



## THESIS / THÈSE

### DOCTOR OF LANGUAGES

#### Language labels, language practices: a multiple case study of parents with children enrolled in Dutch-medium education in Brussels

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# **LANGUAGE LABELS, LANGUAGE PRACTICES**

A multiple case study of parents with children enrolled  
in Dutch-medium education in Brussels

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Sous la direction du Professeur :  
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En vue de l'obtention du grade de Docteur en Langues et lettres  
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## PREFACE

In February 2006, I spent a night outside the school gates of a small Dutch-medium school in Schaerbeek, hoping to enroll my then two-year-old son in nursery school the next day. I was not alone that night, for a number of other fathers – this was a dad’s job, or so it seemed – were keeping me company on this particular outing, in similar hopes of enrolling their progeny. We started the night in high spirits – we built a fire and sat around it with beers in our gloved hands, and someone had even run home to fetch a copy of *The Big Lebowski* so we could watch it on his laptop. But when it started to snow at 3 am, even the vodka that someone had procured proved unable to keep us warm. The school gates finally opened five freezing hours later, and I was ushered inside, straight into the children’s cafeteria. Sitting on a toddler-sized stool, a cup of scalding coffee in my previously numb hands, I was about to enroll my child in nursery school. Had our cold and sleepless night been worth it? I hoped it would be...

Incidentally, during that same period of time, I had started working on a large-scale study on non-Dutch-speaking parents in Dutch-medium education in Brussels. In most research on multilingual practices within educational institutions, the focus lies with pupils’ or students’ interactions, educational practices or outcomes; parents are usually kept aside or treated as secondary actors. But I took them as a starting point for the investigation, as these parents, by opting for a specific language educational system (i.e. Dutch-medium education in Brussels), were laying the foundation for their children’s linguistic and social future. Like the research I had carried out before, this was a quantitative study, aiming to shed light on what motivated these parents in the educational choices they had made for their children.

In the course of the analysis, however, I gradually became more convinced that my approach was not conducive to uncovering the research issues that really interested me, issues that may not have occurred to me had I not been a parent myself with a kid enrolled at a Dutch-medium school. For instance, I quickly realized that different opinions on language were being bandied about among parents on the school yard, but these ideas were not always consistent, and could even contradict each other at times. I also witnessed many different language practices at play, practices that were not so easily boiled down into simple fixed

categories. It niggled at me that there was probably “so much more going on” behind the quantitative data that I had gathered. And this, in a nutshell, is why I ventured into the qualitative project which eventually found its way into this PhD dissertation.

But why study language-in-society in Brussels? The institutional complexities related to language in Brussels and Belgium provide a particularly interesting setting to do this. Since the 1960s, most of Belgium’s internal administrative borders have been based on language, with the officially bilingual Brussels Capital Region lodged as an island in the center. This has led to a complex institutional framework that nowadays involves both a French Community and a Flemish Community in charge of organizing so-called ‘person-related’ matters in the Region of Brussels. As a result, a number of linguistically separate institutions exist in parallel in Brussels, operating largely independent from each other. In terms of education in particular, the effects of this separate but parallel organization are numerous: the language of instruction (Dutch in Dutch-medium education, and French in French-medium education) marks an obvious difference, but differences can also be found in terms of the content, nature and educational aims of the curriculum. At the same time, like many cities, Brussels has become thoroughly multilingual, and the contrast between these multilingual realities and a two-tier institutional organization rooted in a largely monolingual policy is striking. What’s more, the growing linguistic heterogeneity of the pupil population is a challenge for its monolingually-based educational practices. This is particularly the case for Dutch-medium education in Brussels, since it is often considered one of the strongholds of the Flemish presence in Brussels, representing a Flemish, Dutch-speaking minority within a French-speaking majority. In this study then, my interest lies in uncovering how multilingual individual actors from different backgrounds relate to these themes. I interviewed and observed a number of parents, which resulted in my presenting ‘telling’ stories which hopefully shed new light on the intricacy of the issues at stake.

I could not have done any of the above without the help of many. First and foremost, I wish to thank the parents who agreed to act as informants in this study. Without their contribution, none of this would have been possible in the first place.

I would also like to thank Laurence Mettewie, my supervisor, for her continued support and her unfailing faith in my project. Her comments and suggestions

rarely missed the mark, and perhaps more importantly, she never hesitated to give me the proverbial ‘kick in the pants’ when required.

I should equally like to thank Jeroen Darquennes and Rudi Janssens who, as members of the reading committee and members of the jury, were kind enough to dedicate some of their precious time to providing feedback on earlier versions of the manuscript. The other members of the jury, Christine Hélot and Patricia Lamarre, deserve my gratitude as well.

The following people also contributed to the project in one way or another. As such, they deserve my utmost gratitude:

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Finally, my sincere thanks go to Julie Deconinck who has done her best to turn my awkward prose into a pleasant read, although any remaining mistakes are solely my own. Thank you for enduring my many mood swings, and for being a loving presence.

This book is dedicated to my son, Danel.



# GENERAL INTRODUCTION



In the general introduction we aim to provide the reader with all the necessary elements to situate the present study. It consists of three chapters. The first chapter presents both the theoretical and contextual background which underlie the rationale of our study, and finishes with the research objectives that will serve as guidelines to our investigation. In line with the qualitative and ethnographic approach that we wish to adopt for the present study, this first chapter thus presents a conceptual framework that presents and discusses the theories, beliefs, and prior research findings that are relevant to the aims of the study. Note that this does not mean that the theoretical foundations of our study will be confined to this opening chapter; other chapters will also refer to theoretical concepts as they are deemed fitting for the analysis. The second chapter offers detailed information on our methodological approach, as well as on the data collection and analysis. The third chapter then introduces the participants of our study and their immediate environment.



# CHAPTER 1

## THEORETICAL AND CONTEXTUAL FOUNDATIONS

In this first chapter, we will present the theoretical and contextual background of our study:

- (1) the first section offers a concise review of the research literature on the three concepts that are fundamental to our theoretical approach, namely language, identity, and community;
- (2) the second section presents the political and institutional context of Dutch-medium education in Brussels;
- (3) in the third section, we home in on our research focus, namely parents in Dutch-medium education in Brussels;
- (4) finally, on the basis of these elements, we present the rationale behind our study as well as our research objectives.

### 1.1 LANGUAGE, IDENTITY, AND COMMUNITY

#### 1.1.1 Multilingualism, a social approach

In her introduction to *Bilingualism: a social approach*, Monica Heller champions an approach to multilingualism that “privileges language as social practice, speakers as social actors and boundaries as products of social action” in order “to move discussions of bilingualism away from a focus on the whole bounded units of code and community” (Heller, 2007, p. 1). Many scholars working in contemporary sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, and related fields, would – at least in theory – subscribe to the position illustrated in this quote, which privileges speech over language as a research object, and practice over community.

The origins of the approach proposed by Heller can be traced back to a research tradition that originated in the 1960s. Partly as a reaction to Chomskyan structuralist linguistics, and partly as a reaction to Labovian descriptive variationist

sociolinguistics, two scholars working on two different continents proposed a new way of looking at sociolinguistics: John Gumperz and Dell Hymes. John Gumperz' interactional sociolinguistics set out to study how language users create meaning in interaction. Together with Dell Hymes, he proposed an 'ethnography of communication' (Gumperz & Hymes, 1972) as a method to study language as a social phenomenon, rather than as a discrete, closed system. The purpose was to study language practices as 'ways of speaking' and to relate these to what Hymes (1972) coined 'communicative competence', or the social knowledge of how and when to use language. The idea, later elaborated upon and refined by other researchers, was that language competence transcends linguistic or grammatical knowledge by including pragmatic knowledge as well.

The work by Gumperz, Hymes and their peers has inspired, prompted, and influenced a bulk of research in recent decades (see e.g. Rampton, 2007, for an overview), but relatively recent social and global political changes have perhaps contributed to the expansion and mainstreaming of their legacy in language-related sciences more broadly. Since the early 1990s, two phenomena are guiding societies around the world toward what Vertovec (2007, p. 1024) has called *superdiversity*, i.e. a diversification of diversity with "a level and kind of complexity surpassing anything [...] previously experienced in a particular society", and which he relates to two distinct factors. Firstly, a change can be observed in the structure and nature of migration, from rather predictable collective flows to more diffuse and unpredictable shifts. One can now imagine people from all backgrounds leaving any place for any other, for any number of reasons. People move on, or return, at variable moments, and as such the composition of populations throughout the world is subject to hyperdiversity and flux, with obvious consequences for linguistic heterogeneity. This is particularly salient in larger cities around the world, but it is also visible in more peripheral locations (Pietikäinen & Kelly-Holmes, 2011). Furthermore, this growing diversity eludes sociological categorizations that have long been used to make sense of our social world, and – on a more practical level – it increasingly challenges institutions, policy makers and governments' use of these same categories to 'deal' with these realities. Secondly, the rise of new technologies compels us to reconsider traditional ways of looking at language. Connectivity enables online contacts across the globe that were previously unimaginable, and new ways of communicating such as text messaging or chat-practices confront us with users' creativity regarding normative language use.

All of these factors have led to serious critiques of what (a) 'language' and (a)'community' are, critiques broadly rooted in a poststructuralist or postmodern

paradigm. The main criticism can be summarized as an opposition to the use of essentialized, decontextualized notions of language and community, both in general discourse and in research. Languages are believed to be fluid rather than fixed codes, framed within social practices, and their apparent systematicity can be described as “an illusion produced by the partial settling or sedimentation of frequently used forms into temporary systems” (Hopper, 1998, p. 158). This view obviously has consequences for how bilingualism or multilingualism can be defined. Rather than assuming the co-existence of two separate language systems within the individual or society, a framework that informed most research on bilingualism over the past decades, it is suggested that bilingualism should be seen as a language continuum. In order to tighten our theoretical grip on this view of bilingualism, new terms have recently been proposed, such as polylingualism (Jørgensen, Karrebaek, Madsen, & Møller, 2011) or metrolingualism (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010). They converge in that restrictions on what can be said or not are not considered linguistic but social, and related to political and ideologically-motivated norms (Jørgensen, Rindler-Schjerve, & Vetter, 2012), which echoes Heller’s (2007) words above.

Recent work on code alternation, for instance, has shown that often the ‘boundaries’ between distinct languages are not only blurred but cease to be significant, since no meaningful opposition between the use of the two codes can be found (Bailey, 2007; Tsitsipis, 2007; Auer, 2007). Lüdi and Py (2003) proposed to regard these practices as ‘parlers bilingues’ (bilingual talk), referring to the social act performed rather than the linguistic mixing. García (2009a, p. 45) favors the term *translanguaging*, which she defines as “the multilingual discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds”. It is posited that one should look at practices and describe these language practices “from the perspective of the users themselves, and not simply [...] from the perspective of the language itself” (García, 2009a, p. 45). Code-switching phenomena could then be described as acts performed by bilinguals of “accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages” (García, 2009b, p. 140).

In a similar vein, but more directly based upon Bakhtin’s (1981) notion of *heteroglossia*, Bailey (2007, p. 257) describes code-switching phenomena as heteroglossic practices. Bailey uses the notion of heteroglossia to address “(a) the simultaneous use of different kinds of forms and signs, and (b) the tensions and conflicts among those signs, based on the sociohistorical associations they carry with them.” The social force of mono- or bilingualism in lived experience is thus not denied, quite the contrary, but it is not considered “a function of formal, or

inherent linguistic differences among what counts as languages” (Bailey, 2007, p. 271). Compared to translanguaging, the concept of heteroglossic practices thus explicitly invokes an ideological reading of multilingual language practices. Another advantage is that the notion encompasses intra-language varieties as well, so that it helps to focus on different ways of speaking, be it in one language or another, rather than on speaking in different languages. Heteroglossia thus encompasses mono- as well as multilingual forms, which, according to (Bailey, 2007, p. 258), “allows a level of theorizing about the social nature of language that is not possible within the confines of a focus on code-switching.”

We can go back to Hymes for the origins of this line of thinking, through the concept of *language repertoires*. Hymes (1974, 1996) proposed the notion of a repertoire to denote the various ways of speaking that people engage in: “A repertoire comprises a set of ways of speaking. Ways of speaking, in turn, comprise speech styles, on the one hand, and contexts of discourse, on the other, together with relations of appropriateness obtaining between styles and contexts.” (Hymes, 1996, p. 33; quoted in Blommaert, 2005). This (usage-based) view on language enables us to frame language knowledge and multilingualism in a different perspective, since “people are restricted as to what they can do with and in language [or languages], depending on the range and composition of their repertoires” (Blommaert, 2005, p. 13). Language repertoires are thus to be understood as built of generically and sociolinguistically restricted competences, and competence in a language (or languages) can never be complete, but is always partial, dynamic, and ‘truncated’ (Blommaert, Collins, & Slembrouck, 2005; Blommaert & Backus, 2011). This viewpoint also has obvious consequences for how we conceive of multilingualism and education, since it eludes the possibility of knowing a language (or languages) ‘perfectly’, and thus reframes what may be realistically expected in terms of linguistic educational outcome, for instance.

What the many terms mentioned above have in common is that they illustrate a concern with defining linguistic practices differently, yet without having to refer to discrete languages. They focus on the social of the linguistic rather than on the linguistic of the social, and underscore that “despite the fact that language has a psychological and linguistic component, it is the social context in which it is used, and the wishes and power of its speakers, that determine its role” (García, 2009a, p. 25). However, even if we (as scholars) accept that the notion of ‘a language’ is a discursive construction, or, as Joseph (2006, p. 20) puts it, a political-linguistic-rhetorical construct, clearly its power should not be underestimated. For instance, even if we de-essentialize or de-absolutize a normative notion of language, linguistic hierarchies are still applied and acknowledged as such. Likewise,

considering multilingualism as a set of repertoires does not prevent some of these repertoires being more highly valued than others in particular circumstances. Furthermore, it is improbable that people will stop using concepts like ‘French’, or ‘Japanese’ in their everyday lives.

If a turn in thinking has taken place over the last decades, it could perhaps be characterized as a shift from looking at language in society from a collective perspective, i.e. how the individual relates to the collective, to the individual’s perspective, i.e. how the individual as a social, pragmatic actor constitutes the collective.<sup>1</sup> Some scholars suggest that the post-structural emphasis on agency in sociolinguistic research has swung too far, to the detriment of acknowledging the importance of structural constraints on human (linguistic) behavior. David Block (2012), for instance, points out that the notion of ‘class’, though an important concept in early sociolinguistic work (e.g. Labov, Trudgill, and others), has been neglected in more recent work, some exceptions aside (e.g. Rampton, 2006).

As a corollary to this shift in thinking about language and community, scholars working in a critical sociolinguistics paradigm have also highlighted the ideological stances permeating previous ways of thinking about language and bilingualism. They argue that these very notions are a modernist (and Western) invention linked to a Herderian one language-one culture template that served Western nations in their nation-building (Hobsbawm, 1990). In critical perspectives such as Heller’s (2000, 2007), for instance, the notion of bi- or multilingualism as two monolingualisms stuck together, or, as Blommaert (2007a) coins it, *poly-monolingualism*, is claimed to serve the same message of language-nation-identity just like language X or Y did before, but only in a seemingly different way. According to Heller (2000, p. 23), this view leads to

a reproduction of the old nation-state emphasis on “whole” languages, but with a new twist. The celebration of “fusion” and “hybridity” may simply be a way of legitimating what are actually multiple monolingualisms, and the privileged position of those with the right kind of multilingual repertoires. It may also signal a struggle between two elites, one with an investment in monolingualism, the other with an investment in multilingualism. Then again, the second elite may well actually depend for its privileges on the existence of the first.

---

<sup>1</sup> This equally applies to a similar shift within ethnography for instance, since Gumperz and Hymes’ concepts such as linguistic repertoires were linked to particular *speech communities*. These repertoires were seen to characterize communities or bounded groups of people, but already based on speech rather than language, with the notion of a sharedness of repertoire enabling smooth communication (Blommaert, 2007a).

According to this point of view, one of the researcher's tasks is then to look at what message is conveyed in discourse on bilingualism, in which context it is produced, by whom, and with what purposes. To quote Heller and Duchêne (2007, p. 11), “we should be asking [...] who benefits and who loses from understanding languages the way we do, what is at stake for whom, and how and why language serves as a terrain for competition.” Once we have looked at the context in which the present study is situated more closely, the relevance of this issue will become more obvious. To put it very succinctly for now, Dutch-medium education in Brussels is often considered (and promoted, see the next section) as a way to raise children bilingually (Dutch-French), given the fact that bilingual education as such is only scarcely available in Brussels (and in Belgium in general). We can thus ask whether and in what way the notion of bilingualism is relevant for the parents participating in our study. We can also look at what type of conception(s) of bilingualism our informants forward within their narrative, and how these conceptions are or are not related to the way they deal with having a child in Dutch-medium education.

