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Language use in Brussels and the position of Dutch

Some recent findings

*Taalgebruik in Brussel en de plaats van het Nederlands. Enkele
recente bevindingen*

*L'usage des langues à Bruxelles et la place du néerlandais. Quelques
constatations récentes*

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Translator: Kathleen Ferny



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Abstract

The multilingual character of the population, the number of mixed-language families and the fact that more and more people in Brussels are using services of both traditional language communities is making it increasingly difficult to link a person to a specific language community in Brussels. The linguistic landscape is also becoming more complicated in itself. French definitely remains the lingua franca and the youths who are born in Brussels with an "allochtonous" background are increasingly shifting to the use of French in their new family units. At the same time, however, the number of bilingual families and the number of home languages is rising. The portion of people from Brussels from monolingual Dutch families is slightly dropping and ever more people from Brussels who speak Dutch by birth do this in combination with another language. Nevertheless, these people are increasingly speaking Dutch in public life. English clearly remains in third place in terms of language use and is mainly spoken in a work environment, even though an increasing number of people from Brussels claim they speak this language better than Dutch. People who live in Brussels find this multilingual environment an important asset, even though political polarisation is always looming around the corner.

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Rudi Janssens

Language use in Brussels and the position of Dutch. Some recent findings

Translation: Kathleen Ferny

Introduction

Ten years ago the Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies of Brussels of the VUB (Brussels University) launched the project "Language relations, language shifts and language identity in Brussels" (Janssens, 2001), also referred to as "Language Barometer 1" (Taalbarometer 1). On the basis of a representative survey among 2,500 adults in Brussels a general linguistic image of Brussels Capital Region was outlined. Back then the study was in the first place aimed at filling a gap which was left after the language counts were abolished, the last of which was held in 1947 and which presented far from reliable results. The unavailability of official figures about linguistic background gave rise to many discussions, at best based on partial data, at worst nourished by all kinds of unfounded assumptions and myths. In 2005 a follow-up study "Language Barometer 2" was set up in the context of BRIO (the Brussels Information, Documentation and Research Centre), by order of the Huis van het Nederlands (House of Dutch) in Brussels. Just like in the first study, about 2,500 people from Brussels aged between 18 and 70 were interviewed face-to-face about their language skills, language use and language attitudes (see Janssens, 2007a), on the basis of a representative sample, conducted by the NIS. In this contribution we will provide an overview of the most significant findings and shifts within the Brussels linguistic landscape based on the results of both surveys¹.

¹ The integral analysis of the results are available in JANSSENS, Rudi, Van Brussel gesproken. *Taalgebruik, taalverschuivingen en taalidentiteit in het Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest (Taalbarometer II)*, Brusselse Thema's 15, Brussel, VUBPRESS, 2007.

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Language and language communities

While Brussels is still a bilingual city from a political point of view, this is no longer the case in linguistic-sociological terms. The large majority of the people of Brussels see the multilingual context as a major asset, regardless of their language background. Besides the economic potential generated by the international status of Brussels, the rich cultural life which manifests itself in the city, unseen in any other Belgian city, is for many a real pole of attraction to settle in Brussels Capital Region. This dynamism implies that shifts may occur within the linguistic landscape or that the relations between the language groups are not always as harmonious as you would think. A first question we have to ask is, for that matter, to what extent we can still speak of exclusive and exhaustive language groups or language communities in Brussels. The fact that Brussels is not merely a city of Dutch speakers and French speakers has been obvious for a while, even though some inhabitants are trying to reduce it to this dichotomy again, or as formulated in the French version of the popular internet encyclopaedia Wikipedia: 'Brussels has about 85% to 92% French-speaking inhabitants, a third of which have another mother tongue than French'². The question is, to what extent we can actually still speak of language groups. If we look, for instance, at the target group of the Flemish Community policy, it includes both the Dutch speakers, the users of the infrastructure and services of the Flemish Community and those who feel connected to this community one way or another or want to establish a relation with it, in short, almost every inhabitant of Brussels. However, this can hardly be called a language group or a language community. Someone's linguistic background is not always decisive for the school attended by their children, you can hardly brand French-speaking children in Dutch-speaking schools as Dutch speakers or members of the Flemish Community, even though their choice of school in the context of Brussels is not contradictory and they do actually belong to the target group of the policy of the Flemish Community. The same diversity can be seen in the participation in cultural initiatives and infrastructure open to all the people from Brussels, regardless of their language background. The famous 300,000 standard, a standard used by the Flemish Community for its Brussels policy aimed at a target group of 300,000 inhabitants of the capital, therefore provides a much better projection of the impact of this Community in Brussels. Impact, in this context, does not at all refer to the membership of a certain language group. The bond between the Flemish Community, and the same obviously applies to the French Community, and the people from Brussels is not merely based on language and it is even very probable that the large majority of these people from Brussels have ties with both communities. This does not mean that language would be an irrelevant criterion for the formation of the communities. It constitutes an essential part of the identity, more than the demographic variables which are usually presented as decisive. But an identity is layered by definition and language is only one aspect of it, though bilingualism or multilingualism may help to determine this identity. The classification on the basis of home language gives you the benefit of stability, but denies the variability in terms of language use in private and public life.

