies, as we discuss below.

We start by describing the theoretical framework of language ideologies and those relevant to this context. We then describe the method of data collection, reflective drawing, which asks participants to draw their language experiences before discussing them. We aim to link the participants’ reported subjective experience to broader language ideologies, to answer our research question of how individual Anglophones react to the ideologies of English they encounter. Central to our analysis is the concept of monolingual cringe (Torsh 2020), i.e. the ambivalence and discomfort felt by Anglophone migrants on recognising the advantages of their status as English speakers and the difficulties this status creates for others. We argue that this cringe represents a discursive response to the language ideologies they come across regarding English in Luxembourg and fundamentally serves to maintain Anglophone privilege. The results have implications for Anglophone migrants in other multilingual environments, where monolingual cringe may also operate as a means of negotiating tensions between ideologies of English and lived experience of multilingualism.

Language ideologies and ideologies of English

Language ideologies ‘represent the perception of language and discourse that is constructed in the interest of a specific social or cultural group’ (Kroskrity 2004, 501). Although serving particular interests, they often develop into widely shared conceptions of the relationship between language and society, or dominant language ideologies. Several dominant language ideologies have been identified across modern Western European nation-states, including the ‘one nation, one language ideology’ (Woolard 1998), the ‘standard language ideology’ (Milroy 1999) and the ideology of ‘societal multilingualism as a problem’ (Blommaert 1999), all of which can be connected within a broader ideology of monolingual linguistic nationalism. While dominant language ideologies reflect the interests of

powerful élites, they become so pervasive that they are seen as ‘common sense’, with individuals being unaware of the social and historical processes underlying their adoption. When a status quo favouring only some of the population is perceived as an objective reality – including by those marginalised in the process (Bourdieu 2001) – this becomes a means of perpetuating it.

Language ideologies about English relate to its perceived global predominance in a context of linguistic imperialism (Phillipson 1993). The international expansion of English has been a highly strategic economic, political and social project, but the ideology of English as a global language (Sergeant 2009) presents its outcome – the place of English at the pinnacle of a global hierarchy of languages – as a natural and neutral fact. While the ideological hegemony of English exerts considerable force, counter-ideologies operate at international and local levels. The European Union officially promotes a multilingual ideology that resists English as the only choice for intra-European communication (Wodak 2013) and the widespread ideology of linguistic integration demands that all migrants learn and use the national language of the nation-state in which they reside (Horner and Weber 2011). In Luxembourg, two ideologies are prominent, the first a trilingual ideology that promotes the use of French, German and Luxembourgish, and the second a monolingual ideology that promotes Luxembourgish as the one true language (Horner and Weber 2011). These ideologies challenge the role of English, even in a situation of rising use. Where such counter-ideologies hold sway, Anglophone migrants risk being framed as arrogant monolinguals inappropriately seeking to enact linguistic dominance (Lovrits and de Bres 2020). Faced with these competing ideologies, individual Anglophone migrants must choose their own stance, adopting or adapting more broadly circulating language ideologies to align with their subjective experiences of language. Most likely, they will display mixed ideologies at different times, selecting whatever they need from available dominant or counter-ideologies to further their interests (de Bres 2014).

As ideologies are social constructions rather than truths about language, they must continually be reproduced to retain their sway in the face of conflicting positions (Kroskrity 2004). Language ideologies are primarily an ideational phenomenon, involving ideas about language. To be reproduced, they must be expressed persuasively to others via discourse. While most analysis of language ideologies has focused on discourse in verbal form, ideologies are advanced through all forms of discourse, including visual.

Method: reflective drawing

Drawing has been used as a research method in the social sciences since the first half of the twentieth century, including in psychology, sociology, anthropology and education (Rose 2016). Its use has been rarer in linguistic research (Castellotti and Moore 2009, 46). The method used here was developed by a group of researchers in France, Germany, Switzerland and Canada from the mid 2000s (Molinié 2009) and came to be known as *le dessin réflexif* (reflective drawing) (Castellotti and Moore 2009).² It involves asking participants to create a drawing relating to language and then engage in discussion with the researcher about what it means (Castellotti and Moore 2011). Participants often refer to affective states relating to language when this method is used (Molinié 2009; de Bres 2017b). This ranges from positive states of comfort and enjoyment in activating multilingual resources (de Bres 2017b) to negative states of linguistic insecurity and stress (Lovrits and de Bres 2020). Drawings at the beginning of interviews open the door to discussing affective aspects early on, to a degree perhaps less likely in traditional interviews. This link of reflective drawing to affect is particularly useful in metalinguistic research, where the affective character of participants’ relationships to language use can be hard to access using the traditional approaches of language attitudes research (Garrett, Coupland, and Williams 2003).