In the previous paragraphs we discussed how a shift in thinking about language and identity - foregrounding the users and their practices rather than assuming traditional, more discrete accounts of language - has paved the way for exploring the notion of multilingualism anew. This has clear implications for the notion of language(s) in/and education, as we will see below.

### *Multilingualism and education*

It is through education that language and national identity are created, performed and above all reproduced.

(Joseph, 2006, p. 49)

The role of education in the maintenance and reproduction (or contestation) of – as well as the socialization into – dominant or desirable discourse systems and ideologies related to language and identity has long been recognized (Apple, 1982). The seminal work by Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1982; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Bourdieu, 1991) has led many to investigate how this transmission takes place and as a result has had a great impact on consecutive research. As a part of his theory of social reproduction, Bourdieu introduced the idea that we acquire various kinds of capital through schooling. These include cultural capital, symbolic capital, and linguistic capital. As García (2009a, p. 12) puts it: “Bourdieu believes that the ability of students to gather linguistic capital is dependent mostly on the education they receive, and thus schools play a major role in regulating

language as capital and mediating access to it.” Criticism of this point of view has been voiced by Habermas (discussed in Joseph, 2006), for instance, in that Bourdieu’s theory does not sufficiently recognize the power of individual agency in dealing with these structural phenomena, but the theory remains compelling. Indeed, if we consider the role of education to be one of the prime mechanisms of (language) ideological reproduction, we could ask what impact relatively recent trends commonly joined under the umbrella term ‘globalization’ may have. Heller (2000, p. 18) suggests that education plays a key role in the transmission of capital, now even more than before, as alternative ‘modern’ strongholds such as the nation-state and its institutions have lost ground through globalization:

And education has become a key site of distribution of commodified linguistic capital, as former sites of production and reproduction of linguistic capital disappear or are transformed.

A second effect of globalization is that language education itself becomes subject to changes. The density and heterogeneity of language practices linked to superdiversity (Vertovec, 2007) are obviously felt in classrooms as well, and teachers, administrators and policy makers are likely to look for ways to deal with these realities. However, neither traditional foreign language education nor various types of bilingual education that have arisen over the past decades (Baker, 2006; García, 2009a) seem to be able to have found an answer yet to adequately cope with this linguistic complexity. An interesting typological contribution in this respect is Garcia’s (2009a) distinction between monoglossic and heteroglossic types of bilingual education. The first group, roughly corresponding to bilingual education programs designed in the twentieth century (as well as the traditional monolingual education programs with foreign language education), aspires a monolingual proficiency in the dominant language or in each of the two languages. The underpinning belief is that only linguistic practices by monolinguals are considered legitimate. The second group departs from a different view, acknowledging that individuals’ multilingual language practices can relate to multiple norms. In other words, they depart from the translanguaging individual (children that have access to various language practices) rather than the (multiple) monolingual individual. Unsurprisingly, this second group is vastly outnumbered by the first.

### 1.1.2 Language and identity

In the previous subsection, we presented a recent shift in the way language in society is perceived and the repercussions this has on language in education. This subsection deals with another concept that has raised a great deal of attention in sociolinguistic scholarship since the early 1990s, prompting a profusion of literature, including a number of comprehensive and critical overviews (Joseph, 2004; Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). The origins of this interest in the question of identity and its link with the language we speak lie in the post-structural notion that identity (or identities) is not something we are or have, but rather something we perform, among other things through language, and that it is created dialogically. The link between language and identity, moreover, is said to be dynamic, layered, and the result of trajectories and discourses.

To begin with, notwithstanding the large amount of literature on the subject, identity remains a difficult notion to define. In order to incorporate the idea that identity is subject to social construction and constraint, various alternatives to the term ‘identity’ have been proposed in the research literature: these include *self*, *person*, *ethos*, *persona*, *subject position*, *subjectivity*, *positionings*, and *identification* (Ivanic, 1998; in Joseph, 2004, p. 9). Whereas each of these concepts has its own pedigree and its specific – useful – heuristic purposes, each of them is also prone to misinterpretations. Joseph (2004, p. 10) therefore prefers to stick to ‘identity’, since after all, ‘identity’ still remains “the everyday word for people’s sense of who they are” (Ivanic, 1998, p. 10). He defines identity as “the category (or set of categories) into which a person (or less often, animal or object or abstraction) is read as belonging, expressible as or (in the case of a proper name) consisting of a noun phrase or adjective phrase” (Joseph, 2004, p. 40). Note the move away from a definition that is necessarily informed by a cognitively centered subjective, agentive mind. Joseph suggests we abolish looking at representation and communication as the two essential functions of language, and instead adopt a “primordial language subject-cum-object reacting interpretatively to the world around it” (Joseph, 2004, p. 39). In order to apply these ideas to social science research, he argues for an approach grounded in reading and interpretation.

Within a poststructuralist framework, traditional sociological categorizations are (re)conceptualized as socially recognizable categories of membership (Pavlenko, 2001, p. 317), which provide “accessible meaning construction schema for studying experience” (Hanauer, 2010, p. 61). These categories include gender, social class, nationality, ethnic affiliation, race and language, but, as Block (2006)

says, this list is not exhaustive. Moreover, the different options are considered neither exclusive nor discrete, but work *in tandem* and are co-constructing. When these categories are embedded in official discourses, however, they become institutionalized (Bloor & Bloor, 2007, p. 86), and major systems of institutionalized classification include national identity, racial identity, ethnic identity, and class identity. These are often used in censuses and, as Kertzer and Arel (2002) argue, rather than reflecting social reality, a census may actually play a key role in the construction of that reality (see also Rampton, 2007). Similar criticism might be leveled at quantitative research on language and society, as we will see when we discuss specific findings generated by such research.

This, however, does not mean that commonly held categories have lost their meanings for people. As Canagarajah (2005, p. 439) asserts (with respect to research on minority languages), “attachments to ethnicity and mother tongue are resilient, despite their limited value in pragmatic and material terms”. May (2005, p. 330) adds:

While language may not be a determining feature of ethnic identity, it remains nonetheless a significant one in many instances. Or to put it another way, it simply does not reflect adequately, let alone explain, the heightened saliency of language issues in many historical and contemporary political conflicts, particularly at the intrastate level [...]. In these conflicts, particular languages clearly are for many people an important and constitutive factor of their individual, and at times, collective identities.

This remark is reminiscent of a similar comment made above on the usefulness of the concept of ‘a language’. Even if it may be effective to conceptualize identity as a dynamic, layered, discursive construct in order to unveil its complexity, an essentialist view of identity is still typical for social actors. Nevertheless, we follow Block (2006, p. 28) when he states (on identity) that “essentializing might work [...] as a tool to get things done, it does not seem a good strategy to adopt when working as a researcher, trying to construct understandings and explanations of observed phenomena.”

#### *A composite notion of identity*

The notion of identity becomes even harder to pin down when we take the *performance of identity* into account, specifically as it relates to performance in social interactions. Goffman (1955, p. 227) was one of the first to suggest “a functional relationship between the structure of the self and the structure of spoken interaction”, calling this ‘structure of the self’ as presented in speech the *persona*, referring to the self one projects in everyday actions. Le Page and Tabouret-

Keller's (1985) notion of 'acts of identity' similarly refers to the idea that all utterances are indexical of identity, and that these utterances index various dimensions of identity at the same time. However, approaches such as these, while rightfully highlighting the actual context of the interaction as a locus for identity construction, may sideline the impact of the social order as it structures and 'formats' situations and practices (Blommaert et al., 2005).<sup>2</sup>

Some authors propose a view of identity that comprises the 'luggage' one has acquired (broadly understood as one's origins and experiences), the way one's identity is presented in the actual performance of social interaction, and the constraints and possibilities that are imposed on/available to this identity. In her work on writer identity, for instance, Ivanic (1997, extensively discussed in Hanauer, 2010, pp. 58-59) proposes a composite concept of identity, constructed from four categories: (1) autobiographic self, (2) discorsal self, (3) self as author and (4) possibilities for selfhood in the socio-cultural and institutional context. The *autobiographic self* consists of the life-history, memories, events, and the ways of being in the world of the writer. The *discorsal self* refers to "the impression – often multiple, sometimes contradictory – which [writers] consciously or unconsciously convey of themselves in a particular written text" (Ivanic, 1998, p. 25). As such, the notion of the discorsal self cannot be collapsed with an autobiographical self, because the former refers to how the identity of the biographical self is manifested and performed at the time of writing. The *self as author* concerns the degree of authority that writers experience and claim in relation to the writing they do. According to Ivanic, writers vary widely in the extent to which they claim authority as the source of the text's contents, as well as the degree to which they are present as authors in their writings (Ivanic, 1998, p. 26). The last category comprises the "prototypical possibilities of self-hood which are available to the writers in the social context of writing" (Ivanic, 1998, p. 27; quoted in Hanauer, 2010, p. 59). These possibilities are said to be multiple and allow or preclude the subjective positions that can be taken.

Though our interest is not on writer identity, the effort to integrate these different components into a unitary concept of identity is appealing. As Hanauer (2010, p. 58) argues, Ivanic "conceptualizes the issue of the discursive performance of identity within the context of structuring social discourse" and thus proposes a view on identity that comprises trajectories, performance, evaluation of

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<sup>2</sup> This juxtaposition is reminiscent of the divergent stance taken up by conversation analysts and ethnomethodologists toward the precise nature and relevance of 'context' in their analyses of social interaction.

performance, and the possibilities and constraints of a more structural nature, such as political or socioeconomic conditions.

### *Negotiation of identities*

One of the perspectives on identity that prioritizes the agency of social actors in both construing an identity and resisting an ascribed or imposed one, is the idea of a *negotiation of identities* (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). The authors define identities as:

[...] social, discursive, and narrative options offered by a particular society in a specific time and place to which individuals and groups of individuals appeal in an attempt to self-name, to self-characterize, and to claim social spaces and social prerogatives. (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004, p. 19)

Contrary to social psychological approaches to identity, for instance, Pavlenko and Blackledge privilege a discursive interpretation of identities, in which identities are “located in discourses and [...] situated in narratives” (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004, p. 20), a view which relies heavily on Foucault (cf. O'Rourke & Pitt, 2007). Pavlenko & Blackledge's conceptualization of the negotiation of identities is partly grounded in Positioning Theory (Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999). This theory proposes that “[...] identity is about the constant and ongoing positioning of individuals in interactions with others” (Block, 2006, p. 29). Or as Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004, p. 20, italics mine) say, positioning is about the “*perpetual tension* between self-chosen identities and others' attempts to position them differently”. The negotiation of identities is then defined as an interplay between reflexive positioning, i.e. self-representation or self-chosen identities, and interactive positioning, i.e. identities ascribed or imposed by others. Though Harré & Van Langenhove (1999) treat positioning largely as a conversational phenomenon, Pavlenko & Blackledge (2004) expand the concept to include all discursive practices. As we wish to qualify previous quantitative findings (Van Mensel, 2007) on language and identity by adopting an emic point of view, the idea of negotiation of identities seems particularly useful. For it foregrounds the individual's discursive handling of identities, the individual's agentive potential, rather than a structure of identity categorizations in which the individual is placed/allocated.

### 1.1.3 Community as a nexus of shared trajectories

In the subsection on identity above, we discussed the autobiographic self as one

of the constituents of one's identity, to be understood as an accumulation of an individual's life-history, memories, experiences, and ways of being in the world (Hanauer, 2010; Ivanic, 1998). More specifically in terms of linguistic identity, if we take the link between language and identity to be dynamic, one's linguistic life-history is bound to inform part of who we are. People's *language (learning) trajectories* – the languages they have heard, spoken and learned throughout their lifetimes – may have an influence on their identity in different ways. A useful notion for approaching an individual's life experiences is Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* (see Bourdieu, 1984, 1990; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), defined as a “system of durable and transposable dispositions” (1977, p. 72). It refers to a repository of habitualized practices that manifest themselves both physically and psychologically (e.g. ways of acting, ways of speaking), and which are acquired throughout a lifetime: the individual's accumulated experience of social actions. This habitus, thus, is unique to each individual, but people's habitus may overlap to various degrees as they share or have shared experience(s) within the same ‘group’ (which could be a family, a generation, a gender community, a chess club, and so on). Scollon & Scollon (2001; 2003; 2005; 2012) prefer the term *historical body* (borrowed from Nishida, 1958) to habitus, however, because they consider the latter (cf. the formulation of ‘durable dispositions’) too rigid, as it suggests that individuals, once they have internalized certain beliefs and practices, remain determined by these same beliefs and rules by and large. The authors believe that, while this may be the case in some situations, “the process of socialization into discourse systems, especially when it involves the negotiation among multiple discourse systems, is a much more partial and dynamic affair” (Scollon et al., 2012, p. 173). The term historical body thus refers to the interaction between the individual and the discourse systems in which she or he participates, and it allows us to see the individual not just as a “storehouse of social practices [cf. habitus], but also as the ground for the ontogenesis of new social practices” (Scollon et al., 2012, p. 173), a metaphorical ‘compost heap’ of social practices (Scollon, 2003). Hence, the two notions – habitus and historical body – conceptualize the role of the individual's trajectory (life-history, autobiographic self).

An interesting corollary to the idea of trajectories, however, is that it also allows us to conceptualize the notion of ‘group’ or ‘community’ in a different way, i.e. as *a nexus of shared trajectories*. Like ‘language’ (see the first section in this chapter), the notions of ‘community’ and ‘language community’ as based on traditional sociological parameters have been criticized in the literature for being too essentialist and reductive. In his seminal work on ethnic groups, Barth (1969)

suggests that the *boundaries* that are constructed between groups, rather than the ‘objective’ characteristics of individual group members, are constitutive of group identity. Language, then, serves an important boundary-marking function (Tabouret-Keller, 1997; Bucholtz & Hall, 2004; Fought, 2006). For instance, the group of ‘Nederlandstaligen’ (‘Dutch speakers’) is in actual language practice not defined by an objective, static and inherent characteristic, as all its members deploy varied registers and ways of speaking. However, through pinpointing which characteristics are allowed or rejected as being representative of ‘Dutch’, we can come to an identification of ‘Dutch speakers’. In the case of Flanders, for instance, it is remarkable how little flexibility is accorded toward the recognition of ‘immigrant Dutch’ as being part of the in-group varieties, whereas dialectal varieties that can differ radically from the ‘standard’ do not meet with the same objections (Blommaert & Van Avermaet, 2008).<sup>3</sup>

An influential second addition to the theorization of group and community was provided by Anderson’s (1983) notion of *imagined communities*. Anderson’s first interest was to explain the origins and spread of nationalism, and he defines a nation as a socially constructed community, imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of that group (Anderson, 1983, pp. 6-7). The usefulness of this concept lies in the fact that it explains how people that have never met each other are bound together, precisely by a shared belief in the membership in the community. According to Anderson, language plays an important role in the construction of this community since, as one of the primal forces of language constitutes its capacity for imaginary community-building and generating particular solidarities within those imagined communities.

#### *Communities and nexus of practice*

Yet another influential concept for group analysis is the one formulated by Lave and Wenger (1991) of ‘communities of practice’ (see also Wenger, 1998). Rather than focusing on differences (Barth) or shared beliefs (Anderson), the notion of communities of practice, defined as groups of people that do things together, or, as Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) put it, “aggregates of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor”, takes *shared practices* as the starting point for analysis. The idea is that shared beliefs or ideologies emerge in the course of ‘doing things together’ and can thus be analyzed subsequently. The

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<sup>3</sup> Of course, on a different level, these dialectal varieties may be subject to evaluation (mockery, ‘naturalness’, appraisal) as well.

advantage of this concept is that it helps us to focus on what happens in concrete interactions between groups of people, and on what people try to accomplish in these interactions, without taking for granted pre-assumed categorizations in terms of race, gender, nationality, and so on. Another advantage of the notion of community of practice is its definitional openness, in the sense that any aggregate of people can be held to constitute a community of practice (Joseph, 2004, p. 65). It is then the researcher's task to show convincingly how and why the conceptualization of a particular community may be relevant. However, this openness may also be a drawback, in the sense that the concept is subject to a large number of interpretations, resulting in much discussion on what precisely constitutes a community of practice or not (Scollon, 2001). Nevertheless, we do believe that this idea of a community of practice can be usefully applied in the present study, particularly because it enables us to conceptualize our target group, i.e. parents with children in Dutch-medium education in Brussels, as an ensemble, without necessarily referring to their background.