² On 19 September 2007 it literally read 'Cette ville-région officiellement bilingue est habitée par une majorité de [Belges francophones](#) (de 85 à 90% des habitants sont de langue française, dont près de 33% du total sont [Allophones](#)) et par une minorité [flamande](#) (de 10 à 15% de la population).'

Language identity does have this flexibility, but it is characterised by some subjectivity and the fact that language is not the only criterion people use to support their identity. This study tries to further unravel the compatibility and tension between home language and language identity. This contributions outlines a number of findings and then situates them within a broader (policy) context. The focus lies mainly, but not exclusively, on the Dutch language.

	TB1 (good to excellent)		TB2 (good to excellent)	
1	French	95.52%	French	95.55%
2	Dutch	33.29%	English	35.40%
3	English	33.25%	Dutch	28.23%*
4	Arabic	9.99%	Spanish	7.39%
5	German	7.61%	Arabic	6.36%*
6	Spanish	6.90%	Italians	5.72%
7	Italians	4.68%	German	5.56%
8	Turkish	3.33%	Turkish	1.47%*
9	Berber	3.09%	Portuguese	1.67%
10	Portuguese	1.43%	Lingala	0.99%
11	Greek	1.19%	Greek	0.91%
12	Russian	0.48%	Russian	0.64%
13	Lingala	0.39%	Berber	0.36%*

Table 1. Most spoken languages in 2000 and 2006
(*different categories between both measurements significant at .05 level)

Language diversity as a fact

The linguistic image in Brussels is first of all defined by the languages mastered by the people from Brussels. For this purpose we can in fact divide the languages in four groups: firstly, the two official languages which are most commonly spoken and which, in a number of situations, are the only possible languages specified by the law; then there is English, which is frequently used in an economic and cultural context; school languages, mainly taught through education and thus granted a certain status of recognition and finally; the migrant languages which are not taught in schools but which are exclusively transferred via intergenerational language transfers in families and/or via institutions or organisations linked to these communities. This categorisation also largely determines the quality of the language use. The official languages are the only languages of education in Brussels Capital Region - this is without taking into account the international and European schools - and command of at least one of them is indispensable to get a degree and develop a professional life. In addition to both official languages, English is the most important school language which is prominently present but which is rarely acquired by birth and the quality may also overrated. We have even more reasons to believe so if we look at the low rating given to language education by the inhabitants of Brussels. Other school languages such as German, Italian or Spanish are home languages for a part of Brussels' population, but for most Belgian inhabitants they are

mainly school languages. Migration languages are spoken because people with those home languages came to live in Brussels. They are exclusively used in the family unit and have a low status within the Brussels context regardless of the number of speakers. If we compare the situation of about five years ago with the current situation, mainly the number of languages in this category has significantly increased and some major shifts between the other categories can also be observed.

Table 1 gives an overview of the best known languages of Brussels Capital Region. The percentages refer to the percentage of respondents who claim, on the basis of self-reporting, to have a good to excellent command of the language in question. This table compares the results of the first survey (TB1) with the second one (TB2).

If we look at the overall linguistic image it is not surprising that French, as the main language spoken by about 95% of the people from Brussels, maintains its position as lingua franca. The number of speakers of Dutch is decreasing, thus allowing English to settle in second place (see also Van Parijs, 2007), though the command of English does not actually significantly rise. English is a real school language, only a few people speak it as a mother tongue. For Dutch this is fifty-fifty and also other European (ex) immigrant languages such as Italian and Spanish are becoming more popular now that they are no longer only spoken by the immigrants from these countries but are also taught in schools. Arabic and Turkish, the non-European immigrant languages, are losing ground. They are almost exclusively transferred in the family unit which currently still keeps the language quality quite high, but the basis is narrowing. Within these families, depending on the duration of the stay and the linguistic background of the partner, French has been accepted as the second language. Within their own communities these languages fulfill a function, however, the European languages also provide an economic surplus value to its speakers. Almost all the people from Brussels acknowledge that this wealth of languages is a positive fact and only about 17% finds the cohabitation of people who speak different languages problematic.