The data used in this article comprises twelve interviews undertaken in 2018 with Anglophone migrants in Luxembourg. A Facebook group called Luxembourg Expats, with 20,417 members in March 2018, was approached. This is a very active group that connects migrants seeking advice on matters relating to everyday life in Luxembourg. A call was posted for people who had English

as their first language growing up, were born outside Luxembourg, had lived in Luxembourg for at least two years, and were of working age (approximately 20-65). Interviews were undertaken with 12 respondents of diverse nationalities (English (2), Irish (2), Scottish (1), Maltese (1), American (3), Sri Lankan (1), Australian (1) and Kenyan (1)). They had been in Luxembourg for varying lengths of time, with two thirds resident for less than six years. Nine had lived in more than one country before Luxembourg, some in up to four. They had a range of occupations, including stay at home parent (4), IT professional (2), scientist, teacher, office manager, accountant, finance officer, and banker. All had English as their first and only language at home growing up. All except one had learnt other languages since. Of these, eleven had learnt French. All but two continued to use English exclusively in the home, and nine claimed to use both French and English outside (four minimised this as 'some French', 'little French', 'basic French', 'shopping French'). The participants could all be described as 'global employees': 'university-educated, work experienced (...) mobile for the purposes of work (...) flexible, responsible entrepreneurial agents whose profile, identity and status are not only indexed by their multiple language skills but also by their willingness to be subjects of change and movement' (Barakos 2019, 189). While unrepresentative of the broader population in this respect, they reflect the profile of many Anglophone migrants who come to Luxembourg to work.

The interviews were undertaken in participants' homes or in a public space. After brief introductions, they were asked to 'draw yourself using languages in Luxembourg', and drew for around five minutes. Following the general approach of image-elicitation methods (Rose 2016, 322), they were then asked to describe their drawing, using a broad question such as 'do you want to tell me about your picture?'. When they had finished describing their drawing, they were asked questions to build on points in their verbal description and explore visual features of interest. When discussion of the drawing was exhausted, further topics were introduced, relating to language experiences in their family, work and social environments. All interviews resulted in a drawing and a recorded interview of 17-55 min (35 min average).

While it was only at the beginning of the interview that we expressly asked the participants to describe their drawing, reference to the drawings recurred throughout the interviews, in ways both explicit and implicit. Explicit references to the drawing might include a participant stating 'it was like that' and pointing at their drawing as they told a story later in interview, or the interviewer making a link between what a participant was saying and a scenario they had pictured in their drawing (e.g. 'it seems like in a lot of cases people are willing to help you, like this person'). Implicit references to the drawing involved participants returning to speak about a salient theme they had depicted visually, e.g. anxiety about speaking in a language other than English, even if they did not mention the drawing again explicitly. This interconnection between the visual elements of the drawings and the participants' verbal representations of their experiences allowed for establishing shared interpretations of the themes of the drawings during the interviews themselves, and enabled us to make well-grounded analytical connections between the themes of the drawings and the interviews afterwards.

Our analysis focused on both the drawings and the verbal material of the interviews. We began by analysing the images, following the steps in the interpretive process proposed by Rose (2016) for Foucauldian visual discourse analysis. These steps comprise: paying detailed attention to the images (e.g. composition, facial expression, colour, size); identifying key themes in the form of recurring visual features; noting techniques of persuasion; looking for complexity and contradictions that orient to multiple discourses; and looking for the invisible as well as the visible. After the initial visual analysis of the drawings, we analysed the verbal material of each participant describing their drawing and engaging in further discussion. We transcribed and coded the interviews thematically using the qualitative analysis software MAXQDA, identifying salient themes within and across interviews. Using the coded transcripts, we then circled back to the drawings to look for further connections and patterns, in an ongoing and recursive process of interpretation.