An even more profound move toward a study of social action based on practices is proposed by Scollon (2001). To him, a community of practice is in fact the objectification of a nexus of practice, with the latter term defined as a network (or networks) of linked practices. He gives the example of the nexus of practice of 'teaching philosophy', which can be recognized as such, because it combines a number of separate practices – lecturing, holding tutorials, marking exams, etcetera – that differs this nexus from others, such as sheep farming or teacher driver education (Scollon, 2001, p. 147). Scollon suggests, however, that when trying to make these nexus formal and explicit, we tend to lose sight of the centrality of these practices, and reify them as groups of persons (communities of practice) that have or do not have practices to various degrees. Consequently, since "communities of practice value or do not value practices [...] they value or do not value the people who are constructed by that community of practice as having them" (Scollon, 2001, p. 156). This leads to a focus on membership (inclusion and exclusion), obscuring the fact that these practices may be (and probably are) equally functionally present in other communities of practice.

The relevance of the concept of nexus of practice to our discussion is that it radically does away with taking a psychological unit (the individual, the group) as the point of departure for social analysis, taking the practices that these actors engage in as starting points instead. If we consider Scollon & Scollon's (2003, p. viii) more elaborated definition of nexus-of-practice, i.e. a "point at which historical trajectories of people, places, discourses, ideas and objects come together [...]", its conception of 'coming together' facilitates ways of looking at

how boundaries of imagined communities (Anderson, 1983) are constructed or conceptualized, i.e. “where they [these boundaries] come from and why we make them work (or not, as the case may be)” (Barth, 1969; quoted in Heller, 2008, p. 517), rather than taking them for granted.

Finally, the concept of nexus of practice also seems compatible with recent trends in critical sociolinguistics that tend to view time- (cf. trajectories) and spatially-related concepts as possible explanations for socially regulated language behavior. In their plea for more attention to space and scale as variables in sociolinguistic analysis, Blommaert et al. (2005, p. 204) argue that “the specific space in which interactions develop becomes the nexus of influences from various scales, some strictly situational and uniquely creative, others conventional and tied to larger scales [...]” Thus, in a theoretical move similar to the one made earlier by Scollon, the authors conceptualize multilingualism not as “what individuals have and don't have, but what the environment, as structured determinations and interactional emergence, enables and disables” (Blommaert et al., 2005, p. 213). Moving linguistic competence away from something the individual has or does not have – and perhaps considering it a nexus of practice, may help us to deconstruct/explore the reification of (linguistic) practices into communities (of ‘speakers of language L’, for instance) Scollon talks about, as well as examine the corollary membership issues in terms of group boundary construction that go along.

We can now apply these conceptions of community to the context of our study, by considering *having-children-in-Dutch-medium-education-in-Brussels* as a nexus of practice. Like any other nexus of practice, it consists of a number of practices that may partly be found in other, similar nexus (plural), such as *having-children*, *living-in-Brussels*, *having-children-that-go-to-school-in-Brussels*, *having-children-in-Dutch-medium-education*, etcetera. When reified into a community of practice, however, some practices are valued more than others, and people can be evaluated accordingly. As a consequence, any particular (variable) set of (language) practices that is valued higher than others within Dutch-medium education in Brussels (and by extension, within any particular school), may coincide with practices inhabited, enacted and supported by the parents to more or lesser extent. Examples of such practices may range from how to deal with homework – perhaps better formulated as an overt or covert expression of ‘what is a good way to deal with homework’ – to which language varieties are spoken, or should be spoken in which circumstances. In sum, looking at families through this lens enables us to acknowledge for differences (and possibly even conflicts) between parents and the school without necessarily having to turn to grand categorial

dichotomies in terms of us vs. them, dichotomies that in practice are often based on ethnicity-cum-home language (Hirtt, Nicaise, & De Zutter, 2007; Blommaert & Van Avermaet, 2008). Instead we propose to look at these differences as gradually overlapping bundles of practices.

#### 1.1.4 Summing up

In the beginning of this section, we have argued that in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the mainstream of the sociolinguistic field (and other related fields in the social sciences in general) has adopted a post-structuralist paradigm. This is generally taken as a reaction to structuralist accounts, deemed too rigid and thus insufficiently capable of capturing the variability and dynamics of social (linguistic) life. The criticisms of Bourdieu's concepts mentioned above are a case in point. Within a post-structuralist framework, the object of study is not how 'language' and 'community' – which are regarded as too bounded, essentialist concepts – interact or influence each other, but rather how social boundaries are created, maintained, or contested through micro-events of language-in-interaction – language as situated practice. Such a viewpoint calls for a social approach to the study of multilingualism, which “privileges language as social practice, speakers as social actors and boundaries as products of social action” (Heller, 2007, p. 1), a position that informs the theoretical underpinnings of the present study.

Within such a framework:

- (1) Multilingualism has been conceptualized as translanguaging, or as heteroglossic practices; rather than taking multiple languages as a starting point for analysis, the viewpoint is on the individual resorting to various (language) practices by drawing on dynamic repertoires of various ways of speaking. For the present study, we subscribe to this viewpoint and consider the language knowledge of our informants in terms of varied multilingual repertoires (Blommaert, 2005).
- (2) Identity is considered as dynamic and located in discourse, which is why Joseph (2004) argues for an approach grounded in reading and interpretation. For the present study, as we wish to qualify previous quantitative findings (Van Mensel, 2007) on language and identity by adopting an emic point of view, the idea of negotiation of identities (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004) furthermore seems particularly useful. More specifically, we will use the notions of reflexive and interactive (or self- and other-) positioning as a heuristic tool for the analysis of part of

our data (see Chapter 2).

- (3) Community is not defined by objective, static and inherent characteristics, but rather by shared practices. For the present study, we will apply the notion of a community of practice: it enables us to conceptualize our target group, i.e. parents with children in Dutch-medium education in Brussels, as an ensemble, without necessarily referring to their background. Instead, differences between them are considered as gradually overlapping bundles of practices.

Notwithstanding the fact that we, as researchers, may privilege a deconstructed, situated view on language and community, in everyday life, however, generalized (and generalizing) labels not only appear difficult to avoid, but these labels (e.g. Dutch, Chinese, Francophone, English speaker) often constitute meaningful concepts to many people. As May (2005, p. 330) states: “particular languages clearly are for many people an important and constitutive factor of their individual, and at times, collective identities.” In the next section, we shall see that this observation is particularly salient in the context of Brussels.

## 1.2 INSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT OF BRUSSELS

In this section the situational context of the study will be presented and discussed. The aim is twofold: (1) to provide the reader with information necessary to situate the research results within its broader societal context, and (2) to demonstrate that Brussels is a particularly fruitful location to do research on sociolinguistic identity. Firstly, a brief introduction will be given on languages in Brussels. Secondly, we will home in on Dutch-medium education and the specific place it occupies within the general landscape. Finally, we will review previous research that has dealt with parents in Dutch-medium education in Brussels.

### 1.2.1 Languages in Brussels

#### *The officially bilingual Brussels Capital Region*

Although it is not feasible here to provide a detailed account of the linguistic history and the political structure of Belgium and its capital Brussels, we may still need to give some background features to help contextualize the research in its broadest terms. Brussels has a long history of multilingualism, mixing the language(s) of rulers since the 14<sup>th</sup> century (French and Spanish) with cultural prestige languages (like French in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century or English in the 20<sup>th</sup>

and 21<sup>st</sup> century) and local (Dutch-based) language varieties or dialects (Willemyns, 2003). Because of its high socio-cultural status, French has played a dominant role in the city, whereas the Dutch language was negatively associated with Flanders as a rural and poor region (in contrast with a wealthy, 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial French-speaking Wallonia), and thus considered a language that was culturally limited and certainly not synonymous with social upward mobility (see also Mettewie & Van Mensel, 2009).

Nowadays, the city of Brussels occupies a special place in the Belgian institutional landscape, as it is defined as a semi-autonomous and officially bilingual (Dutch-French) administrative region, the Brussels Capital Region (161 km<sup>2</sup>).<sup>4</sup> Like the two other regions in Belgium, the Flemish Region and the Walloon Region, the Region of Brussels-Capital has its own parliament, its own government, and its own ‘minister-president’. Person-related matters, such as education and culture, however, are not governed by the Regions but are the responsibility of Communities. In Brussels, these matters are divided between the Flemish Community and the French Community. Both are represented by a Community Commission: the VGC (Flemish Community) and the Cocof (French Community), who meet at regular intervals in a single consultative body (GGC/CCC).

This entails that much of administrative life in Brussels is organized in terms of two parallel language-based structures, one French-speaking and the other Dutch-speaking. People are free to choose to which ‘language group’ they wish to adhere, which ‘subnationality’ they wish to subscribe to, but they have to choose between one or the other, for instance when applying for an ID card, or with respect to social security. The institutional enshrinement of the dichotomy French-speaking vs. Dutch-speaking is also reflected in the educational system (see below), and in much of cultural life, since many large-scale cultural events and locations are linked to (and financed by) either the Flemish or the French Community. Furthermore, the opposition between the two language communities remains strong in politics and the media (Sinardet, 2012; Sinardet, 2013).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *The Belgian Constitution*. Belgian House of Representatives. "Article 3: Belgium comprises three Regions: the Flemish Region, the Walloon Region and the Brussels Region. Article 4: Belgium comprises four linguistic regions: the Dutch-speaking region, the French-speaking region, the bilingual region of Brussels-Capital and the German-speaking region." URL: [http://www.dekamer.be/kvvcr/pdf\\_sections/publications/constitution/grondwetEN.pdf](http://www.dekamer.be/kvvcr/pdf_sections/publications/constitution/grondwetEN.pdf) (Last accessed: 10 September 2013).

<sup>5</sup> A telling recent illustration is the row over two panda bears that Belgium will receive on loan from China. After it emerged that the bears would go to a wildlife park in the French-speaking region and not to the Antwerp Zoo (in Flanders), a Flemish N-VA (Flemish nationalist) politician

This situation is the outcome of a historical process, and the so-called ‘Brussels’ model’ (Witte, Alen, & Dumont, 1999), negotiated in the 1960s and 1970s, was the result of a desire to ensure political representation and protection of the Dutch-language minority in Brussels. Previously, the socioeconomical and cultural prestige of French had led progressively to a ‘Frenchification’ of the city – with, for instance, many Dutch-speaking parents sending their children to school in French – and to a ‘minorization’ of the Dutch-speaking population in the capital (Witte & Van Velthoven, 1998; Treffers-Daller, 2002; Willemys, 2003).

### *Contemporary multilingual Brussels*

This two-tier organization contrasts strongly with the cultural and linguistic diversification that now characterizes the city. This diversity is the result of several migratory waves of working class people, refugees (both political and economic), and more recently of white-collar expats that have come to work for the international institutions or the many private organizations located in Brussels (Deboosere, Eggerickx, Van Hecke, & Wayens, 2009). Like many other European medium-sized cities, Brussels is subject to an increasingly diversified migration which is likely to continue in the coming decades.<sup>6</sup> It is, however, not easy to obtain precise figures on the linguistic composition of the city, because language censuses were abolished after 1947 (and in 1961 forbidden by law in Belgium), due to the political tensions they triggered (Witte & Van Velthoven, 1998; Treffers-Daller, 2002; Willemys, 2003). We can, nevertheless, refer to three comprehensive survey studies that were conducted in Brussels in 2000, 2006 and 2012 (Janssens, 2001, 2007, 2013). Table 1.1 below gives a general breakdown of the language(s) spoken in Brussels’ homes recorded across these three years.

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accused the Prime Minister (himself from the French-speaking Socialist Party) of intervening. The row made the front pages of the national newspapers.

<sup>6</sup> At the beginning of the 21st century, the city also faces a demographic boom: the population of the Brussels Capital Region was registered at 1,048,491 inhabitants in 2008, but forecasts estimate this number to increase with 200,000 by 2050 (Deboosere et al., 2009). This development brings about challenges on various levels, notably housing, mobility, and education.

<i>Language (combinations)</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2012</i>
French only	59.5%	63.1%	38.1%
Dutch only	6.4%	5.2%	5.2%
Dutch-French	8.0%	7.2%	17.0%
French-Other (than Dutch or French)	14.5%	16.3%	23.2%
Other	11.6%	8.1%	16.5%

*Table 1.1 Estimated home language use in Brussels (Janssens, 2013)*

These figures clearly show how the composition of the Brussels' population in terms of the language(s) they predominantly speak at home has evolved in the past decade. The number of families in which reportedly only French is spoken at home has dropped from around 60% to a mere 40%, in favor of combinations with Dutch or other languages, and the number of homes where none of the two official languages is spoken amounts to 16.5%. In 2012, French is still the most important language spoken in Brussels' homes (78.3%), but Dutch is present in just over 20%, and in almost 40% (39.7%) another language than Dutch or French is spoken (compared to 26.1% in 2000). Another index of the present linguistic diversity is the total number of languages that was mentioned by the participants as spoken 'well' or 'very well'. In the 2012 sample, this figure was 104, compared to 72 in 2000 (Janssens, 2001). This 50% increase in such a short period of time may indicate that linguistic diversification in Brussels has indeed been rapidly growing in recent years.

From the same studies it emerges that French is still used as Brussels' main lingua franca, but that English is gaining ground in this respect as well. This has led Van Parijs (2007) to claim that English, more than Dutch, has become the second language of Brussels. Whether this is the case could be considered debatable,<sup>7</sup> but in any case, the picture we obtain of the languages spoken in Brussels is a diversified one. Brussels is becoming increasingly multilingual, and the notion of two language communities sharing its particular space is definitely no longer supported by the reality at hand, if it ever was.

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<sup>7</sup> A discussion of English as 'the neutral third party' in Brussels can be found in O'Donnell and Toeboosch (2008).

## 1.2.2 Dutch-medium education in Brussels

The institution of Dutch-medium education was set up as a means of maintaining a Dutch-speaking presence in the largely French-speaking city of Brussels (Deprez, Persoons, Streulens, & Wijnants, 1982; Witte & Van Velthoven, 1998; Mettwie, 2007; cf. language maintenance education, Baker, 2006).<sup>8</sup> In 1970, the so-called ‘freedom of the head of the family’ (“liberté du père de famille”) had been restored (Witte & Van Velthoven, 1998), which implied that the language of schooling was no longer necessarily the same as the language registered as home language. Consequently, many had expected Dutch-speaking parents to send their children to French-medium education in droves, rendering Dutch-medium education as good as obsolete, and leading to the complete ‘Frenchification’ of Brussels.

In fact, quite the opposite happened, and the growing socioeconomic prestige of Dutch at the time (backed by the economically vibrant Dutch-speaking region of Flanders) as well as the perceived superior quality of Dutch-medium education (supported by considerable financial means) led many non-Dutch-speaking parents to send their children to Dutch-speaking schools instead (see also below). Given the specific organization of the educational system in Brussels, this was – and still is, some exceptions aside<sup>9</sup> – one of the most common and straightforward ways to raise children as bilinguals. Promotional campaigns for Dutch-medium education in Brussels (with slogans such as “l’avenir est aux bilingues” ‘the future belongs to bilinguals’) that originally targeted the traditional Brussels ‘bilingual French-Dutch’ families, apparently also appealed to ‘French-speaking’ families, and at a later stage children from immigrant families started attending Dutch-medium education as well. The pupil population in Dutch-medium education thus gradually evolved from a predominantly Dutch-speaking ‘Flemish’ population to a culturally and linguistically heterogeneous population, and the original target group has now become a numerical minority. In the whole of Brussels, Dutch-medium education now hosts about 17% of the city’s pupil population compared to 80% for French education and 3% in educational

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<sup>8</sup> For a historical perspective on education in Brussels, we refer to Treffers-Daller (2002).

<sup>9</sup> The French Community allows language immersion programs since 1998. In the Brussels Capital Region, 10 primary schools and 18 secondary schools offer some type of Dutch immersion education (school year 2011-2012, source: [www.tibem.be](http://www.tibem.be), last accessed: September 4, 2013). For Dutch-medium education, a limited number of schools (six since 2011) have been participating in the STIMOB-project, which was set up in 2001 to offer CLIL-type immersion.

institutions that use (an)other language(s) of instruction (e.g. European schools) (Janssens, Carlier, & Van de Craen, 2009).