If we look at the inhabitants of Brussels on the basis of the home language (see table 2) some shifts have taken place over the last five years. The number of people with a monolingual French background increased, just like the number of new bilingual people. This was at the expense of the other groups, which all scored somewhat less. This tendency is mainly accounted for by the born and raised Bruxellois who are – at least in percentages - stronger represented in today's Brussels as compared to the first survey and the immigrants from abroad who also increase their relative impact on the population. For the Dutch speakers both the portion of Dutch-speaking people from Brussels born in Brussels Capital Region and of immigrants from Flanders is decreasing. While the number of Bruxellois who grew up in a Dutch-speaking family is decreasing, just like the number of Dutch speakers, the number of monolingual Dutch-speaking families remains steady and Dutch speakers are increasingly using Dutch in mixed-language marriages. While about half of the born and raised Dutch speakers in Brussels has a French-speaking partner, just like about a third of the immigrated Dutch speakers, under a third of the families speak only French. In the previous survey this was still the case in about half the families. The number of families where at least one of both partners is Dutch-speaking and where French is the language of communication within the new family unit has dropped from more than a third to a fifth. Also in traditionally bilingual families, we see a tendency of more Dutch being used in the family unit. While shifts in the French and foreign speakers remains limited after a new family unit is formed, new bilingual families are speaking more French in a family context (from a quarter to a third). For foreign speakers, French is increasingly accepted as a second family language and Dutch does not come into the picture at all. The only way Dutch is spoken in non-Dutch families is when the children attend a Dutch-speaking school. In French-speaking families this choice of school does not affect the language use in

the family, but this is different for foreign speakers, where Dutch is regularly spoken with friends, but also with brothers and sisters. However, we can generally say that people, regardless of their home language, in the first place want to pass on that language to the next generation.

	TB1	TB2
Dutch	9.5%	7.0%*
French	51.6%	56.8%*
Dutch/French	9.9%	8.6%
French/other	9.3%	11.3%
Other	19.7%	16.3%*

Table 2. Home languages on the basis of the family of origin
(*different categories between both measurements significant at .05 level)

	TB1	TB2
Home language family origin	49.2%	45.1%*
- only home language	27.3%	23.9%*
- home language in combination	21.9%	21.2%
Education language	8.8%	11.3%*
Language as a subject matter	37.5%	38.7%
Home language current family	0.6%	1.3%
Other	3.9%	3.7%

Table 3. Language acquisition of people from Brussels who speak good to excellent Dutch
(*different categories between both measurements significant at .05 level)

Table 3 provides a short overview of how the people from Brussels who claim to speak good to excellent Dutch have acquired the language. Less than a quarter of them spoke it in the family they grew up in as their only home language, just compare: for those who speak good to excellent French this is almost half, for English barely 3%. For half of these speakers of Dutch, the language is a school language, and especially the rising share of students from Dutch-language education is striking. You also have to keep in mind that the respondents are at least 18 years old and that the recently increasing share of non-Dutch speakers in secondary Dutch-speaking schools in Brussels is only reflected in these figures to a limited extent. In the future this number will probably further increase, especially if you consider the bilingual education initiatives which are becoming more widely accepted in French-speaking education nowadays.

Also outside the family unit Dutch speakers in Brussels are speaking more Dutch. In contacts with the administration and in healthcare significantly more Dutch is spoken. Table 4 illustrates this and also indicates how the wealth of languages in Brussels is narrowed down in administrative terms for non-Dutch speakers to the use of French, which for some is a reason to consider them French speakers.

Also traditionally bilingual people are speaking more Dutch in public environments. In general, 2/3rds of the Dutch speakers and of the traditionally bilingual population claims that Dutch is spoken in more and more places. Also almost 60% of the French speakers and the new bilingual people thinks that you hear more and more Dutch in Brussels. Even more than 60%

of the people who speak yet another language think it is important to know Dutch in Brussels. This can be seen, for example, in the student population of Dutch-speaking schools, which are becoming increasingly popular among non-Dutch speakers and in the success of Dutch courses for adults. Those who already have

some notions of the language are more eager to attend a Dutch course, while those who have no idea of the language are not really inclined to learn it.