The participants' visual and verbal accounts are not treated as direct representations of their language practices, which is not possible using this method (Busch 2012). Instead they

are treated as metalinguistic data, i.e. representing what the participants chose to convey about their language practices, their language ideologies, and their views of themselves as linguistic subjects.

Results

In presenting our results, we focus on participants' visual and verbal representations of living as Anglophone migrants in a multilingual society. Participants were highly aware of the ideologies of English they encountered, which provided the backdrop against which they took their own positions. Faced with ideologies combining admiration of English and resistance to it, they had to decide how to respond to best further their interests. The drawings and interviews reflect a range of affective and ideological responses, which we describe below. Although we address these responses sequentially, most participants adopted a mix of them at different times. The common thread is the phenomenon of monolingual cringe, which serves several functions, overall enabling them to manage the social effects of their privilege.

Aligning with global English

Participants were very conscious of their privilege as English speakers. The ideology of global English is evident in their accounts of encountering positive attitudes towards English. Kenyan Natalie commented³:

If I walk into a shop and I struggle with (...) the French and I try to express myself in English, I feel like they relax a little bit, like people try to recollect what they learnt in school, they give you the time of day like hmm hmm I'm trying to help you out, I really feel English is really appreciated in this country, from the people I interact with.

Such positive orientations to English among others meant participants were often able to use it with ease. When Australian Michael was asked if it was possible to get by in Luxembourg without speaking English, he spoke of doing just that:

I mean the reality of it is that it IS extremely convenient to live in Luxembourg speaking only English, you CAN do it, you can easily live here I've been here for now well three years and I have never had a situation where speaking English had hindered anything in my work or in my day to day activity, it was always enough to speak in English.

English also conferred specific advantages in the form of valued economic and cultural capital (Bourdieu 2001). Due to his 'native English' skills, Michael became the 'go to English guy' working with clients from American banks and British investment firms at his consulting company. English Rob felt that English was 'a sort of trendy language like French was, like Italian was, a few centuries ago' and that its popularity in the media meant Anglophones were 'riding on the coat tails of that'. According to American Greg, rather than people feeling 'angered' or 'threatened' by English, as was the case for French in Luxembourg, 'if anything [...] some people are a bit embarrassed when they DON'T speak English well because they feel that it's an important language and they're lacking something'. These reported responses to English highlight the high level of symbolic capital it represents within an ideology of global English, which participants sensed induced a mix of admiration and envy.

When participants referred to these advantages, they were aligning with the ideology of global English operating in their favour. Another strong theme, however, was shame at using English when they could be using other languages. American Greg said he planned to learn Luxembourgish due to 'just feeling like shame at having lived here for eleven years and not speaking Luxembourgish better and desire to integrate more'. The positions taken by participants regarding their own language use carry a strongly normative load, as seen in the extract below:

Unfortunately I've gotten quite used to [people accommodating to me] which I know is the wrong way to live life, especially because we are in Luxembourg where you SHOULD capitalise on the amount of languages that are here [...] I feel like this is an opportunity I shouldn't waste um BUT again I've gotten into the feeling of comfort' (Michael, Australian)

Normativity is here reflected in the use of modal verbs (I 'SHOULD capitalise', 'an opportunity I shouldn't waste') and morally loaded language ('unfortunately', 'the 'wrong way to live life'). The shame Michael expresses at using English sits uneasily with the ease and comfort he describes simultaneously. Discursive conflict (Coupland, Holmes, and Coupland 1998) is indicated by the use of the conjunction *but*, separating an expression of comfort ('I've gotten into the feeling of comfort') from an expression of shame ('this is an opportunity I shouldn't waste'). Shame and comfort here represent two sides of the same coin.

We can see this interplay between comfort and shame in the drawing and commentary of English Charlotte. Charlotte pictured herself using languages in two separate circles containing groups of language domains (Figure 1). The left is an 'English-speaking bubble', within which she interacts with her family who 'all refuse to speak any French', friends, neighbours, and social groups. The right is 'another, separate circle' in which she speaks French at shops, her daughter's school, the crèche, and in service encounters. She shows herself moving across linguistic domains, having been 'sent out from the bubble to go and get stuff we need', with the rest of her family 'stuck in the bubble'.