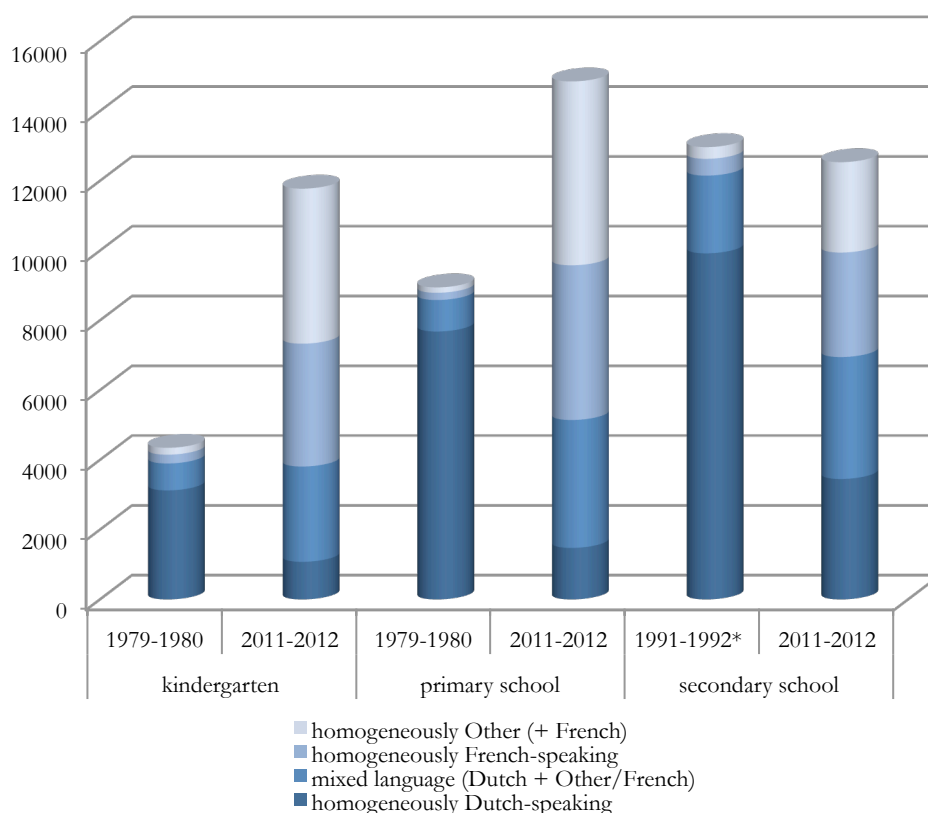


Figure 1.1 Dutch-medium education in Brussels: evolution of pupil population according to reported language background (VGC, 2013)<sup>10</sup>; \* no figures available before 1991

The figures in Figure 1.1, based on estimates collected by the representative body of the Flemish government in Brussels (VGC) from the schools’ principals, clearly illustrate the aforementioned evolution. In three decades, the total number of pupils in primary school and kindergarten in particular has grown exponentially. The proportion of children from Dutch-speaking families is now a mere 10% (in secondary school 30%), and over a third of the children speak an immigrant language (partly in combination with French) at home (in secondary school 20%).

<sup>10</sup> We literally reproduced the categories used by the VGC to describe the language background, even if some of them appear to be incoherent.

Source:

<http://www.vgc.be/Onderwijs/Onderwijsbeleid+van+de+VGC/Over+het+Brussels+Nederlandstalig+onderwijs/cijfers.htm> (Last accessed: September 4, 2013)

It must be added that some caution is warranted regarding the accuracy of the figures, as they are based on the school principals' interpretation of the parents' statements on their home language(s) at the time of their child's enrollment. Moreover, the broad language categories used are not unproblematic either (see also our discussion below), but in any case, the figures are testimony to the undeniable sea change in the pupil population of Dutch-medium education.

The development and expansion of Dutch-medium education has obviously given way to numerous challenges for teachers, schools and policy makers alike. Since the 1990s, a variety of initiatives have been taken with a view to supporting the schools and teachers.<sup>11</sup>

Yet, one wonders whether the conceptualization of education in Brussels as a two-tier system may in itself be an obstacle to successfully dealing with cultural and linguistic heterogeneity. As mentioned before, education is a so-called person-related matter, and so teaching programs, contents, and objectives are set by the Flemish Community for Dutch-medium education and the French Community for French-medium education. Education in bilingual Brussels is thus not conceived to educate bilingual pupils, but to enable both official language communities to offer their members an education in their own language and culture. In practice, this means that a different language at school entails a difference in what is taught and how it is taught. A pupil in Dutch-medium education in Brussels is expected to see the same subjects and meet the same requirements as a pupil in a Flemish town, rather than as a pupil in French-medium education in Brussels. Furthermore, as Blommaert (2007b) argues, Dutch-medium education policy makers generally profess what García (2009a) calls a pervasive 'monoglossic language ideology', i.e. with a strong emphasis on the knowledge of one language, Dutch, as the first and most important linguistic goal to attain (for an elaborate discussion, see Blommaert & Van Avermaet, 2008).

The organization of education in Brussels is thus based on a monocultural model, which contrasts strongly with the cultural and linguistic heterogeneity that characterizes the city's population (see also De Schutter, 2002). It should be mentioned that there are political and historical reasons for the reluctance among Flemish policy makers to envisage Dutch-medium education in Brussels (and in Flanders) opening up to other languages than Dutch (see, for instance, Van

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<sup>11</sup> For an overview, see:

<http://www.vgc.be/Onderwijs/Onderwijsbeleid+van+de+VGC/Over+het+Brussels+Nederlan+dstalig+onderwijs/geschiedenis.htm> (Last accessed: September 4, 2013)

Velthoven, 2011). Dutch-medium education is often considered one of the few (successful) strongholds of the Flemish presence in Brussels, symbolically representing a ‘Flemish, Dutch-speaking’ minority within a French-speaking majority. In the polarized political landscape in Belgium, the potential symbolic value of such a presence is considerable.

However, if a closer collaboration between French- and Dutch-medium education in Brussels is a contentious issue politically, practical issues may arise that call for such a collaboration. One of these issues is the growing capacity problem in certain schools. In his conclusions to a study about these capacity problems, Janssens (2009) states that the projected demographic boom will render a collaboration between French- and Dutch-medium education absolutely necessary. The same study pointed to another problem, namely the growing socioeconomic divide between schools, regardless of their language of instruction. Certain schools in some neighborhoods suffer more from capacity problems than others, and the higher mobility of economically successful parents may enhance the emergence of a segregation between ‘richer’ and ‘poorer’ schools in the future. Such a process is eased by the fact that education in Belgium is organized as a so-called ‘quasi market’ (Dumay & Dupriez, 2008): (1) schools receive a certain amount of money per pupil and are thus financially dependent on the number of pupils they attract, and (2) families are free to choose which school they wish to send their child to, which has allowed for the emergence of popular vs. non-popular schools. Due to the installment of an internet enrollment procedure for Dutch-medium education in 2010, images of parents camping out up to a week outside ‘popular’ school gates have disappeared, but the chasm between popular and less popular schools have not ceased to persist.<sup>12</sup>

The particular situation of Dutch-medium education in Brussels, which we discussed in the preceding paragraphs, has led to a number of studies, varying in terms of aims, participants, and methodological approaches (see, for instance, the edited volume by Housen, Pierrard, & Van de Craen, 2004). Most of the studies have been concerned with language skills (e.g. Van Mensel & Janssens, 2005), attitudes and motivation related to language learning (Mettewie, 2003, 2004), and/or, when interested in the link between language and identity, survey-based (Ceuleers, 2008; Janssens, 2007, 2013). Noteworthy exceptions that adopted a qualitative approach are Declercq (2008), Audrit (2009), and Ceuleers (2008). However, only a few of them have directly addressed the parents of the pupils

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<sup>12</sup> *Online aanmelden voor basisonderwijs bijna afgelopen.* www.brusselnieuws.be, February 1, 2013 (Last accessed: September 19, 2013).

concerned, notably Deprez et al. (1982), Gielen and Louckx (1984) and Van Mensel (2007), and the following section is dedicated to a detailed discussion of these three studies, as well as to an unpublished exploratory study which we conducted in the Josaphat daycare center (see Chapter 3.1) in 2006.

## 1.3 PARENTS IN DUTCH-MEDIUM EDUCATION IN BRUSSELS

### 1.3.1 Earlier studies

*Deprez, Persoons, Struelens and Wijnants (1982)*

The study by Deprez et al. (1982) was the first to focus on French-speaking parents with children attending Dutch-medium education. At the time, the phenomenon was very new and still rare, but all the more surprising since after the re-installment of the principle of free school choice some years before, many had expected that Dutch-medium education would rapidly decline. Their study consisted of two parts, a survey questionnaire that was distributed via 30 primary schools (at the time 52% of the total number of Dutch-medium primary schools), and a series of interviews with parents that were randomly selected from the survey sample. The aims of the study were to find out what these parents' socioeconomic backgrounds were and why they had chosen for Dutch-medium education. Based on the responses from 109 'homogeneous Francophone' families, and 59 'foreign' families<sup>13</sup>, the researchers found that the former were mostly from a medium to higher socioeconomic background, whereas the latter were predominantly from the lower social classes. Semi-directed interviews were then conducted with seven Belgian Francophone families and eight non-Belgian families.

The motivations they distinguished among the Francophone parents for sending their children to Dutch-medium education were grouped into three main categories: (1) the perceived importance of Dutch to enjoy certain professional opportunities in Brussels; (2) the relatively low number of immigrant children in Dutch-medium schools when compared to French-medium education; (3) the

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<sup>13</sup> The term used in the original article was "vreemde gezinnen". This article shows its age through its use of terminology that would now no longer be considered politically correct. The compound "vreemde gezinnen", for instance, could also be translated as 'strange' or 'alien' families. Similarly, a term like "gastarbeider" (guest worker), used in the same article, is no longer deemed acceptable.

high quality of the schools themselves (small classes in relatively smaller schools, good infrastructure). The proximity of the school was sometimes mentioned but was never claimed to be a decisive factor. Still, most of the parents presented their choice as a difficult one. They met with objections from family and friends, and were worried about their offspring's school results in the long term. According to the informants, the reactions of Dutch-speakers to the presence of French-speakers in a Dutch-medium environment were generally positive, and particularly the teaching staff were praised.

The opinions among the 'foreign' families converged to some extent with those expressed by the 'Belgian' group. They also evoked the importance of Dutch for job opportunities, and praised the quality of education, infrastructure, and atmosphere in the Dutch-medium schools. Unlike the former group, these parents did not refer to their choice in any way as having been difficult or problematic. The researchers accorded this distinction to the fact that the friends and family of these latter parents, nor the parents themselves, perceived their choice for a Dutch-medium school as having a political dimension, so much fewer emotions were involved. Interestingly, if the 'foreign' parents had received any negative comments about their choice, these remarks had come from 'Belgian Francophones'. Another striking element is that these 'foreign' families also considered the absence of 'too many people of foreign origin' in Dutch-medium schools an asset.

Deprez et al. (1982) noted that the overall tone of the parents' stories was one of praise, but they do suggest that this praise may be informed by these parents having taken a decision that is generally not appreciated by members of their own group – or in the case of the 'foreigners', by members of the group perceived to be dominant, i.e. 'Belgian Francophones'. Therefore, the praise heaped on Dutch-medium schools by the parents, justifying their 'unorthodox' decision, may have been triggered by a pre-emptive reaction toward potential skeptics.

#### *Gielen and Louckx (1984)*

The study conducted two years later by Gielen and Louckx (1984) was based on survey questionnaires collected from a representative sample of 520 parents from all backgrounds, in five Dutch-medium nursery and primary schools. The aims of the study were to describe the parent population within Dutch-medium education according to a number of socioeconomic variables, and to find out why they had chosen for a Dutch-medium school. This very descriptive study somewhat lacks an overall interpretation, and so we will list only a few of the general findings that are relevant for the purposes of our study.

Slightly more than 20% (21.4%) of the parents in the sample claimed to speak predominantly French with their partners, and about 70% predominantly Dutch (72.6%). The latter were also observed to have a relatively higher income. Generally, the educational profile of the parents that participated in the study was relatively high; about one third (32.7%) had a degree in higher education. The parents' motivations to opt for Dutch-medium education were surveyed both by one open question and a list of possible motivations suggested by the researchers. Although the results differed to some extent across these two types of questions, the parents' most important motivations could be grouped into five categories overall: the school's proximity, its language of education, its religious denomination (or lack of), its reputation and the quality of its education.

### 1.3.2 Exploratory study Josaphat daycare center

Our own first attempt to look into the subject of parents in Dutch-medium education in Brussels was undertaken in the early spring of 2006, when we conducted a small-scale pilot study among the parents of the Josaphat daycare center (see Chapter 3.1). We administered questionnaires to the parents of 36 babies and toddlers (aged 5 months to 2,5 years). It was believed that by contrasting the parents' linguistic backgrounds with the future language-related expectations they had for their children, one could catch a glimpse of these parents' desired linguistic identities. The questions in the questionnaire evolved around two broad themes: (1) the parents' language background; and (2) the language-related hopes, aspirations and expectations these parents had for their children, as well as the linguistic choices they intended to make for their children. At the time, the status of Dutch seemed to be growing in Brussels, exemplified by the popularity of Dutch-medium education among non-Dutch-speaking parents. Therefore, the overall aim of this exploratory study was to look into the apparent re-evaluation of Dutch within this particular educational setting, to identify some of the factors that played a role in this and to gain more knowledge of its precise nature.

The language background variable was based on a combination of the (reported) language(s) the parents spoke with each other and the language(s) they had spoken (and/or still did) with their own parents. On the basis of these data, four categories were created, which are given in Table 1.2.

<i>Language combination</i>	<i>n=36</i>
Dutch-Dutch	13
Dutch-French	5
Dutch-Other (than Dutch or French)	7
Other-Other	11

*Table 1.2 Exploratory study Josaphat daycare center: reported language background parents*

As can be seen, the categories we applied were defined in relation to the two official languages of Brussels, Dutch and French. This is broadly the same categorization as the one used by the official educational policy makers and the schools, as well as in much of quantitative research conducted in and on Brussels (see, for instance, Janssens, 2001, 2007, 2013). Even if criticism to such a classification is warranted (see below), the overview in Table 1.2 does offer a window into the linguistic heterogeneity of the pupil and parent population in Dutch-medium education, which the composition of the sample in the Josaphat daycare center reflects.

A combination of closed questions (with statements to be judged on a 4 or 5 point scale) and open questions led to a number of observations. Let us first look at the parents who both spoke Dutch as their first language. These parents appeared to be very confident both about their choice for Dutch-medium education and in the positive outcome that such an educational trajectory would have for their offspring's multilingual future. Most of them envisaged an educational career in Dutch-medium schools for their children up to adulthood, with only some doubts being expressed regarding the language of higher education, mentioning English (and not French) as another possibility. When asked for their motivation for choosing Dutch-medium education, the answers were formulated in terms of apparently self-evident statements such as "because we are Dutch-speaking" or "Dutch is our mother tongue". Such a disposition does, however, not prevent them from imagining a multilingual future for their children, as these parents not only aspire to a 'perfect mastery' of Dutch for their offspring but also a 'near-perfect mastery' of French and English, and sometimes adding German and/or Spanish to the picture. Only one Dutch-speaking couple expressed an intention of enrolling their child in French-medium schools from primary education onwards, specifically with a view to raising the child bilingually. Couples in which one of the parents spoke Dutch and their counterpart a language other than Dutch or French (in this study German, Italian, Spanish, English, Frisian and Vietnamese) appeared to have a less clearly defined view of

the future as their family situation made a move away from Brussels a realistic possibility. For instance, these parents proclaimed to be more open to a change in their children's language of education, particularly from secondary school onwards. They also voiced expectations regarding their offspring's future language skills that were less emphatic. To them, multilingualism appears to be experienced as a part of their everyday (family) lives, and Dutch is but one language in the mix. When one of the parents spoke Dutch and the other French, the main argument for choosing a Dutch-medium school was to raise the child(ren) bilingually. Sometimes the quality and good reputation of Dutch-medium education (as opposed to French-medium education) was also mentioned. Some of these parents do consider sending their children to a French-medium school at a later point, particularly from secondary education onwards. Their expectations of their offspring's future linguistic knowledge were similar to those formulated by the other parents (i.e. very high), but these mixed French-Dutch-speaking couples appear to insist even more on a 'perfect' mastery of French, next to Dutch and English.