The fact that education plays an essential role in a multilingual society is clear. Mixed-language classes are a reality in all schools and this is seen as an enrichment by over 80% of the Bruxellois (this figure fluctuates between 81.4% for Dutch speakers and 91.3 for other language speakers). Better language education is at the top of the agenda of many people in Brussels and even though the Dutch speakers are a bit less inclined to support bilingual education as the road to multilingualism,

most of them do think it provides a possible solution. Especially French speakers (12.8%) and the traditionally bilingual persons (9.8%) do not really believe that multilingual education would prejudice the knowledge of the original language of education in their own system, Dutch speakers are a bit more suspicious about it, but the majority of them does not believe that the level of Dutch would suffer because of it (only 18.7% thinks that this would be the case). The other way round, 40% of Dutch speakers think that Dutch education pays enough attention to language education to educate bilingual students, only 10% of French speakers is convinced that their own education system can give the same guarantees. Among the people from Brussels with another linguistic background about 85% is convinced that the education in Brussels is failing in this task. The fact that bilingualism is a necessity is endorsed by most of the inhabitants of Brussels. About 95% is convinced that bilingualism is a *conditio sine qua non* on the shop floor.

		Néerlandais	Français	Nl/Fr
Dutch-speakers	TB1	48.3%	41.2%	10.5%
	TB2	59.9%*	30.2%*	9.9%
French-speakers	TB1	2.5%	97.5%	1.9%
	TB2	1.6%	97.4%	0.8%
Trad. bilingual	TB1	4.4%	86.7%	8.8%
	TB2	10.7%*	81.8%*	7.5%
New bilingual	TB1	1.7%	94.0%	3.8%
	TB2	1.8%	97.9%*	0.4%
Other languages	TB1	1.2%	96.6%	0.8%
	TB2	1.7%	94.8%	1.5%

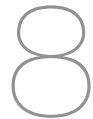
Table 4. Language use with local authorities
(*different categories between both measurements significant at .05 level)

People with a different linguistic background are not only attending the same schools; club life is also increasingly reflecting this diversity. While the level of participation of Dutch speakers is increasing, as opposed to that of people with another language background, does not imply that they are systematically opting for Flemish associations. Associations in Brussels are no longer linguistically homogeneous. Just look at the Dutch-speaking clubs: the language used in 85% of these associations is actually Dutch, but the language background of the members is quite varied. The same applies for other associations. Club life thus evolved from a strict separation based on language background to a meeting place for all the people from Brussels, more so because the most popular clubs are sports clubs and socially-committed associations which mobilise people for non language related issues.

While the people from Brussels do meet via education and clubs, acquiring information via the media is still strictly separated along language lines. Dutch speakers, and to a lesser extent the traditionally bilingual people, consult the Flemish press, but those who do not speak Dutch by birth do rarely or never read Flemish newspapers or hardly ever watch TV programmes in Dutch. If they do, they will mainly watch films and series on Flemish channels because, as opposed to the French channels, they are broadcast in their original language. For French and foreign speakers Flemish channels are more English-language than Dutch-language. This tendency is also seen in newspapers, Dutch speakers read French-language and Dutch-language newspapers, French and foreign speakers only get their information from the French-speaking press. It is striking though that among Dutch speakers, the share of Dutch-language papers is exceeding that of French-language papers, but due to the large variety of titles *Le Soir* is still the most read paper among Dutch speakers. In terms of collecting local news the Dutch speakers are largely dependent on the French-language media.

Outside private life French remains the prevailing lingua franca in daily life. If someone from Brussels starts a conversation with a stranger on the street, he will do so in French. However, we see for example in the administration that, despite the complaints which are a secondary reason for some Dutch speakers to eventually move to Flanders (Janssens, 2007b), they are – compared to the previous survey - increasingly attended to in Dutch and also the traditionally bilingual persons are starting to use more Dutch. Dutch speakers are also more assertive in their dealing with public servants, though the difference between people who were born and raised in Brussels and who more flexibly adjust themselves and those who moved from Flanders who are more adamant about the use of Dutch still exists. In healthcare too, Dutch speakers are increasingly attended to in Dutch, in the sense that it is less a French-only-matter and both official languages are increasingly being used.