Although the two circles in Charlotte's drawing are similar in size, with no visual suggestion that one dominates, Charlotte's metaphor of the English 'bubble' was the most salient feature of her drawing description, occurring five times. This is a term she only used to describe the English circle ('I have a bit of a BUBBLE, because we live here in Luxembourg in a kind of English-speaking bubble'). Charlotte's description of her comfort in this bubble ('I can just walk around in my bubble speaking English, feeling quite comfortable') calls to mind Gearing and Roger's (2018) study of expatriate teachers of English in Korea, who spoke of functioning in an English-speaking 'cocoon', both terms referring to a space the participants were tempted to stay in as it was safe and comfortable. Alongside this comfort, however, Charlotte oriented to shame in relying on her English bubble more than she might like to. In one such instance she said she wanted to make friends with speakers of languages other than English ('I would like to improve my languages, so I'd like to have that opportunity') but went on to qualify this, adding 'although I suppose I should be able to find those opportunities (laughs), I mean I say that you know I'm sort of sitting here quite comfortably in my English bubble saying I would love to be able to find someone to speak

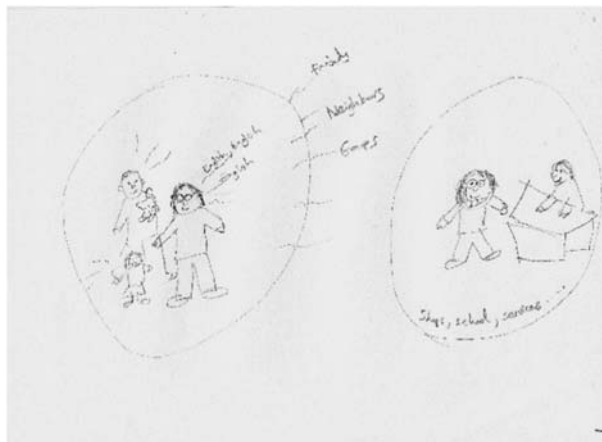


Figure 1. The bubble.

to and here I am in multilingual Luxembourg (laughs)'. Charlotte's rueful admission indicates she is aware of her linguistic privilege as a speaker of English. Her discursive recognition of this allows her to save face in a context where she is not ready (or able, given her family's language skills) to fully linguistically 'integrate' in the place where she lives.

We argue that participants' expressions of shame are instances of monolingual cringe. Torsh (2020) introduces the term 'language cringe' to describe the shame, embarrassment and inferiority speakers of Australian English who have a partner from a non-English-speaking background express about their own linguistic repertoires. She connects this to the 'cultural cringe' Australians have traditionally associated with Australian English, in the context of (post)colonial ideologies prioritising British English. The parallel form of language cringe she describes relates to monolinguals who speak English comparing themselves to multilinguals who are non-native speakers of English. Recognising this as fundamentally involving a monolingual/multilingual comparison, we use the term *monolingual cringe*. This monolingual cringe is linked to the privilege associated with being a 'native speaker' of not just any language, but English in particular, with its attendant prestige. As Torsh (2015) observes of her Australian participants, 'this response seems to be one way of engaging with and mitigating their own privilege as native speakers of the powerful global language, English'.

While it may seem counter-intuitive to link shame to linguistic privilege, in this context expressions of shame do not represent straightforward instances of self-criticism. Instead, they represent a discursive strategy allowing participants to indicate awareness of privilege and thereby manage the social effects of that privilege. In this respect, participants' monolingual cringe can be seen as an affective disclaimer (Park 2011), ostensibly serving to express affect but also performing a social function. As Park observes, 'displays of emotions or feelings through language and other semiotic means are not mere reflections of one's inner psychological state, but important means through which speakers negotiate their social relations and cultural positions' (2011, 266). Our participants' expressions of shame perform a function of pre-emptively disclaiming a monolingual stance that others might attribute to them. By orienting to shame at their lack of skills in other languages, and implicitly apologising for this, they can less easily be reproached for speaking English only. Cringe provides a means of socially managing the embarrassment associated with Anglophone privilege and, in so doing, fundamentally serves to maintain that privilege.

Linguistic insecurity and the monolingual English speaker

There is evidence of counter-ideologies in the previous section, where the ideological edifice of global English exhibits cracks in the form of cringe. Some participants also encountered overt resistance to English, when others felt obliged to accommodate to them as the only English speaker present. Maltese Carla described her situation as the only non-French speaker in the office:

They really did make an effort but it was still you know 'oh - Carla, let's switch to English' and oh you know 'we HAVE to do this in English' and my colleagues really didn't appreciate that because for one person they were all out of their comfort zone.