The parents in the families in which no Dutch is spoken at home,<sup>14</sup> although harboring equally high aspirations, were more tentative about the future choices they would make for their children's language of education, as well as about the outcome of these choices. Their goal was for their children to become multilingual, and Dutch-medium education seemed like a good option to attain such a goal. However, these parents did raise some doubts as to whether their child would be intellectually capable of managing such a bilingual environment, particularly since the school and home languages were different.

To sum up, we noted that all participating parents, although with slight variations, expressed rather high expectations regarding the number and quality of the languages their children should be able to speak after the schooling period. The combination of French, Dutch and English emerged as a default, reflecting the value that the parents attribute to these languages in contemporary Brussels' society. In this sense, we could interpret their answers as language ideological statements that reflect which particular (combination of) languages – and which type of multilingualism – they perceive to be important, knowledge of which should then yield an advantage in their eyes.

A factor that may have influenced our results is the relatively high socioeconomic

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<sup>14</sup> These were mostly French-speaking families, with the exception of three cases where French was combined with (an)other language(s), namely Portuguese, Turkish, and Arabic and Pakistani (presumably Urdu).

status of the parents participating in this particular study. Both the high expectations of future language proficiency and the relatively confident outlook on the outcome of a multilingual education – at least when asked for in a questionnaire such as the one we administered – could potentially be related to the educational background of the parents. These hypotheses were verified at a later stage in the larger quantitative study (see below), in which more parents from different schools and with different backgrounds participated.

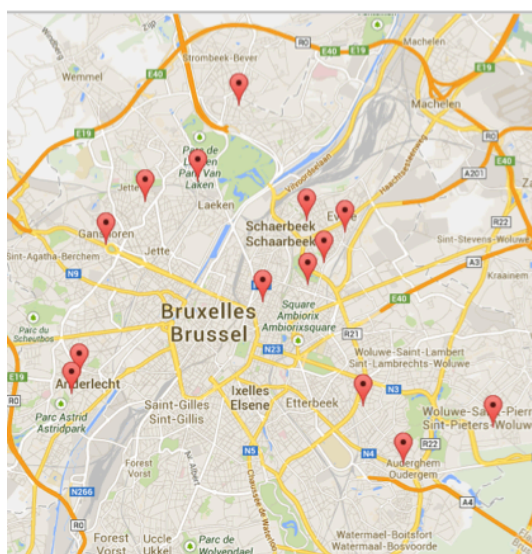
Another element that struck us was that the participating parents displayed great confidence in (and great hopes of) Dutch-medium education. At the time of the data collection, the children were still in the daycare center, and no formal schooling had yet begun. The confidence that permeates the parents' expectations is hardly based on personal experience, but rather on word-of-mouth and, more generally, on beliefs regarding the reputation of Dutch-medium education in Brussels. Such confidence, which appeared in the answering patterns of all parents, was perhaps the strongest in the case of the Dutch-speaking couples. Particularly the fact that many of them stated they had chosen for Dutch-medium education “because they are Dutch-speaking” is noteworthy in this sense. Assertions such as these – as if stating the obvious – contrast strongly with the historical so-called (self-)Frenchification of the Flemish inhabitants of Brussels (Treffers-Daller, 2002).

A last element that may be of interest for the present purposes, is that in this study we asked the parents to categorize themselves according to a number of language and identity-related labels. Since the number of participants was low, and the answers to this question were dispersed, it is hard to generalize from the collected data. However, we could observe that the Dutch-speaking families identified themselves as Dutch-speakers in the first place, then as Belgians, and then as Europeans. Half of them indicated ‘Fleming’ as a self-identifying label (two out of 13 as the first option, another two as the second option and three as the third option). The Francophone parents tended to prioritize Belgian and Brussels, and Europe was also mentioned. In the mixed language categories, the answers to this question were diverse. In any case, the precise interpretation of such self-labeling questions remains a moot point.

### 1.3.3 Quantitative survey study 2006

The second study we conducted on parents in Dutch-medium education in Brussels is a survey study that was done in May/June 2006 (Van Mensel, 2007),

and focused on those parents who did not have Dutch as a home language. The main purposes were to identify their background and to find out what their motivations were to choose a Dutch-medium school. As we have seen (cf. Figure 1.1), since the studies by Deprez et al. (1982) and Gielen and Louckx (1984), both the number of pupils in Dutch-medium education in Brussels in general and the proportion of non-Dutch-speaking parents had risen enormously, and so a quarter of a century later we wished to ask the same questions as to who these parents were and why they had chosen for Dutch-medium education.



*Map 1.1 Survey study Van Mensel (2007): situation of 14 participating schools*

A total of 399 questionnaires were collected in fourteen (primary and secondary) Dutch-medium schools situated in a variety of neighborhoods in Brussels (see Map 1.1). For practical reasons, these questionnaires were drafted in French. One obvious drawback was that we limited the data collection to parents who were sufficiently competent in French. This may partly explain why the number of families in our sample that claimed to speak only French at home compared to those who speak another language (than French or Dutch) – see Table 1.3 – is higher than what appears in the figures from the educational authorities, i.e. 41.6% French vs. 58.4% ‘other languages’ (based on the data collected by the VGC, 2006). Again, it should be mentioned that the latter data are based on a personal interpretation of the different school boards at the moment of enrollment, and therefore caution is warranted with respect to their reliability.

<i>Reported home language(s)</i>	<i>n=399</i>
French	57.1%
Other	22.6%
French-Other	9.8%
French-Dutch	5.4%

*Table 1.3 Survey study Van Mensel (2007): reported language background parents*

The socioeconomic background of the parents in our sample, based on the level of education and the current professional status, was relatively high, particularly when compared to the Brussels' average. To give an example, almost 90% of the mothers in our sample had finished at least secondary education successfully. It should be added though that rather large differences in this respect were observed depending on the school, an observation which is not surprising considering the large income differences that are known to characterize the different neighborhoods in Brussels (see also Chapter 3.1, Map 3.2). Even if the lowest educational profiles were generally found among parents who were not born in Belgium – most of them speaking another language than French or Dutch at home – and the highest ones predominantly were, the study's large body of informants consisted of people from all origins, with a medium to high socioeconomic background. This observation echoes what Gielen and Louckx (1984) had described in 1984.

The motivations for choosing a Dutch-medium school in Brussels voiced by the parents in 2006 did not differ substantially from what Deprez et al. (1982) and Gielen and Louckx (1984) discovered. Apart from the perceived importance of Dutch for future professional opportunities, the reputation of the schools and the quality of education were mentioned in particular as crucial elements that had motivated the parents' choices. The proximity of the schools also played a part, but to a considerably smaller extent. A factor that had completely disappeared from the parents' answers by 2006 was the presence of immigrant children in the schools. Two societal developments can be proposed as an explanation. First of all, the differences in this respect between French- and Dutch-medium schools had become much less obvious in 25 years' time. In many Dutch-medium schools (particularly in kindergarten and primary school), the number of children with an immigrant background is relatively high, reflecting the composition of the Brussels' population much more truthfully than before. Secondly, it would seem to us that stating such a motivation has become impossible for reasons of political correctness. To our present mindset, the fact that parents in the early 1980s

explicitly forwarded the profusion of immigrant children in French-medium education as a reason not to send their children there seems rather awkward now. Some questions in our survey dealt with issues of identity. When asked whether they expected their offspring to feel more at ease among Dutch-speakers in the future after having been to school in Dutch, about 75% of the parents responded positively. However, this figure was notably higher among the higher educated and monolingual Francophones than among the parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and the ones who spoke another language at home (see Table 1.4).

<i>At ease among Dutch-speakers</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
French-French	81.2%	18.8%
French-Other	79.4%	20.6%
Other-Other	63.2%	36.8%
highly educated	85.7%	14.3%
lesser educated	68.6%	31.4%

*Table 1.4 Survey study Van Mensel (2007): answer to the question whether child will feel at ease among Dutch-speakers, broken down according to reported language background and level of education of the parents*

Two factors may have contributed to this response pattern. Firstly, the fact that most Dutch-speaking parents in the schools were higher educated might lead highly educated French speakers to presuppose shared cultural pursuits. Concurrently, the lesser educated may perceive a lack of shared cultural values with the Dutch-speaking families as an obstacle to comfortable future social interactions. Secondly, Francophone parents may feel more concerned about getting along with Dutch speakers, as they may feel more directly implicated in the political divide between the French- and the Dutch-speaking communities in Belgium than parents from immigrant backgrounds. If, by choosing a Dutch-medium school for their children, these Francophone parents sense they have made a political choice, the expectations that this choice will make a difference may be higher, hence their higher positive scores. Furthermore, for most of these Francophone parents the point of reference is a largely Francophone social environment with little contact with Dutch-speakers (see also Janssens, 2007), and so it is not very surprising that they expect their children to benefit from going to a Dutch-medium school as far as social contacts with Dutch-speakers are

concerned.

Whereas most of the parents (80%) were not of the opinion that schooling in Dutch-medium education would have a negative influence on knowledge of the home language(s), 42.8% of the higher educated parents did hold such an opinion. Most of the latter were ‘monolingual French-speakers’, regardless of ethnic background, whereas the bi- or multilingual respondents seemed less concerned with the potential demise of their children’s home languages. To account for this difference, we suggested that the misgivings of these highly educated parents in this regard were higher, because, in their working environments, ‘school’ varieties such as written French play an important part, which is probably less the case in jobs that are typically linked to lower levels of education. In any case, the answers to this question were contingent on home language and education, not ethnic background.

So far, the elements we have discussed were at least to some degree related to the socioeconomic status of the parents. There was one element, however, for which the ethnic background of the parents was the main differentiating factor. The parents were asked whether they thought that the presence of their children in Dutch-medium schools was regarded positively or negatively by the Dutch-speakers present. The bulk of the respondents answered that, in their opinion, Dutch-speakers endorsed a neutral to positive stance (broken down into the children (94.1%), the school staff (86.6%), and the parents (74%)). However, those who claimed that the presence of non-Dutch-speaking children might be frowned upon were mostly parents with a Belgian nationality. Probably these parents, generally though not exclusively monolingual Francophones, were more aware of, and/or more involved in, the political divide in Belgium and hence more sensitive of the way in which they were perceived, i.e. as ‘Francophones’ in a Dutch-speaking environment. This interpretation was enhanced by the observation that a possible negative stance toward the presence of French-speakers was associated more with the Dutch-speaking parents (33%) than with the Dutch-speaking children in the school (10%).

Similar to what Deprez et al. (1982) had noted, the parents’ evaluation of Dutch-medium education in our 2006 sample was complimentary throughout. An overwhelming majority (92.5%) of the parents proclaimed to be happy with the choice they had made: they would recommend the school to other people, their child was likely to continue in Dutch-medium education, and they believed the child was happy at school. Additionally, although communication between the

school and non-Dutch-speaking parents is often perceived to be difficult by teachers and school boards,<sup>15</sup> the parents themselves were very positive about the matter overall.

#### 1.3.4 Parents in Dutch-medium education in Brussels: a discussion

As we have seen, Dutch-medium education in Brussels has evolved significantly since the 1970s in terms of both its amplitude and the composition of its pupil population. However, the reasons forwarded by non-Dutch-speaking parents to send their children to a Dutch-medium school appear to have hardly changed over the same period. The importance of Dutch for finding a job as well as the good reputation of Dutch-medium schools continue to be paramount factors in these parents' decision. Their motivations thus seem to be primarily instrumental or pragmatic, and not the expression of an attempt to come closer to the 'other'. Similar observations were made in contexts such as Québec and Catalonia (Mc Andrew & Gagnon, 2000; Mc Andrew, 2010), who share with Brussels the presence of two separate educational systems linked to historical language groups. However, it is hardly conceivable that identity-related factors do not play a role in these parents' considerations. Deprez et al. (1982) already mentioned that some parents had to deal with remarks from friends and/or family – or in the case of immigrant families, from Francophone Belgians – regarding their choice for Dutch-medium education. The researchers suggested that some of their results might even have been influenced by a pre-emptive reaction on the respondents' part toward potential critics. In our own survey study (Van Mensel, 2007), although the socioeconomic background proved to be explanatory for many of the issues discussed, particularly those questions that were more identity-related evoked diverging answers among the 'Belgian Francophones' compared to the other parents. It appeared that the former not only expressed greater hopes that their children would feel comfortable among Dutch speakers, but they were also more sensitive to how the children, as French speakers, were being perceived by Dutch speakers in the school. In other words, identity-related variables do play a

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<sup>15</sup> Some references to this perception can be found in documents that were issued at the occasion of a round table conference on education in Brussels (RTCB), organized by the Department of Education of the Flemish government in 2007. See <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/brussel/wg1/startnota/default.asp> and [http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/brussel/slotconferentie/Eindrapport\\_RTBCB.pdf](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/brussel/slotconferentie/Eindrapport_RTBCB.pdf) (Last accessed: September 19, 2013)

part. However, how this part can be qualified, and how it interconnects with other background variables, is a question that remained unanswered.

Furthermore, Dutch-medium education is presently set up as monolingual education, with (prestigious) languages being taught in foreign language classes. On top of this, Dutch-education policy makers profess a pervasive monoglossic language ideology (Blommaert & Van Avermaet, 2008), with a strong emphasis on the knowledge of one language, Dutch, as the first and most important linguistic goal to attain. As mentioned before, the contrast with the heterogeneity of the population of Brussels in general and of the pupil population in particular is thus considerable. How this contrast is experienced by the parents, after all an important group of stakeholders within Dutch-medium education, is worth looking into. Furthermore, choosing Dutch-medium education means not choosing for French-medium education, and in a polarized context such as Brussels this can easily be interpreted in political terms. Additionally, opting for Dutch-medium education implies choosing for a particular way of dealing with language(s) at school, or in Bourdieuan terms, for a particular way of regulating language capital and mediating access to it. Even if parents consider knowledge of Dutch as a commodity that enhances their children's linguistic (and perhaps social and cultural) capital, the strong emphasis on a 'perfect' knowledge of Dutch sets the threshold for access to this linguistic capital on high.

Survey studies such as the ones discussed may help us to generate a general picture of a particular phenomenon, in our case parents in Dutch-medium education in Brussels, but the complexities behind such a general picture remain hardly touched upon. On the contrary, these complexities are sometimes dismissed for the purposes of descriptive analyses, as is the case with the categorization of the parents in terms of language, for instance. The various studies we discussed all used language background as a variable in some way or another. In order to operationalize such a variable, however, homogenizing categories such as 'Dutch speaker' or 'French speaker' were applied, or a wide range of languages were assembled in a category 'other'. Incidentally, the label 'otherlingual' ("anderstalige") is quite commonly used in Belgium, and typically it is used to refer to all people who speak an immigrant language, and by extension (or reduction) to immigrants or descendants from immigrants, mostly from the less affluent socioeconomic classes.<sup>16</sup> Whereas we agree that such broad

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<sup>16</sup> The VGC's cataloguing of pupils in Dutch-medium education in terms of Western vs. non-Western background (before 2002-2003, this distinction was formulated as "binnenlands gezin"

categorizations are unavoidable in quantitative analyses, we suggest that certain aspects may be obscured rather than revealed in this way. In order to explore the complexities of the link between language practices, language beliefs and sociolinguistic identity of these parents, a qualitative approach that allows for the richness of data to be considered indeed seems more appropriate.

## 1.4 RATIONALE FOR THE PRESENT STUDY

In the previous three sections, we presented the background of our study: (1) we gave a brief overview of current sociolinguistic theory-building on language, identity and community, (2) we discussed the political and institutional background of Dutch-medium education in Brussels, and (3) we surveyed previous studies that focused specifically on parents in Dutch-medium education in Brussels. All this has led us to the following observations:

- (1) Contemporary social science scholarship has moved away from looking at language, identity and community as bounded entities. Language is considered in terms of a variety of (social) language practices, identity is seen as largely discursively constructed, and community in terms of shared practices.
- (2) By contrast, even if researchers and policy makers include words such as ‘variety’ and ‘multilingualization’ in their discourse, in practice both policy and research in and on language and identity in Brussels typically deploy top-down categories as bounded entities.
- (3) The two-tier organization of education in Brussels, rooted in a largely monolingual policy, contrasts strongly with the multilingual reality of the city.
- (4) Dutch-medium education has expanded not just numerically, but also and importantly in terms of linguistic and cultural heterogeneity.
- (5) Previous research on parents in Dutch-medium education, like most research on language and identity in Brussels, has been mainly quantitative in nature.