The employment situation is always a good illustration for the necessity of bilingualism. The significantly higher degrees of people employed in Brussels is a clear sign. Higher degree requirements also translate into an increasing demand for language skills at the time of recruitment. In this sense, it is absolutely more important to know Dutch than to know English. If you look at how organisations and companies present themselves to the world, English does play an obvious role. French remains the most important language but due to the introduction of English advertising and communication in both official languages decreases to the benefit of other language combinations. The result of this increased diversity is that companies are addressing their audience more and more exclusively in French, even though the role of French in the overall communication is decreasing. Only in the catering business we see that Dutch and English are increasingly being used, clearly to the detriment of the monolingual French-speaking communication. While the first contacts with customers and suppliers may be mainly in French, the actual daily contacts are very diversified; half of the staff who deal with customers claim to speak Dutch also. In general, Dutch-speaking customers are attended to in Dutch, especially in the catering business, and there is only a limited number of complaints. Within the organisations and companies French still prevails and Dutch speakers address their French-speaking colleagues, subordinates or superiors more in French than that they are addressed in Dutch. Foreign speakers internally choose to address Dutch speakers more often in English than in French. Still, the linguistic hierarchy within the



economic sector in Brussels remains clear: French is the most important language followed by Dutch and English in third place.

While language knowledge and language use are quite objective parameters, language identity is not, even though this notion is essential within community thinking. Regardless of their language background people feel in the first place either Belgian or Bruxellois. The term “Fleming” is a bit delicate for all the people from Brussels. Among Dutch speakers mainly unskilled and young people feel Flemish and there is even a group which explicitly states to feel least related to the term “Fleming”. Among traditionally bilingual people youths feel the furthest removed from the Flemish people. For people who do not speak Dutch by birth the mental distance with the Flemish people is quite generalised. For French speakers and the new bilingual people the identification as a French speaker comes only in fourth place, they feel more Bruxellois, Belgian and European. If these new bilingual people do choose and affiliation with one of the traditional language communities, it is the French-speaking community, though there is only a minority who makes this link. Foreign speakers, except those who work at international institutions and who have a milder opinion about it, have a very negative perception of Flemish people.

The previous paragraph clearly points out that people from Brussels do not feel Flemish. But they are not keen on a strong bond with Wallonia either. However, we can at the same time speak of a kind of polarisation illustrated by the fact that - as compared to the previous survey - people are either choosing to vote on a monolingual French-speaking or a monolingual Dutch-speaking list in the elections.

Language in Brussels: between cohesion and polarisation

If we look at the linguistic landscape in Brussels the significantly growing diversity of home languages is very striking. The linguistic and cultural basis of Brussels is becoming broader. Not only this diversity in itself but also the speed with which the linguistic changes are occurring. Even though the average age of the Brussels’ population is above the Belgian average, the “migrant municipalities” among the 19 are at the top of the list of the youngest municipalities of Belgium: Sint-Joost-ten-Node is the Belgian municipality with the youngest population, followed in third to seventh place by Schaarbeek, Sint-Jans-Molenbeek and Sint-Gillis. In these municipalities language shifts can set in quite quickly due to the demographic and linguistic composition of their population, e.g. in case of a changing marriage pattern because the focus is less on foreign partners of the country of origin or due to a strongly rising influx from Eastern Europe in a certain district, which makes a forecast about the future linguistic image very difficult. Also the large number of single people and the number of couples with a different linguistic background makes it difficult to predict what the future will bring. The fact that these shifts can occur in a relatively small time span is illustrated by the significant differences in the use of Dutch. While a relationship of a Dutch-speaking and a French-speaking partner mainly used to result in a family unit where French was spoken as a home language, we now see that despite an increase of mixed-language relations, more Dutch is spoken in these families. The shifts related to language background occurring in the student populations in Dutch-speaking education are another example of this dy-

namism of multilingual Brussels. These quick changes in a context of increasing linguistic diversity is the most striking result of this survey. It makes long-term forecasts very speculative.

The evolution in the language landscape is also remarkable. The strengthening of the use of Dutch by Dutch speakers is accompanied by an overall decrease of the number of Dutch speakers. However, this decrease is relative. Even though the number of people who speak good to excellent Dutch is decreasing, the number of people from Brussels who speak no Dutch at all is also decreasing, which results in a significant group with at least some notions of the language. Education seems to be the crucial gatekeeper which converts the diversity in the command of three contact languages. Due to its role as lingua franca everyone speaks a quite decent French, but due to its popularity as a school language English has managed to catch up with Dutch, which is also taught to a growing group in schools. However, this raises questions about the quality of school languages, a consideration which may be extended to French, because everyone claims to speak good French, but the diversity is still very large. The fact that personal language skills mainly have a utilitarian value is proved by the findings which refer to the link between language and identity. Even though language shifts in themselves, as aforementioned, are difficult to foresee, it looks like the future inhabitants of Brussels will master and use different languages at a certain level. It is not about turning speakers of other languages into Dutch or French speakers, but about making sure that within a certain context they can use both languages adequately.