In such situations, participants felt the spectre of the stereotypical monolingual English speaker abroad who does not adapt to the language use of others (Lovrits and de Bres 2020). While they did not mention others explicitly referring to this stereotype, they could feel it in the room. Describing a social encounter at a bar where a local expressed surprise that he could not speak French, Australian Michael observed:

I think there is surely a slight sentiment of uh negativity towards Anglophones, especially people like MYSELF who are you know monolingual you know, because you haven't tried to integrate or you can't speak French what are you doing here, I can feel that this is (clears throat) a thought maybe for some people.

Here Michael takes up the imagined voice of his interactant ('you haven't tried to integrate ... you can't speak French what are you doing here'), and his self-critical comments elsewhere suggest he

has to some degree internalised the stereotype. Such reactions index a counter-ideology questioning the role of English in a multilingual society and suggesting that, rather than ‘riding on the coat tails’ of their linguistic privilege, its speakers should ‘integrate’ linguistically. Here we can identify the influence of the ‘discourse of integration’ (Horner and Weber 2011), common across Europe, which places moral responsibility on migrants to ‘integrate’ by learning local languages. This is evident in Maltese Carlas’s comment:

I was the foreigner coming in I should they shouldn’t adapt to me I should be the one adapting to them.

Some participants anticipated negative reactions should they insist on using English, chose not to do so, and to some degree accepted the resulting exclusion they experienced. A visual theme was for participants to draw themselves in situations of separation or isolation due to language use. Scottish Sarah drew herself in the office, soon after having arrived to work at a French company (Figure 2). She had not expected to be working in a fully French-speaking environment and found herself isolated from her colleagues:

It was a huge shock (...) it was all in French (...) and ... I was a bit, to be honest I was a bit depressed for the first few months I felt really isolated because even the ones that COULD speak English were a bit reluctant to speak English with me (...) I felt really quite apart.

She expresses her isolation in her drawing through composition and colour, placing herself alone to one side, coloured in blue, and her colleagues together on the other, coloured in a common green. She said she did not know why she had chosen blue to draw herself, but this choice of a cool colour could be related to low affect during this period when she felt ‘a bit depressed’, implicitly referencing the metaphor of ‘feeling blue’.

Maltese Carla described a similar experience during her early months at work:

It was difficult, very very difficult, it was ... the first few months it felt very lonely because there was no way of finding friends, there was no way of communicating (...) I had promised myself that I would stay for a year no matter what but I have to say the first six months I pretty much cried EVERY single day (...) it was very hard.

While Carla’s drawing depicted a subsequent happier state, she described what it would have been like back then, also using colour as a visual metaphor: ‘it would probably have been like BLACK and scribbles’. In total, three participants referred to experiencing depression related to linguistic exclusion on first arriving in Luxembourg. As participants tended to sympathise with those resisting use of English, they found it hard to avoid being left out, instead engaging in forms of voluntary non-participation (for similar patterns, see de Bres 2013; Lovrits and de Bres 2020). This compounded their feelings of exclusion, as Carla described:

Most of the time I’d just say (laugh) do it, you know, it’s fine, you know because you don’t like getting the disappointed looks from many people, especially the people you have to see every day, but it also avoided

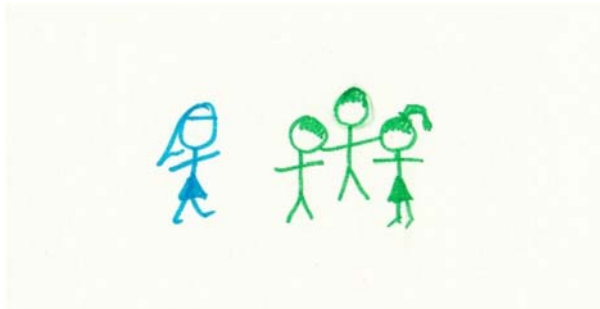


Figure 2. Isolation.

like me interacting with them because i knew if we did, if we went to afterwork drinks, they would be speaking French and I just wouldn't be able to communicate.