However, to truly capture and describe the complexities and paradoxes listed here, quantitative research may come up short. We can further illustrate this by

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vs. “buitenlands gezin”, possibly translated as ‘domestic family’ vs. ‘foreign family’) is also telling in this respect. See:  
<http://www.vgc.be/Onderwijs/Onderwijsbeleid+van+de+VGC/Over+het+Brussels+Nederlandstalig+onderwijs/cijfers.htm> (Last accessed: October 8, 2013)

providing more information about our own early attempts at studying parents in Dutch-medium in Brussels. In the course of our investigation, we were faced with a number of limitations, which we will enumerate here.

The first limitation concerned the usefulness of general sociological variables to pin down the range of issues at hand. Both ethnicity and socioeconomic background seemed to inform parental motivation(s) and (school) language choice in a variety of ways, and finer-grained distinctions arose from the data. For instance, French-speaking parents with a Belgian background emerged far more concerned with how they were perceived by the Dutch-speaking parents than parents from a different ethnic background and/or nationality. At the same time, university educated parents across ethnic backgrounds were all equally concerned with the quality of their children's language skills in French, a concern that seemed less paramount among parents with a lower educational profile. These findings suggest that the traditional sociological variables used in this quantitative study (language background, ethnicity, socioeconomic background) may not have been so conducive to uncover the tapestry of meanings potentially present beneath the data.

A second shortcoming of this study was that a categorization in terms of language background often misrepresents the actual language practices of the parents involved. The survey's questions on parental language use in different domains of social life (Fishman, 1972) showed that these language practices were highly varied and multilingual. However, this variation was inevitably eschewed as we aimed to provide a general(ized) picture. One may therefore wonder whether such abstracting is the best way to gain insight into the language-related challenges faced by Dutch-medium schools in Brussels, and particularly how these parents relate to these challenges.

A third concern with the quantitative study arose from the main research question, which focused on parents' motivations to enroll their children in a Dutch-speaking school. The question remained as to what happened afterwards, *after* the decision was made. What impact does 'having children in a Dutch-medium school in Brussels' have on the parents' language practices and repertoires? What impact does it have on their way of thinking about themselves and others? Some related issues were briefly touched upon in the questionnaire, such as the nature of the communication with other parents and with the school, but results were obviously based on reported practices and therefore merit caution.

As is often the case, the impetus for a qualitative approach partly follows from a frustration or worry about the lack of depth that is obtained through quantitative

research (Dörnyei, 2007). All of these considerations indeed led us to a qualitative approach that should enable us to map language practices and to question and qualify sociolinguistic categories, from an emic point of view. More precisely, we opted for a multiple case study approach (Dörnyei, 2007; Duff, 2008) that gathers different types of data with a limited number of parents from various backgrounds. This should allow us to take into account the complexity and fluidity of microlinguistic contexts, often overlooked in research on language policy, which typically, perhaps all too easily, assumes a macro-perspective (May, 2005). We wish to look at how people themselves describe themselves, in terms of language and identity, and at what these people ‘do’ with language.

#### *Research objectives*

On the basis of the considerations expounded above, we can now formulate the general research objectives that guided us in our investigation. First of all, we aimed to investigate how the parents themselves relate to a number of common sociolinguistic categories and labels used in policymaking, research, and general discourse on language and identity and (Dutch-medium education in) Brussels. Secondly, we wished to look into the language practices that these parents engage in and in what way these language practices do (or do not) fit in with the categories/labels used. And consequently, we wondered whether having a child in Dutch-medium education in Brussels would inform these parents’ language practices or the way they describe themselves.

Our general research objectives gradually gave way to more specific lines of inquiry as they emerged during the data gathering and analysis, something which is typical for a qualitative research design (see Chapter 2.1). These included looking at discourses related to the children’s future, which we grouped under the heading ‘imagining identities’, discourses related to the parents’ language ideologies, and we also adopted a stance perspective to one of the case studies.

#### *Outline of this dissertation*

We can now give a general outline of the remainder of this dissertation. In the next two chapters, we will provide more details on the methodological approach applied for this study (Chapter 2), as well as on the informants that participated in it (Chapter 3).

Our ensuing analyses will be grouped in three parts. Part I – chapters 4 and 5 – focuses on how our informants themselves identify with a number of sociolinguistic labels. Chapter 4 describes more general categorizations, whereas Chapter 5 zooms in on a possible identification with Brussels as a city identity.

Part II – chapters 6, 7 and 8 – investigates how these identity issues are dealt with in a number of discourse contexts that are relevant to the overall theme of the study: Chapter 6 looks into our parents-informants imagining future identity options for their children, Chapter 7 discusses the participants' language ideologies and in Chapter 8, we will offer a detailed analysis of one conversation in terms of stance, in order to illustrate how identity issues are negotiated at a micro-level. In Part III – chapters 9, 10 and 11 –, we turn to recordings of spoken interaction made by our informants. Finally, we will formulate the general conclusions of our study.

# CHAPTER 2

## APPROACH, DATA-COLLECTION AND DATA-PROCESSING

In the previous chapter, we set the general context of our study as well as the research questions that inform its central investigation.

In this chapter, we will:

- (1) discuss general methodological aspects with respect to our approach;
- (2) present an outline of the different phases of our data collection;
- (3) describe how the collected data were processed and analyzed.

### 2.1 GENERAL METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

#### *A qualitative approach*

The choice for a qualitative approach has implications both for the type of data collected and for the type of research design. Since we are interested in emic (participant-relevant, insider) representations of sociolinguistic identity as well as language practices, our study will necessarily engage with different types of data collection. Such a multiple method design allows for triangulation, which is believed to enhance the validity and reliability of a qualitative approach (Denzin, 1978; Dörnyei, 2007). Moreover, as a qualitative design is not fixed beforehand, it often changes as the study unfolds (Duff, 2012, p. 95). According to Maxwell (2005), a qualitative research design is best served by an interactive, emergent approach. The advantage is that it leaves space for flexibility and adaptability, much harder to attain in a large-scale quantitative study. The emergent nature of this type of research not only reveals itself in the categories that emerge from and within the informants' narratives, for instance, but also throughout the cyclical, iterative process of exchanges between data and theory.

#### *A multiple case study*

Qualitative research may refer to various types of data gathering. Dörnyei (2007) distinguishes ethnography, interviews, focus group interviews, introspective

methods, case studies and diary studies, though it can be argued whether all of these ‘methods’ can be placed at the same heuristic level. As we already mentioned in the preface, one of the purposes of our study is to qualify previous quantitative data (Van Mensel, 2007). We therefore opted for a multiple case study, with participants chosen according to the categories used in this previous study. According to Dörnyei (2007, p. 155),

The case study is an excellent method for obtaining a thick description of a complex social issue embedded within a cultural context. It offers rich and in-depth insights that no other method can yield, allowing researchers to examine how an intricate set of circumstances come together and interact in shaping the social world around us.

Typically, case studies involve a variety of data collection methods in order to maximize our understanding of the unitary character of the social being or object under investigation (cf. Duff, 2012).

In our study, five different cases were chosen to explore a more general phenomenon, i.e. having-children-in-Dutch-medium-education-in-Brussels. The cases were purposively chosen in order to ascertain in what ways a different background impacts (or not) on how these parents experience having-children-in-Dutch-medium-education-in-Brussels and in what way it influences the way they perceive themselves and others. Therefore, each of the cases has its own particular relevance for our research, although it shares a commonality with the other cases. This chimes with what Duff (2012, p. 105) says about the advantage of having several participants, namely that it “gives you more options [...] for noting similarities and differences across cases”.

#### *An ethnographic approach*

Though many similarities can be found between ethnography and most case study research, the approach is slightly different (Duff, 2008). For instance, case studies can contain quantitative data as well, or can be positivist, seeking an objective ‘truth’, two tenets that are rather inimical to the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of an ethnographic approach. Sociolinguistic ethnographies “allow us to see how language practices are connected to the very real conditions of people’s lives, to discover how and why language matters to people in their own terms, and to watch process unfold over time” (Heller, 2008, p. 250). They typically involve a variety of techniques, such as participant observation, interviewing, the researcher’s field notes and diary, in order to provide a ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973) of the study object under scrutiny. Blommaert (2007a),

however, in his commentary on a special issue of the *Journal of Sociolinguistics* dedicated to linguistic ethnography, warns us not to mix up ethnography with the type of data collection that is usually associated with it. He therefore distinguishes between a *method* and a *methodology*, and suggests that “ethnography, too, would best be seen as a general theoretical outlook, while things that are often (wrongly) metonymically seen as ‘ethnography’, such as fieldwork with participant observation and interviews, are just methods” (Blommaert, 2007a, p. 684). To Blommaert, then, ethnography refers to “a particular fundamental methodological position in the social sciences”, rather than a collection of methods. The basic tenets of this position are three-fold:

[Ethnography] describes the sometimes chaotic, contradictory, polymorph character of human behaviour in concrete settings, and it does so in a way that seeks to do justice to two things: (a) *the perspectives of participants* – the old Boasian and Malinowskian privilege of the ‘insiders’ view’; and (b) the ways in which *micro-events need to be understood as both unique and structured*, as combinations of variation and stability – the tension between phenomenology and structuralism in ethnography. While these two concerns are constant and define the long history of twentieth-century ethnography, a third one was added from the 1960s and 1970s onward in the work of Fabian, Bourdieu, Clifford and others: (c) *a concern for the situated and dialogical character of ethnographic knowledge itself* – reflexivity. (Blommaert, 2007a, p. 682, italics ours)

While it is more correct to regard the present study as a multiple case study, we subscribe to the three ethnographic methodological positionings mentioned by Blommaert.

#### *Ethical issues regarding the data collection*

In order to study language-in-interaction, one has to get as close as possible to language practices and thus to the social actors who perform them. Engaging with people, entering into their lives and taking back home traces of what they do and who they are, is potentially a symbolically intrusive act. Compared to other types of studies, the information gathered by a qualitative approach is far more personal, even private. Therefore, in this study the following precautions were taken:

- we asked the informants for their permission to record the conversations;
- we asked the informants for their permission to use the transcribed version of the recorded data in publications or for other scientific purposes;
- the purpose of the study and the informants’ contribution to it was

- explained prior to the beginning of the open interviews (mostly beforehand, if not at the beginning of the recording session);
- instead of their real names, pseudonyms are used throughout this book to refer to the informants, their children (only if they appear in the excerpts) or any other participants.<sup>17</sup>

## 2.2 DATA COLLECTION

In order to obtain information on (a) reported language use and language representations, complemented by (b) actual language practices, and (c) eventually return to the informants for feedback, we planned to collect data in three phases with five families, or Parental Nodes. Throughout this study we will use the term ‘Parental Node’ (often abbreviated as PN) to refer to the participating families. We chose not to use the term ‘family’, as our focus was on the parents as parents, and not on the entire family. Our terminological options were also limited in that one of our parental nodes actually consisted of a single-parent (PN C).

The *five Parental Nodes* are designated as PN A, PN B, PN C, PN D, PN E and are listed here:

<i>Parental node A</i>	Béatrice & Alain
<i>Parental node B</i>	An & Ricardo
<i>Parental node C</i>	Aisha
<i>Parental node D</i>	Hadise & Aydemir
<i>Parental node E</i>	Lieselot & Wim

The children of all participating parents go to the same school (the Josaphat school), and the parents were contacted by the researcher at the school. Arrangements to meet for an interview were made through email or telephone,

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<sup>17</sup> Apart from these concerns about ethical issues regarding the study as such, there is another source of concern, which is related to the outcome, interpretation, and re-entextualization of the research results, be it in the materialized form of a research report, or in the discourses that develop from it (in the media for instance). Even when researchers act as cautiously as possible, once the product of their work is published, the course it takes can only partly be controlled. This entails that the sayings and doings of the informants are - even if only because they contributed to our own words, ideas, and conclusions - eventually beyond the researcher’s control and subject to various types of re-interpretation which may eventually even be counter to the informants’ interests. Indeed, one could argue that that the work of scientists, particularly that of social scientists, can be and is sometimes instrumentalized, used, or abused, in order to fulfill other purposes (see, for instance, Scollon and Scollon (2007) on the work of a number of American anthropologists during the Second World War). In this respect, Shohamy (2004) reminds us that researchers must “follow the uses (and misuses) of their research results”.

and throughout the study contacts were maintained in the same manner. Details on the background of these parents as well as on the school will be given in Chapter 3.

The *three planned phases* can be briefly described as follows:

- *Phase I*: a semi-directed interview evolving around three main themes:
  1. the informants' language use:
    - linguistic background of the family;
    - trajectories of language learning and language use;
    - current language practices within the family;
  2. having children in a Dutch-medium school in Brussels;
  3. sociolinguistic affiliation.
- *Phase II*: a variable number of *in situ* recordings of language practices, during which the researcher is absent. These recordings would preferably register transitional (cf. also Lamarre & Lamarre, 2009), multi-local (Marcus, 1986) events or stretches of time.
- *Phase III*: feedback interviews, in which the researcher and participants jointly discuss previous findings.

Furthermore, some *complementary data* were collected that were not initially planned but were relevant to the research context. These were mostly conversations with the informants outside the specifically agreed upon discussions (Phase I, Phase III), such as a dinner table conversation or at occasions when the recording device was exchanged before or after Phase II. Also, two conversations took place with the principal of the school and these were recorded as well. Since the focus of this study is on the parents, the latter recordings will not be analyzed as such but used to complement our description of the school which the children attend (the Josaphat school, see Chapter 3.1). An overview of the collected data is given in Table 2.1.

	PN A	PN B	PN C	PN D	PN E	School Principal
Phase I	x	x	x	x	x	0
Phase II	x	x	0	0	x	0
Phase III	x	x	0	0	x	0
Complementary data	x	x	x	0	0	x

*Table 2.1 General overview of data collection (x = gathered)*

Two of the families, PN C and PN D, did not wish to participate in Phase II (nor Phase III consequently). Unfortunately, this type of setback is unavoidable in this type of qualitative data gathering (see a.o. Dörnyei, 2007; Blommaert & Jie, 2010). Of course, the refusal to participate as such is an interesting phenomenon, especially in light of the cultural background of the parents who participated and those who refused (see Chapter 3.2). The cultural distance between the researcher and the participants definitely may have been a factor. However, we will not give a detailed account of the circumstances of the refusal, because doing so would be ethically questionable and would not contribute to the main research questions of the present study anyway.

Finally, we should mention the researcher's so-called 'wider ethnographic knowledge' (Blommaert & Jie, 2010) about the parents who participate and about the school in which their children are enrolled. Prior to the beginning of this study, the researcher had known the Josaphat school for about four years as a parent himself. He had talked to teachers and other staff, become acquainted with other parents, and attended school events and parties – and had at times worked as a volunteer during such activities. No notes were taken during any of these previous encounters, however, and thus any information gathered this way would presently be based on recollection. Yet this knowledge unavoidably will have had an impact on various aspects of the study.

In what follows, we will describe the types and amount of data that were collected as well as some of the pertinent methodological concerns. Each of the three phases will be discussed under a separate heading, as will the range of complementary data.

### 2.2.1 Phase I

Phase I of the data collection consisted of open-ended interviews. The interviews were conducted between July and December 2010 in varieties of Dutch, French, and Spanish.<sup>18</sup> Most of the conversations took place in the informants' respective homes. Table 2.2 enumerates the number of recordings and the total amount of recording time per PN (see Appendix A for details).

<i>PN A</i>	3 recordings	1:57:39
<i>PN B</i>	2 recordings	54:14
<i>PN C</i>	1 recording	1:16:04
<i>PN D</i>	1 recording	1:56:10
<i>PN E</i>	1 recording	1:16:43
<i>Total</i>	8 recordings	7:20:50

*Table 2.2 Total recording time Phase I*

Interviews have been widely used as a form of qualitative data inquiry within the social sciences. They can be considered a form of social practice, in which an interviewer and an interviewee perform certain roles within a specific discourse setting. The outcome of the interview is then seen as a result of an interactionally co-constructed dynamics based on social relationships, with issues of power equally at play as in any other social practice (Pavlenko, 2007; Blanchet & Gotman, 2010; Talmy & Richards, 2011; Duff, 2012). Note that this does not mean that power lies solely with the interviewer. The informant-interviewee can still construct, highlight or censure, order, and re-entextualize his or her story; or in other words, they can still decide what to tell and how to tell it (Thamin, 2009; Blanchet & Gotman, 2010).