In this process of language acquisition education plays a crucial role. It forms the link between, on the one hand the families where a multiplicity of languages is spoken and, on the other hand, the Brussels city society in general and its employment market in particular. The study clearly shows that when optimising this link, a number of questions can be asked. Even though the large majority of the people from Brussels claim that bilingualism is an essential part of the Brussels identity and they almost unanimously underline the necessity of it, only a minority is satisfied with the language education. While almost a third of Dutch speakers still agrees with the fact that the education offers a good preparation in terms of language skills, Dutch education generally scores better in terms of the appreciation of first and second language lessons, only about 10% of the other language group endorses this view. That is why there is a need for another language education, which makes the demand for e.g. bilingual education quite plausible. This bilingualism is crucial, for instance, if the government wants to guarantee bilingual services. The fact that the unemployment rate among young people in Brussels is 35%, far above the European average of 17%³, may not be entirely ascribed to the limited language skills, but it undoubtedly contributes to it. The success of Dutch courses for adults is not surprising, it's just that people who are already quite apt in Dutch are most inclined to attend an additional course, people who have no notions of Dutch whatsoever do not have a lot of interest in it. The famous Matthew effect is looming around the corner. The same applies for the advocates of bilingual education: the better the language skills of parents (and inherently, the higher their degree), the more they plead for bilingual education. The need for a different approach to language education is urgent, according to this survey, but the group with limited language skills is

³ Source: OECD country report "Youths Jobs", 2007

also the group who considers such remediation the least necessary. In view of the background of the parents who plead for better education and who will also be the first ones to go along with innovative initiatives, we have to be careful not to create an elitist bilingual/multilingual education where only children of well-off Bruxellois can take advantage of. For now, barring a few experiments, only children of European officials are enrolled in multilingual schools via the European schools. If the language education is reformed, we have to make sure not to deepen the gap between monolingual and bilingual individuals. A first condition is that the debate about an adjusted (language) education should be conducted on the basis of pedagogical, and not sentimental and ideological, arguments. Currently, Dutch education seems to provide a better guarantee of bilingual graduates and this education is also the only way in which Dutch can get access to non-Dutch-speaking families. Even though the economic demand remains an important incentive to study Dutch, schools remain the crucial organisations which can have a multiplying effect leading to consolidation. The economy can, if necessary, also get its workforce from somewhere else. Therefore, from a Dutch-language perspective it is important to continue to invest in this education and to innovate so that the trump cards are not discarded. The result is that an ideal school environment is created where non-Dutch-speaking people from Brussels can get a bilingual education. In view of the relatively limited number of children from monolingual Dutch-speaking families the future of Dutch in Brussels lies more and more in the hands of these bilingual or multilingual individuals.

Besides both official languages, English is also an important language in the linguistic landscape in Brussels. The peculiarity of this language is that it is mainly taught at school and that it does not play a 'natural' role as a home language in Brussels, this as opposed to Dutch, French and the other European and non-European immigrant languages. In the public, non-economical, atmosphere this language also plays a limited role, even though it is clearly, though passively, present via the media and cultural participation. Only in the economic sector there is no way of getting round the language. Within the European institutions and within a few international organisations and companies, it is the principal language of communication and the expansion of the EU has resulted, among other things, in the fact that a large group of young Europeans, who have not been taught French, but English, in their respective home countries, is coming to live and work in Brussels. This explains why the group of people from Brussels who do not speak French are mainly young adults. It is assumed that a growing diversity is thus benefitting English. However, on the basis of the facts you can hardly claim that the language is ousting Dutch, as could wrongly be concluded based on the general linguistic image. English prevails only in the international institutions, but these institutions and their employees form a rather separate community and their contact with daily Brussels is rather limited. In the rest of the economic sector, the impact of English is growing noticeably, but the clear hierarchy with French as the principal language, Dutch as the second language and English as the important third language, also remains put here. This appears from a study from Mettewie and Van Mensel (2006) which argues that in the first place there is a poignant shortage of bilingual Dutch/French people on the Brussels employment market and not so much of multilingual individuals. Furthermore they conclude that in a context of economic globalisation, English does play an important role in the external communication of companies, but only in combination with