In situations where their monolingualism was problematic, participants tended not to blame others but to blame themselves in the form of linguistic insecurity, characterising themselves as 'bad at languages'. American Dawn described her continuing language learning efforts in the face of what she saw as pitiful progress:

I took lessons the entire time, I continue to take lessons here, I've been taking Luxembourgish, I'm on my third year, I literally CANNOT speak it, she just keeps me in the class because she says I bring good energy to it (both laugh) I'm like oh my god I have no idea what you guys are saying.

This reference to being 'bad at languages' was widespread among the participants and represents another feature of monolingual cringe (Torsh 2020). In this case, however, rather than cringe providing a means of socially managing the embarrassment associated with Anglophone privilege, the participants seemed to be expressing genuine distress. Dawn drew herself in an extreme state of stress, experiencing a panic attack while trying to speak French (Figure 3). The subject's anxiety is indicated visually by elements of her facial expression: the beads of sweat on her forehead, her furrowed brow, pursed lips and the worry lines around her mouth. The concentration of bright colours in her face draws attention to these visual features. Dawn described her drawing as follows:

What I'm trying to convey is distress - so like the lines on the forehead are like when you're like trying to listen, trying to understand and then that leads to sweating, which is the droplets (laughs) ... and inevitably I'm wearing a scarf, which is adding more heat, and then a big black coat (laughs), so yeah I end up stressed and very overheated.



Figure 3. Distress.

In the above cases, participants are responding not to ideologies of global English, but to counter-ideologies of resistance to it. Rather than leaning on their privilege and attempting to force others to adapt to it, they suffer under the weight of opposition to English and/or the stereotype of the monolingual English speaker. Their cringe descends deeper than embarrassment to more searing forms of self-criticism. Wanting to avoid being perceived as an ‘arrogant monolingual’, they take the blame for their lack of language skills and exclude themselves from situations where their reliance on English is a problem. The implications for exclusion here are high, with holders of these ideologies aware of how their language skills inhibit their involvement in certain groups. The existence of these counter-ideologies also suggests the strength of multilingual ideologies in Luxembourg: they appear too powerful for some to resist (de Bres 2014).

Ambivalence and Anglophone fragility

As we have seen, participants perceived both advantages and disadvantages to being an Anglophone migrant. The result was ambivalence, the complex affective state of experiencing both positive and negative affect simultaneously. This ambivalence surfaced strongly in discussions of hyper-accommodation, which came up frequently in both drawings and interviews. Communication accommodation theory describes how speakers adapt their language use to converge with, or diverge from, that of the person they are speaking to (Giles and Smith 1979). Speakers converge when they want to signal alignment with another person and diverge when they want to signal distance from them, thus convergence is often seen as expressing solidarity or politeness. It can have the opposite effect, however, if it is experienced as hyper-accommodation, which occurs when the level of convergence exceeds the preferences of the person being spoken to. Two drawings featuring hyper-accommodation are shown below. Here we see evidence of mixed language ideologies, in which the participants balance the privilege associated with the ideology of global English with attempts to manage counter-ideologies of resistance to English.

In the first drawing, American Greg is shown in a café interacting with a server (Figure 4). He greets the server in a mix of Luxembourgish – *Moien!* (hello) – and French – *un café SVP* (a coffee please). The server replies with the same Luxembourgish greeting *Moien* but then switches to English to ask if he wants milk. Greg initially continues with his previous language choice – *oui* (yes) – but then switches to English, mirroring the server’s choice to use English (‘uh, yes thanks’). The server continues in English (‘3.30 euros please’) and Greg stays in English too (‘OK, thanks’) before switching back to Luxembourgish to say goodbye (‘uh, äddi’). While the interaction appears to function effectively (Greg gets his coffee), there are visual and verbal signals of discomfort on Greg’s side. The server is depicted as speaking without difficulty, but Greg’s frequent language switches are accompanied by hesitations (‘uh’) and reformulations (‘*oui*, uh, yes’), and his facial expression suggests bewilderment via a pursed mouth and wide eyes. In describing his drawing, Greg explained that he felt gratitude at being accommodated to (‘it’s kind of nice and I always feel a bit humbled like oh thank you that’s so nice of you’), but also frustration at not having the opportunity to practice his languages (‘but then on the other hand I feel I’m never gonna ... make the progress I want if (comic exasperated tone) you people keep speaking my language to me!’).