### 2.2.2 Phase II

The data for this second dataset consists of a number of audio fragments recorded by the informants themselves in various settings and circumstances, and

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<sup>18</sup> The researcher is a native speaker of Dutch, and may generally be said to master both other languages enough to maintain what is perceived by the interlocutors as a native-like conversation. The ability to alternate with relative fluency between these languages and to be perceived as a valid interlocutor to the informants in their respective languages was definitely an advantage during the data collection and analysis.

were collected between November 2010 and September 2012. The aim was to collect the informants' language practices in their natural environments. We requested participants to record short instances of language interaction, preferably during 'transitional' events such as when dropping off or picking up their children from school, although they could determine the actual moments of the recordings themselves. As a result, most recordings were indeed transitional, but some materials were recorded at home. We were interested in recording transitional moments because specific settings often elicit different types of language practices; only by observing linguistic practices *across* settings can we achieve a fuller picture of our participants' language practices. Furthermore, we may also have expected to find a certain level of linguistic creativity in these transitional moments, with language practitioners more likely to negotiate their linguistic identities as they move across multiple sites and contexts (cf. Lamarre & Lamarre, 2009).

Table 2.3 presents an overview of the number of recordings and the total amount of recording time per PN (see Appendix A for details).

<i>PN A</i>	7 recordings	1:33:40
<i>PN B</i>	10 recordings	1:04:59
<i>PN E</i>	6 recordings	51:41
<i>Total</i>	23 recordings	3:30:20

*Table 2.3 Total recording time Phase II*

The absence of the researcher aims at bypassing the 'researcher's bias', in order to obtain so-called 'ecological data' (Heller, 2002), i.e. as they would occur in 'natural' circumstances. However, whether the absence of the researcher as such suffices to neutralize the influence of an 'external observer' remains doubtful. Possible objections to this supposed neutrality, partly based on our own experiences, include the following:

- (1) Even if most people tend to forget about the recording device shortly after it has been switched on, merely having the device at home, and having to remember to turn it on, and carry it around might have an effect on the interactions that take place.
- (2) The researcher is perceived as present through the material presence of the recording device. The following excerpts (Phase II, PN B) illustrate this phenomenon, as one of the daughters actively engages in a sort of 'conversation' with the recorder, specifically indexing the link between the

device and the researcher.

daughter - de papa van Wally hoort da

*daughter - Wally's daddy hears this*

(II-B-0026-00:15) Wally = name of the researcher's son

daughter - oye papa de Wally. me oyes? me oyes, papa de Wally?

*daughter – hey Wally's daddy. can you hear me? can you hear me, Wally's daddy?*

(II-B-0023-1:45)

- (3) Participants may remain aware of the fact that they are participating in a study and may wish to 'do well', which could imply that their recorded behavior is different from their normal behavior. For instance, later in the same excerpt (II-B-0023), the daughter is reprimanded by her mother for playing with the device. This possibly shows her mother's wish to do a 'good job' at the task that she promised the researcher to do, and it certainly indicates her mother's awareness of being part of a study. Alternatively, it might be nothing more than a mother teaching her daughter not to shout in microphones.
- (4) On more philosophical (and political) grounds, the issue of 'naturalness' and 'authenticity', in this case of spoken language data, is a problematic one, since it presupposes the existence of non-natural or non-authentic material (see also O'Rourke & Pitt, 2007; Speer & Hutchby, 2003).

It is therefore worthwhile to keep these objections in mind when analyzing these data.

With respect to the recordings in Phase II, the safeguarding of the participants' anonymity is slightly more difficult than during the interviews. On these informant recordings, other people may be heard in conversation with the informant him/herself. The most ethical way of dealing with these instances would be to discard them, since no permission has been asked from these (mostly unaware) interlocutors. Our policy in this matter is the following: we do not use these data as verbatim for any of the analyses, but the actor's function in the conversation as well as the language variety spoken by him/her is noted, and this only when relevant to the analysis at hand. Thus, for instance, a conversation

between Alain (PN A) and his daughter’s music teacher is reported as follows:

Alain – ((@ Emma:)) hoe was het Emma? ja? ((@ teacher:)) ça a été?

Music Teacher – ((in French))

Alain - ouais ouais et . elle traduit pas euh

*Alain – ((@ Emma in Dutch:)) how was it Emma? yes? ((@ teacher in French:)) how was it?*

*Music Teacher – ((in French))*

*Alain – yeah yeah and . she doesn’t translate euh*

(II-A-A008-1:38)

### 2.2.3 Phase III

The third data collection consists of a number of feedback interviews, held between September 2012 and August 2013, in which the researcher and the informants jointly discuss the research findings from Phase I and Phase II, allowing the informants to possibly correct and re-entextualize the intermediate research findings. They were recorded at the respective homes of the families in varieties of Dutch, French, and Spanish. Table 2.4 presents an overview of the total amount of recording time per PN (see Appendix A for details).

<i>PN A</i>	1 recording	51:22
<i>PN B</i>	1 recording	1:00:44
<i>PN E</i>	1 recording	45:16
<i>Total</i>	3 recordings	2:37:22

*Table 2.4 Total recording time Phase III*

### 2.2.4 Complementary data

As mentioned above, we also recorded a number of complementary data at various moments during the course of this study. Although not initially planned, we consider these data to be relevant because they complement our knowledge of the research context and as such add to our investigation. They were recorded at

various locations in varieties of French, Dutch, English and Spanish. Table 2.5 presents an overview of these data (see Appendix A for details).

<i>PN A</i>	3 recordings	1:20:26
<i>PN B</i>	2 recordings	44:49
<i>PN C</i>	1 recording	1:00:42
<i>School Principal</i>	3 recordings	2:15:39
<i>Total</i>	9 recordings	5:21:36

*Table 2.5 Total recording time complementary data*

## 2.3 DATA-PROCESSING AND DATA-ANALYSIS

### 2.3.1 Data-processing and transcriptions

The data were recorded using digital audio recorders and subsequently transcribed using TranscriberAG or Praat, and then converted into word processor readable files with Transformer.<sup>19</sup> Most of the transcripts were carried out by the researcher (see Appendix A for details). The painstakingly rendered raw transcripts (see Appendix B) were later transformed to a more reader-friendly version. In this process we were generally guided by two concerns: to provide as faithful a rendition as possible of the interactions recorded, but to ensure the transcriptions' readability at the same time. Commas (and the occasional period mark) have therefore been added both to the transcripts and their translations. To guarantee readability, we also made a decision to render spoken word forms into standard written forms, except for when these spoken forms were relevant to the research objectives. So for instance, in French 'pasque' was rendered as 'parce que', or 'kweetetnie' in Dutch was transcribed as 'ik weet het niet'. However, if the use of a non-standard spoken variety by one of the participants was somehow revelatory of their language practices, then we did transcribe it as heard. This was particularly the case for the data collected in Phase II, i.e. the recorded interactions discussed in Part III.

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<sup>19</sup> These applications are all freeware (URL Praat: [praat.org](http://praat.org), URL TranscriberAG: [transag.sourceforge.net](http://transag.sourceforge.net), URL Transformer: [www.oliverrehmer.de/transformer](http://www.oliverrehmer.de/transformer); last accessed: September 3, 2013).

### *Transcription conventions*

The following conventions were used when transcribing the recorded data:

((words))	Double parentheses enclose transcriber's comments.
<laugh>	Angle brackets enclose descriptions of vocal noises (e.g. laughter, chuckle, inhale) or other noises on the recording that are relevant for the analysis (e.g. hands clapping)
words [words] [words]	Square brackets enclose simultaneous talk.
xx	x's indicate strings of talk for which no hearing could be achieved.
( )	Single brackets enclose possible alternative hearings.
CAPS	Capitals indicate emphatic stress.
?	A question mark indicates a relatively strong rising intonation (interrogative).
!	An exclamation mark indicates rising intonation (exclamatory).
. ..	Dots indicate silence (more dots indicate a longer silence).
@ name	An at sign followed by a name indicates to whom the utterance is directed.

In this manuscript, the various excerpts or paraphrases will be referred to with a combined code (x-x-xxxx-x:xx) which should be read as follows:

- the first code refers to the Phase in which the data were gathered
  - I: Phase I
  - II: Phase II
  - III: Phase III
  - C: Complementary data
- the second code refers to the informants
  - A: Parental Node A
  - B: Parental Node B
  - C: Parental Node C
  - D: Parental Node D
  - E: Parental Node E
  - P: Principal
- the third code refers to the sound and transcription files. Two different

codes were used, due to the use of two audio recording devices

- numbers consisting out of 4 digits, e.g. 0010 add “WS57”, the sound file is “WS570010”
- numbers consisting out of 1 letter and 3 digits, e.g. A010 add “DVT\_”, the sound file is “DVT\_A010”
- the fourth code refers to point in the sound/transcription file at which the excerpt starts
  - e.g. 24:12 or 24 minutes 12 seconds from the beginning of the recording

So, for instance, if an excerpt is tagged (I-C-0017-39:08), it is part of the interview (Phase I) with Aisha (PN C), recorded in sound file WS570017, and starting at 39 minutes and 8 seconds from the beginning of the recording.

### 2.3.2 Data analysis

For our research purposes, discourse analysis obviously appears as a prime entry point for the data analysis. Discourse analysis is defined as a method of closely examining language in order to connect the micro-dynamics of language-in-use with the macro-dynamics of culture and society (Gee, 2010). Our analytic approach is *empirical* and based on *interactional data*. These data were transcribed and the resulting transcripts, or *interactional texts* (Silverstein, 1992), serve as the materials for the actual analysis. The two bodies of data that provide the basis of our analysis are the interviews (Phase I) and the in situ recordings (Phase II), and these recordings were fully transcribed. Both the data collected in Phase III and the complementary data are mainly used for additional exemplification. Therefore, instead of transcribing these latter recordings, we made a *précis* of them, which allowed us to quickly survey the data and select any relevant fragments (cf. also Blommaert & Jie, 2010).

#### *Analysis of the interviews*

We applied a reflexive and cyclical process of analysis, aimed at uncovering particular themes as they emerge in the informants’ discourse. Such *thematic analysis* allows the researcher to uncover recurrent motifs in the participants’ stories and focus on the themes that are important to them (cf. Pavlenko, 2007; Talmy, 2010; Duff, 2012). In our study, this analysis implied multiple readings of the transcripts with, subsequently, multiple layers of annotation (see Appendix B). When systematically scanning the transcripts of the interviews, we looked specifically at instances in which the informants expressed themselves in terms of

identity positioning (both self- and other-positioning), imagining (of future identities), and language ideologies (for an example, see Appendix B). After identifying the key themes as they emerged in our informants' accounts, single excerpts were isolated to exemplify our findings.

Note that when analyzing the content of the informants' accounts, we also paid attention to the form in which the content was presented. Pavlenko (2007, 2008), for instance, rightly argues that context, content, and form cannot be separated when discussing personal narratives, and that "researchers interested in the content need to take into consideration the context and the form of the telling" (Pavlenko, 2007, p. 180).

#### *Analysis of the in situ recordings*

The transcripts of the recordings that the informants made were analyzed somewhat differently. Since the researcher was not present during the recordings, an obvious first step in the analysis consisted of familiarizing ourselves with the data through repeated listening. Next, we scanned the recordings for stretches of interaction containing empirical evidence that would confirm or disconfirm the informants' assertions on their language use as collected during Phase I, as well as our interpretations of these data (cf. Gumperz, 2001). We also paid specific attention to what happened in terms of language practices when the informants moved from one place to another (cf. Lamarre & Lamarre, 2009).

# CHAPTER 3

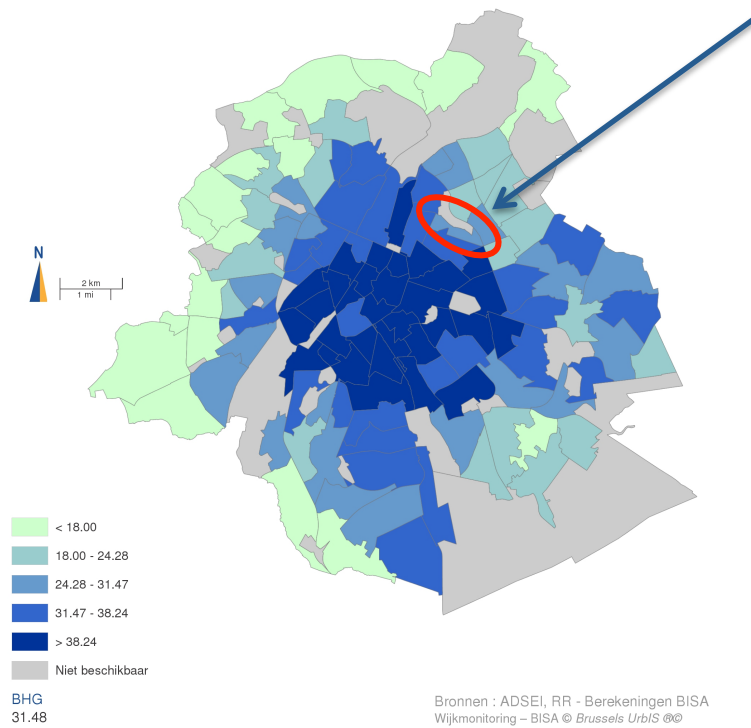
## INFORMANTS AND IMMEDIATE RESEARCH CONTEXT: THE PARENTS AND THE SCHOOL

### 3.1 THE JOSAPHAT SCHOOL AND ITS NEIGHBORHOOD

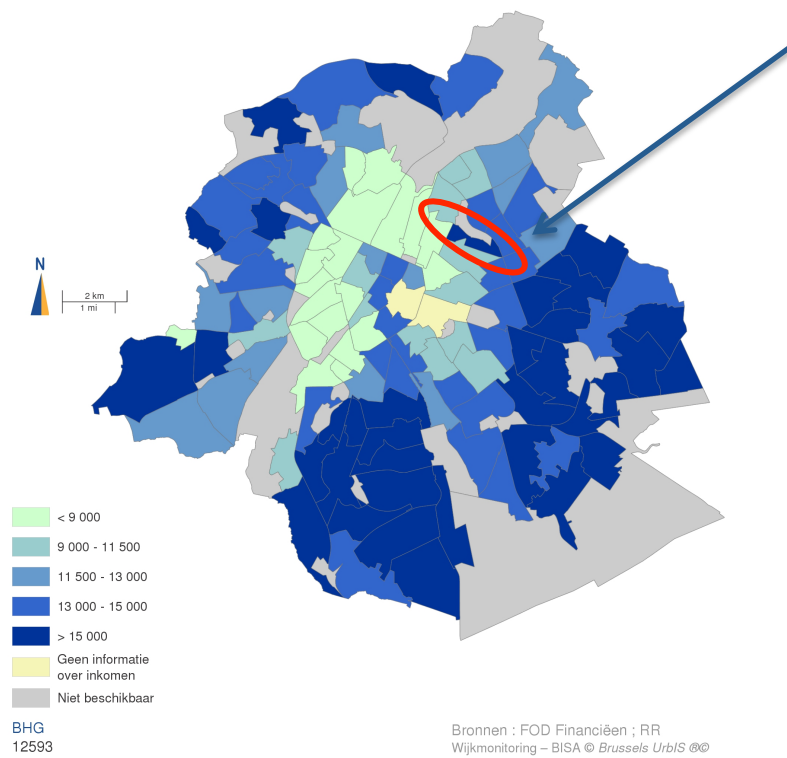
Since all of our parents have children in the Josaphat school, we deem it useful to provide some information on the school and its neighborhood. After all, it is this particular school (environment) that represents 'Dutch-medium education' for the informants; as such, it is likely to have an influence on what the informants conceptualize as Dutch-medium education.

#### *The Josaphat neighborhood*

The Josaphat school is located in a rather quiet, residential neighborhood with a mixed population in terms of its ethnic, social, economic, and presumably also linguistic background. Furthermore, it is situated at the junction of two 'socio-demographic' boundaries within the city. The first boundary (see Map 3.1) can be traced between the areas housing a large number of foreigners and the areas housing fewer; the second boundary (see Map 3.2) between the poorer, inner-city areas and the richer ones that are situated further away from the city center. This location, between rich and poor on the one hand, and in an ethnically heterogeneous area on the other hand, was one of the reasons why this particular school seemed apt for our study, since we wished to investigate a setting in which individuals that are mostly categorized in different macro-social groups live together on a daily basis and meet to varying degrees.



Map 3.1 Number of foreigners in Brussels per neighborhood (in %, 2011, BISA/IBSA).