French and Dutch and not in itself. This conclusion is confirmed by the figures in the chapter on 'Language and employment situation'. The fact that English is becoming the most important language, is also put into perspective by the people from Brussels themselves. Only 12% of the Dutch speakers think that English is more important in Brussels than French. Also a minority of the people who speak yet another language (44.4%) is of the opinion that knowing English in Brussels makes the command of French redundant. On the other hand a majority of the French speakers think that the command of Dutch is more important than speaking English (52.6% is of that opinion). If more English is spoken, this is mainly to the detriment of French. About 70% of Dutch speakers thinks that English is in first instance a threat for French, and even 80% of French speakers is of the opinion that that is the case. However, English could also oust Dutch. Within the economic sector traditional bilingualism is increasingly replaced by English and by an increased language diversity, which also results in the fact that in general communication there is a growing tendency towards either English or French. Even though it cannot be denied that English is gaining popularity, we should not lose sight of the functions fulfilled by the three major languages in Brussels. In that respect English does compete in some domains with French and much less with Dutch. It is an alternative, though, in places where bilingual communication is currently being sustained.

However, it is not just a lack of language skill which lies at the basis of the incomprehension among people from Brussels. Even though this study was not aimed at including the impact of the media on the linguistic image and the mutual relations between the language groups, we cannot get round the fact, after analysing the results, that they probably play a role. While Dutch speakers get their information about current affairs in Brussels and Belgium from the Flemish and French-speaking media, and bilingual media are almost inexistent also in Brussels, the other language groups almost exclusively consult the French-speaking media. This undoubtedly plays a role in the very negative image foreign speakers have of Flemish people. Whether the Flemish media pay enough attention to Brussels was not one of the principles of this study either, but there are a few indications that they are only moderately interested in Brussels. For instance, the French-speaking Brussels newspaper *Le Soir* is the most popular paper for Dutch-speaking people in Brussels and they have, as opposed to the French speakers, to rely on the local press to be informed about the daily reality in Brussels. If Dutch-speaking people in Brussels want to know what is going on in their immediate environment they largely appeal to French-language publications. The perception Flemish people have of Brussels is also affected by the way in which the Flemish press reports about Brussels. In the move study (Janssens, 2007b) it became clear that Flanders has a quite negative idea about Brussels and that, for example, the education situation is considered disastrous. The people who do have children of their own in Dutch-speaking education in Brussels, are satisfied with it, though. It is true, a lot can be done about the image of Brussels and the Flemish Community in Brussels, not just in relation to Dutch-speaking people in Brussels, but also in relation to Flanders and the non-Dutch speakers in and outside of Brussels. The right channels to do so are apparently not currently available, although this communication should not be an insurmountable problem in this digital era.

The fact that non-Dutch speakers think command of Dutch is important does not mean that they are very fond of the language. The mutual contempt between Dutch

speakers and French speakers which already stood out in the previous study (Metwewie & Janssens, 2007b) is again confirmed here. While 92.7% of the Dutch speakers think that French is a beautiful language, only 43.4% of the French speakers feel the same about Dutch and of the new bilingual persons only a third. Dutch speakers have a much less negative attitude towards French than the other way around, even though French speakers are not completely adverse to Dutch but more so to the Flemish people. Even though the majority of Bruxellois finds bilingualism an essential element of the Brussels identity (however, Dutch speakers significantly more so with 97.4% positive answers, while 75.3% of French speakers endorse this), a majority of French speakers finds that Dutch is unrelated to the Flemish Community and the Flemish culture. Dutch speakers feel the same about the relation between French and the French-speaking Community. Only a majority of foreign language speakers find that the two are inextricably bound up. Non-Dutch speakers do acknowledge the role and status of Dutch in Brussels, but do not agree that Flanders, just like Wallonia, should have too much say in Brussels. From a French-speaking angle this can sound politically logical, because of the distinction they make between the communities and regions, for Dutch speakers this is a little less obvious with a Flemish Community that incorporates both. The Flemish and French-speaking Community present themselves on the basis of the singularity of their language and in a multilingual Brussels context such identification with a monolingual community is not obvious. Dutch and French both have their own function in a multilingual context, and therefore it is not illogical that this function is detached from the Flemish or French culture which invokes the link with a monocultural context.