The second drawing by Irish Tara (Figure 5) depicts two situations in which the subject attempts to initiate an interaction in a language other than English but is met with English in return. In the first, Tara starts with *Moien* in Luxembourgish and her interactant responds ‘I speak English’. In the second, Tara begins with *bonjour* in French and the interactant responds ‘would you like me to speak English’. Underneath these images, Tara is drawn alone, saying in English ‘I tried’.

Like Greg, Tara explained that she was frustrated by people not giving her ‘a chance to try’ using languages other than English, which she said led to her ‘kind of just giving up’, as shown in her drawing:



Figure 4. Hyper-accommodation.

I've got a lot of Luxembourgish friends and they go 'oh nobody tries to speak Luxembourgish' but every time like I say Moien or anything they're like 'I speak English' automatically and it's like ah so I don't HAVE a chance to try it and that's why I think after a while I kind of just give up and go 'Moien, do you speak English?'

Tara experiences hyper-accommodation as being denied linguistic authority as a multilingual speaker. She feels particularly aggrieved as she has been trying to counter a reproach of being monolingual (her friends' comments that 'nobody tries to speak Luxembourgish') and yet feels thwarted in her attempts. Thus the stereotype of the monolingual English speaker again looms large. In light of the interview, her drawing can be interpreted as depicting her struggle to be recognised as the multilingual person she is.

These were the only two drawings featuring hyper-accommodation, but the topic arose frequently in other interviews. On the one hand, participants tried to put themselves in the other person's shoes, identifying potential motivations for hyper-accommodating to them. These included confidence in English skills ('speaking English is a badge of pride for them'), a desire to practice ('I came to realise that's the only time they get to practice what they learnt in school'), a concern to put them at ease ('I know that they're trying to make me comfortable'), a customer service imperative ('their thing is that they speak all these languages to help their customers and they feel like they need to offer them if they have an English speaking customer'), a habit ('I think they're just more used to swapping languages') and taking pity on them ('they switch to English with me because they hear it's a struggle'). On the other hand, they expressed strongly negative affect, Irish Tim remarking 'oh that drives me crazy, I hate when people do that'. The most common reaction was to experience hyper-accommodation as a negative judgment of their language skills, and thus insulting.

The participants' often present their stance in variations on 'I know they mean well, but ...', as when Irish Tim comments:

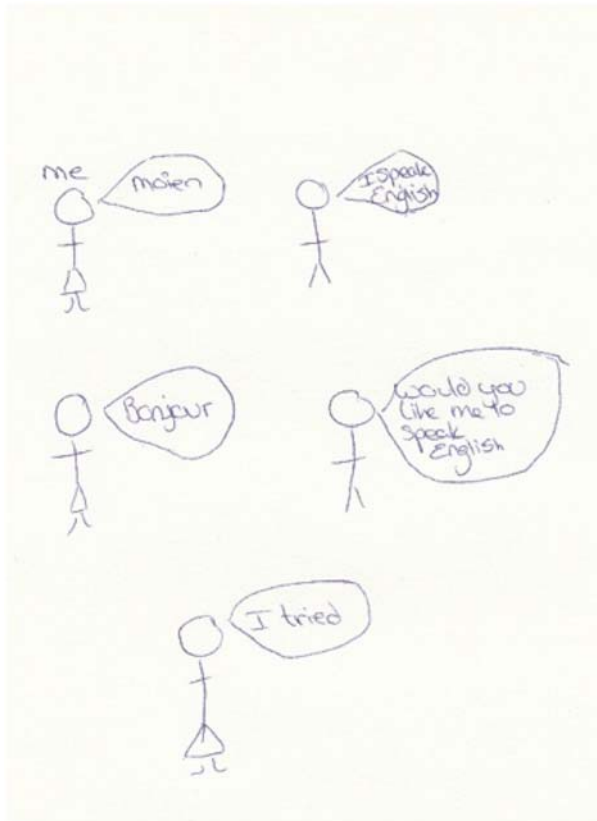


Figure 5. I tried.

I know people mean well in general but I'm making the effort to speak in French and so you know let's speak in French you know.

This use of conjunctions again indicates discursive conflict, in this case between two opposing interpretations of people attending to their needs versus disparaging their language skills and preventing them from speaking other languages. In negotiating these competing interpretations, their syntax suggests they settle on the more negative interpretation, i.e. they choose cringe.

The participants felt that hyper-accommodation prevented them from developing their language skills, but their frustrated linguistic ambitions remain closely tied to their privilege as Anglophone migrants. As was evident at other points of the interviews, many were happy to be able to use English whenever they needed to. This turned to annoyance or offense when they could not similarly use other languages when they wanted to, and consequently felt their agency was threatened. In such circumstances, the participants' privilege as speakers of English quickly transformed into linguistic insecurity, revealing its fragility. The ambivalence the participants expressed towards hyper-accommodation reflects this delicate balance.

Conclusion

This article has presented the results of research on Anglophone migrants in Luxembourg, based on analysis of metalinguistic discourse elicited through interviews with twelve participants incorporating reflective drawing. The aim has been to relate the individual level of subjective experience to broader language ideologies, exploring how individual Anglophones react to the ideologies of English they encounter in their everyday lives.

Affectively, participants were grateful for their ability to use their first language with relative ease, the valuable linguistic capital it represented, and the positive attitudes others showed towards it, which made them feel at ease. When attempting to use other languages, however, they often experienced communication difficulties and social isolation, and consequently felt frustrated, stressed, lonely and depressed. The result was ambivalence, as they attempted to reconcile conflicting positive and negative affective states. They used a range of visual features to convey their experiences, including colour, composition, facial expression, and gesture, and their drawings radiate a strong affective charge.

Ideologically, participants selected whatever they ‘needed’ from available language ideologies to best represent their interests. They drew on different ideologies at different times, sometimes aligning with ideologies of global English, sometimes with counter-ideologies of resistance to English, often both at the same time. This variability within individuals is a feature of language ideologies (Kroskrity 2004). Tying the participants’ responses together is the discursive and ideological phenomenon of monolingual cringe, which none of the participants escape. Cringe – expressed as shame, embarrassment, and being ‘bad at languages’ (Torsh 2020) – performs several functions for them. Sometimes it serves as an affective disclaimer, allowing the participants to continue relying on their privilege in a more socially acceptable way. Sometimes it appears to express genuine distress, in the form of debilitating linguistic insecurity. Sometimes it performs a distancing function, enabling participants to oppose themselves to the stereotype of monolingual English speaker.

Even at their most privileged, participants express doubt about the validity of their place as Anglophone migrants in a multilingual society. The status of the English language is uncertain in Luxembourg, as is the position of its speakers, who seek to establish their legitimacy in the context of an already ideologically contested space (de Bres 2014). The ideology of global English clashes with counter-ideologies of resistance to English, which frame Anglophone migrants in line with monolingual stereotypes, to which they react with monolingual cringe. The affective intensity of their struggle to balance their privilege with their linguistic insecurity is evident in the drawings and suggests that the ideology of global English has costs for Anglophone migrants alongside others. Fundamentally, though, monolingual cringe reinforces privilege, allowing the participants to apologise for their monolingualism even as they continue to benefit from it.

Anglophones in Luxembourg are clearly not the only migrants negotiating ideologies of English in multilingual environments. The results of this research have broader relevance for other multilingual societies with Anglophone migrant workforces, including international urban environments in Europe and further afield. In a context of transnational mobility fuelled by the demands of the global labour market, ideologies of English become ever more powerful worldwide. Anglophones as a social group are linked both to older post-colonial ideologies of English and newer ideologies of global English as an indispensable part of the global ‘knowledge society’. Our research on the experience of Anglophones in Luxembourg highlights how such language ideologies shape the experience of individual Anglophone migrants, with resulting tensions that likely impact on intercultural communication in a wide range of areas. How they negotiate such tensions on the personal and interpersonal level, including via the discursive phenomenon of monolingual cringe, is an important focus for future research in other settings.

Notes

1. We define this term below.
2. As the original French term used by Molinié (*le dessin réflexif*) has not yet been translated into English, there is the option of choosing between the terms reflexive and reflective drawing (both English translations of *réflexif*). We use ‘reflective drawing’ to underline the element of reflection involved (pondering something) alongside that of reflexivity (taking oneself as an object of analysis), both of which are implied by the French term *réflexif*.
3. All names are pseudonyms. Transcription conventions: Extracts are transcribed broadly, with paralinguistic features indicated in brackets and emphasis in capital letters. Truncated text is indicated with ellipses in brackets.

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