The fact that Dutch and Flemish are less and less considered as synonyms is crystal clear. Especially in the relation between language and identity this is strikingly demonstrated. Indeed, the relation between language and identity is already very complicated. This identity cannot just be derived from the language background and the daily language use. Someone can identify himself with people who speak the same language, as a bilingual individual or as a member of a multilingual community, where one category does not necessarily exclude the other categories. It is no surprise that most people from Brussels identify themselves neither with the Flemish, nor with the French-speaking Community. People simply do not live in a monolingual environment in Brussels and both in their personal relations and in their daily public life they are constantly reminded of that multilingual environment: their own circle of friends is usually multilingual, the same for their club life and work environment.... The link with a Flemish or French-speaking Community which, especially in politics, presents itself as a monolingual community is not self-evident, and neither is the identification with a territorial identity they clearly do not want to belong to. Therefore, it is no surprise that 'Brussels' or 'Belgium' is more of a basis for identification than the communities. However, the identification with what is 'Flemish' is even more problematic. French speakers, foreign speakers and even a part of the Dutch speakers are least of all inclined to identify themselves with this Flemish side. This leads to a rather ambiguous situation whereby Dutch is becoming increasingly important and the need to learn this language is acknowledged by more and more people from Brussels, but where the term 'Flemish' seems to be driving the communities further apart. These tensions are not only expressed on a political level, also non-Dutch-speaking Bruxellois often associate 'Flemish' with Flemish extrem-

ism and intolerance. Even a major part of Dutch-speaking people in Brussels distance themselves from the adjective 'Flemish'.

Multilingualism is seen as a surplus value by the people in Brussels and bilingualism is inextricably bound up with the Brussels identity. Within a federal state structure based on duality, this situation also presents a huge challenge to politics. Multilingualism implies that people speak and have to learn different languages and in this respect the majority of the inhabitants of Brussels Capital Region thinks that educational reforms will be required. The diversity in Dutch-speaking education has often been considered a problem situation, but French-speaking education is seriously failing to educate students to become bilingual citizens. The fact that Dutch speakers are probably in the best position to teach French-speaking students their language, whatever the context is, and that French speakers can do the same for the Dutch speakers, appears to be pure obviousness in pedagogical terms, but politically this is rather a distant utopia. Though this is not the only problem to which both communities have to find an answer. In terms of political representation the relation between the people from Brussels and the respective communities is far from unambiguous. Certainly the minority feels it is important to strengthen their own political position to support the function of their own language and language community, even though the Flemish people find themselves in a rather ambiguous situation. If we look at the last two elections, we see that on a local authority level Flemish representatives are mainly elected on mixed-language lists, while in the most recent federal elections, Flemish people were supposed to vote on the lists where the persons heading the lists made a point of not wanting to represent Dutch-speaking people from Brussels in the current institutional setting. Therefore, it is no surprise that the inhabitants of Brussels do not expect much good to come from Flanders and Wallonia, while an increasing number of them is opting for change. Finally, daily life is mainly lived within the family unit, the neighbourhood, and possibly the work environment, and these environments are not strictly divided in language communities but diversity is a central given. The tension between the political-administrative structure of Brussels and the reality of a multilingual society is a fact, though this does not mean that children cannot be prepared, e.g. based on a dual educational structure, for this multilingual living environment. This will only become a problem when these children are not capable of communicating with each other. In this context the gap between youths from both language communities is significant, where 'Flemish' seems to be the catalyst.

Conclusion

It is very difficult to get a grip on the evolution of the linguistic landscape. For Dutch the balance is moderately favourable. The majority of the people in Brussels acknowledges that bilingualism is an essential feature of Brussels and endorses the necessity of a command of Dutch. Dutch speakers themselves are also using the language more often, even though they are losing some ground as a group that speaks Dutch by birth. At the same time education provides them with a valued tool to pass on the language both to Dutch speakers and non-Dutch speakers. The importance of the language is not limited to the mother tongue speakers in Brussels Capital Region. On the other hand, we see the negative connotation of the 'Flemish'

aspect. While in the first survey the semantic discussion was still about “Flemish people who are from Brussels” or “People from Brussels who are Flemish” the focus has now shifted to the “contradiction” “Dutch” versus “Flemish”. The label “Dutch” has turned from a linguistic choice into an ideological one. The discussion about splitting the electoral district Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde also illustrates the institutional disconnection of Flanders with Dutch-speaking people from Brussels. So, their position has not become any less unambiguous.

French still is the most important language. It consolidates its position as a second home language of a large group of foreign speakers and as lingua franca it still dominates public language use. The increased diversity also plays into the hands of English which, to a lesser extent, is gaining importance in public life but especially within the work environment. The fact that English is sometimes taking the place of Dutch, but mainly of French, does not mean that the language in itself is ousting the traditional languages. It may be the second best known language and especially popular among youths, in terms of home language English still remains very weak, making it remain mainly a school language with a utilitarian function. Just like French dominates in the streets while hiding a large diversity of languages, this is also the case for English.

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