Map 3.2 Average revenue per inhabitant in Brussels per neighborhood (in euros, 2010, BISA/IBSA)

The Josaphat neighborhood is situated in the middle of Schaerbeek (in Dutch Schaarbeek), one of the 19 *communes* (boroughs) that constitute the Brussels Capital Region. The *commune* is highly diverse, as can be seen on Maps 3.1 and 3.2. To illustrate this diversity, Table 3.1 breaks down the figures of nationality represented in Map 3.1 according to the origins of the foreign inhabitants and compares these figures for the Brussels Capital Region, Schaerbeek, and the Josaphat neighborhood. Note that these figures underrepresent the demographic diversity, as many citizens with a non-Belgian background – and notably immigrants from Morocco and their children and grandchildren (Deboosere et al., 2009) – have obtained Belgian nationality. Almost a third (30.85%) of the Josaphat neighborhood’s residents have a foreign nationality, which is concurrent with the average for the whole of the Brussels Capital Region, and slightly lower than the average for the town of Schaerbeek. The larger part of these foreign nationals (15.51% + 5.94%) are EU citizens. Two groups that have an important representation in Schaerbeek, nationals from Northern African countries and Turkey, are somewhat less present in this specific neighborhood.

<i>Nationalities in % (2011, IBSA/BISA)</i>	<i>Brussels Capital Region</i>	<i>Schaerbeek</i>	<i>Josaphat school neighborhood</i>
EU (15)	14.74	10.64	15.51
‘recent’ EU (2004, 2007 & 2013)	5.06	6.95	5.94
OESO (except EU & Turkey)	0.87	0.37	0.65
Northern Africa	4.07	5.38	2.24
Turkey	0.89	3.29	1.48
Rest of Africa	2.20	2.54	1.74
Other nationalities	3.66	3.99	3.28
Total foreigners	31.84	33.16	30.85

*Table 3.1 Number of foreign nationals (in % of total population) in Brussels, Schaerbeek, and the Josaphat neighborhood (2011, IBSA/BISA)*

### *The Josaphat school*

The Josaphat school (Picture 3.1) is a relatively small school, with 210 pupils in 2010-2011, divided over 10 years (including a transitional class before kindergarten). It has two sections, a pre-school section (ages 2,5 to 5) and a primary school section (ages 6 to 12). It is dependent on the Annunciates monastic sister order as its organizing body. The fact that it is small is partly due

to a lack of space in the existing building as well as on the premises behind. The school building and premises are surrounded by houses on all sides, which makes expansion impossible. At the same time, this does serve its image of being a neighborhood school, firmly located within a residential area rather than on the edge of it. Both factors, its reduced size and location at the heart of the neighborhood, clearly contribute to the success of the school.



*Picture 3.1 Historical picture of the Josaphat school (Date unknown. Retrieved from [www.irismonument.be](http://www.irismonument.be), November 22, 2013)*

The Josaphat school shares playground space with the adjacent day-care center, which used to be part of the same educational institution, but because of the official policy to separate childcare in the strict sense (until 2,5 years of age) and child education, they are no longer linked at the institutional level. However, the connection between both remains strong, and it is still the Josaphat school's main feeder day-care center.

Furthermore, the Dutch-medium school is housed next to a French-medium school. Its adjacent gardens are separated by a wall, and mutually accessible through a single door. Parents, children and teachers refer to it as the "*French school*" ("Franse school"). According to the Principal of the Josaphat school (C-P-A080-50:15), the relationship between both schools is good and they help each other as far as practical matters are concerned (e.g. using the other school's facilities for parties or happenings), but there is no real collaboration in terms of educational programs or language exchanges, for instance. The fact that the Josaphat school resorts under the Flemish Community and the neighboring French-medium school under the French Community is not likely to facilitate such types of collaboration.

The composition of the school's population in terms of the categories previously applied to the neighborhood population (in Table 3.1) is harder to establish. The only estimates we have are from the reported home languages collected each year by the principal. These figures for the year 2010-2011, as communicated by the school's principal, are given in Table 3.2. These data should be regarded with caution, but if we compare them to the averages available for Dutch-medium education in Brussels in general (see Figure 1.1 above), the relatively large number of pupils of which both parents proclaim to speak mainly Dutch at home is notable. Moreover, over half of the children have at least one parent claiming to speak Dutch as a first language at the moment of enrollment.

<i>Reported home languages</i>	<i>Josaphat school (n=132 families)</i>	<i>Dutch-medium primary education in Brussels (n=14850 pupils)</i>
Dutch-Dutch	35.3%	9.9%
Dutch-Other/French	24.87%	24.7%
French-French	18.27%	29.9%
French-other	16.75%	
Other-other	5.08%	35.5%

*Table 3.2 Reported home languages in the Josaphat school (in %, n=132 families, 2010-2011), compared to Dutch-medium education in Brussels (cf. Figure 1.1). "Other" refers to "Other languages than Dutch or French", as reported by the Josaphat school principal*

If Dutch-medium education in Brussels in general has a good reputation, the Josaphat school is a particularly popular one. Before the switch to an Internet enrollment procedure (in 2010) for all Dutch-medium schools in Brussels, parents used to camp out in front of the school entrance before enrollment to make sure their children would be admitted. This queuing outside the school gates happened for the first time in 2005 as a result of a change to the admission procedures, and gradually necessitated a stronger degree of parental commitment, with parents camping outside the school for almost a full week in 2009. Since then, the continued popularity of the school is reflected in the enrollment waiting lists. In May 2011 for instance, over 120 children were on the waiting list for the next school year (2011-2012), a number exceeding half of the school's capacity.

A variety of reasons can be proposed to account for the school's success. As mentioned before, it is a small, neighborhood school, with a maximum of two

classes per age group.<sup>20</sup> Another characteristic generally perceived to be an asset is the (previously discussed, see Table 3.2) fact that, compared to Dutch-medium education in Brussels in general, the Josaphat school still counts a large number of pupils from Dutch-speaking families. In the eyes of many, this is supposed to ensure decent standards of language education. Another index marking the Josaphat school is its so-called GOK profile. GOK stands for ‘Gelijke OnderwijsKansen’ or ‘Equal educational rights’ and is a positive discrimination program financed by the Flemish government, which allocates a number of extra teaching hours to the schools in question, to counter learning and teaching difficulties that are related to the school’s population. Importantly, there is government funding involved. A number of parameters are used to gauge the relative necessity for these extra hours in each school. In terms of the educational profile of the mothers, which is one of the parameters, the Josaphat school clearly exceeds the Brussels’ average. This may partially explain why it is perceived as a ‘good school’, with the number of pupils from a home situation considered ‘precarious’ being slightly below the average for Dutch-medium education in Brussels. In terms of its pupils’ home languages, a second parameter, the linguistic variety of its population is obvious and corroborates with the figures presented in Table 3.2. However, one should bear in mind that these numbers are based on information that is passed on to the official departments by the school board, and thus partly subject to their impressionistic evaluation of the pupils’ home situations.

When the author discussed the school’s success with the principal (C-P-0011), she expressed a concern about the school’s population becoming too divided between families with a markedly higher socioeconomic profile on the one hand and families that are much less affluent on the other hand. Her impression was that the ‘middle ground’ was disappearing, and she regretted this, fearing the present “good mix” might vanish.

A last point that should be mentioned here is the school’s language policy. Even if the pupils, the parents and the neighborhood display a considerable degree of language heterogeneity, language use on the Josaphat school premises is officially more restricted. Parents are required to sign a school policy document (“Schoolreglement”), which includes a clause proclaiming the (Dutch) monolingualism of the school. Under the heading ‘Language policy’ (“Taalbeleid”), the first sentence reads as follows: “You chose a Dutch-medium

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<sup>20</sup> In an informal setting (June 24, 2011 - no recording), another parent described the school as a “*small, cozy, catholic neighborhood school*” (“een klein, gezellig, katholiek buurtschooltje”) to the author.

school. We are happy about this. However, this choice requires from the ‘otherlinguals’ (“anderstaligen”) among you a substantial commitment and a consistent adherence to the language rules.” (Appendix C, our translation). More specifically, the document stipulates that only Dutch should be spoken: (1) at school, during all activities except foreign language classes; (2) during trips or excursions organized by the school; (3) in all communication between the school and the parents. Moreover, in a fourth point ‘mixed language’ (“taalgemengde”) and ‘otherlingual’ (“anderstalige”) families are formally asked to actively engage in Dutch language leisure activities, which includes seeking out Dutch language books, TV programs and extra-curricular activities. However, de facto French (or English) is used in oral communication with parents when necessary and French and other languages are heard commonly among parents on the school premises. In sum, because of the socially and linguistically varied composition of the school and its neighborhood, we deem it to be a fitting catchment area for our study. In the following section, we will zoom in on the five parental nodes who will take center stage in the rest of the document.

## 3.2 THE PARTICIPATING PARENTS

In this section, we will introduce the parents and families that have participated in the study and agreed to act as informants. The five parental nodes are listed here for the reader's convenience.

<i>PN A</i>	Béatrice & Alain
<i>PN B</i>	An & Ricardo
<i>PN C</i>	Aisha
<i>PN D</i>	Hadise & Aydemir
<i>PN E</i>	Lieselot & Wim

We will present their profiles in terms of the following guiding themes:

- (1) general presentation: names, age (at the time of recording), number and age of the children, where they live;
- (2) linguistic background of the family;
- (3) history of language learning and language use;
- (4) current language use within the family;
- (5) their choice for Dutch-medium education.

Although it is not our intention in this section to analyze language ideologies and beliefs, we would like to remind the reader that all information given here is based on what the informants have told during the interviews (Phase I), and perhaps to a small extent on ethnographic knowledge that may have been gathered by the researcher prior to and during the study. What is said in the following paragraphs thus represents the way the informants themselves make sense of, for instance, their family's language history. Their stories may therefore already indicate language ideological positionings in terms of what they believe is to be considered a language, what is language use, etc. Examples are the fact that Béatrice mentions her grandmother speaking "Brusseleir", which she describes as a mix of French and Dutch (I-A-0010b-18:23), or Lieselot who distinguishes the vernacular she spoke with her parents (West Flemish) from a Dutch standard language (I-E-D009-17:25). These issues will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

### 3.2.1 Parental node A: Béatrice & Alain

The first couple is Alain (38) and Béatrice (40). Both were born and raised in Brussels in a largely French-speaking environment. They have two children: a

daughter (7), who is in her first year of primary school, and a son (4,5), in the second year of kindergarten. They live in the Josaphat neighborhood, and very close to the school. Béatrice is the Belgian vice-director of an internationally renowned French publishing house and Alain works as a collaborator on a university research project related to ecological issues.

When looking at the *linguistic background of the family*, it is clear that French has been present in all of the represented generations, and dominant most of the time. On the other hand, some traces of Dutch can be found in the family history of both Alain and Béatrice. Whereas Béatrice's father and grandparents on her father's side are “Bruxellois” (inhabitants of Brussels) and monolingual French-speakers, her mother and grandmother are what she calls 'bilingual Brusselers', who ‘started their phrases in French and ended them in Dutch’:

### Excerpt 3.1

Béatrice	et donc elle commençait ses phrases en français, elle terminait en néerlandais, mais c'était du brusseleir, tu vois, c'était une espèce de mélange	<i>and so she started her phrases in French, she ended in Dutch, but it was Brusseleir ((Brussels' dialect)), you see, it was a kind of mix</i>
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(I-A-0010-18:23)

Alain's mother is originally from Liège (Wallonia) and speaks only French, as did her parents. His father, on the other hand, was born in Flanders. As a part of the French-speaking Flemish bourgeoisie, he spoke both (a dialectal variety of) Dutch and French at home. Alain's father went to school in French, and then moved with his parents to Wallonia, where no Flemish was needed or heard at all.

Alain and Béatrice's *histories of language learning* can be described as follows. As a child, Alain grew up and lived in the Brussels' municipality Sint-Pieters-Woluwe/Woluwé-St.-Pierre. He went to a French-medium school and had Dutch and English foreign language classes. According to Alain, the quality of these classes was insufficient, as he was able to speak neither Dutch nor English after finishing secondary school, according to his own claims. He learned to speak English at the age of 20, when he spent seven months in a kibbutz interacting with an international crowd. His trajectory of learning Dutch is mostly linked to his professional trajectory. From his thirties onwards, and due to a career move, he started having more extensive contacts with Dutch-speaking colleagues at work. This encouraged him to make an effort and speak their language as much as possible. Within this environment, he followed a week of intensive training, and at times had to speak to the press in Dutch. Around the same period, he started

meeting other Dutch-speakers at the Josaphat nursery and school, which enabled him to practice Dutch outside his working environment.

Béatrice's story is a similar one in the sense that she grew up in a (near-) monolingual environment. French was the language spoken at home. At school, she also spoke mostly French but English and Dutch were taught as a foreign language. On the other hand, she says she did hear some Dutch when she was a child, since her mother and grandmother were bilingual bruxellois. Moreover, in the neighborhood where she spent her childhood, many older people spoke 'Brusseleir', the Brussels' dialect which Béatrice describes as a mixture of French and Dutch. After finishing secondary school, she decided to improve her knowledge of Dutch and English through following an intensive language course (ten hours a week) for a whole year. Her feelings about this course, now, are mixed, in that she is disappointed that it has not resulted in a mastery of these languages for life. She then enrolled in higher education at a French-speaking university and afterwards started working in a dominantly French-speaking environment (the head office of her company being located in Paris). Furthermore, Béatrice has to use English (or rather as she prefers to put it, 'Globish') relatively often for her work, albeit in a written form (e.g. e-mails, contracts) or spoken when at international business meetings or book fairs. Finally, Béatrice hears (and to some extent uses) Dutch in the context of the school and her children.

French is the *language commonly spoken at home*, as well as with relatives and most of their friends. The children speak French with each other as well, though the daughter sometimes uses Dutch when playing by herself. Every day, the children watch a television show in Dutch for about 15 to 30 minutes, in order for them to improve their vocabulary. Dutch is also spoken to a certain extent when they are with Dutch-speaking friends at home or elsewhere, be it adults or children. The family likes to watch movies and popular American television series in the original version with French subtitles, which in practice means that there is a regular passive input of English.

According to Alain and Béatrice, they 'accidentally' ended up sending their children to a *Dutch-medium school*. For practical and ecological reasons, they wanted a nursery nearby and apparently the Dutch-speaking one in the neighborhood left a far better impression on them than the Francophone one (I-A-0010-12:25). A concern for their daughter to feel comfortable around her friends, the quality of education, as well as a certain impetus to continue with Dutch, led them to continue in Dutch-medium education.

### 3.2.2 Parental node B: An & Ricardo

An (35) and Ricardo (36) met in Salamanca (Spain) in 1995, where she was a study abroad student on an ‘Erasmus’ European exchange program. They have three daughters, aged 6, 4, and 2 at the time of the recordings. They are Alain and Béatrice’s (PN A) near-neighbors, as they live on the same street, and just a two-minute walk from the school. Both have a law degree and work as lawyers, for the European Commission and a private company respectively.

When we look at the *linguistic backgrounds* of An and Ricardo’s families, they both seem exclusively ‘monolingual’ in nature. Ricardo grew up in Valladolid, Spain, in a Spanish-speaking environment. An is from Bruges, in the Flemish part of Belgium, where she spoke a dialectal variety of Dutch at home. *In their present home*, they claim to follow the ‘one parent – one language’ principle, since An uses Dutch with the children and Ricardo Spanish. They have spoken Spanish to each other from the very beginning of their relationship, and continue to do so until the present day. The children speak Dutch with each other and their mother, and are supposed to communicate with their father in Spanish, although they are said to respond in Dutch at times, “when they are tired or lazy”:

#### Excerpt 3.2

An	en ik zie de kinderen ook, . euh, als ze moe zijn of als ze lui zijn . antwoorden ze gewoon in de taal dat zij willen, dus, als Ricardo hen iets vraagt in 't Spaans, antwoorden ze soms in 't Nederlands, omdat ze zo lui zijn of moe . of, en dat ze heel goed weten dat Ricardo het eigenlijk wel verstaat.	<i>and I notice the children as well, . euh, when they are tired or lazy . they just answer in the language they want, so, when Ricardo asks them something in Spanish, they sometimes answer in Dutch, because they're so lazy or tired . or, and because they know very well that Ricardo does understand it.</i>
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(I-B-0006-9:11)

Both parents have a *history of language learning and language use* that is strongly linked to their professional careers. An also mentions that she was encouraged by her parents to meet with French-speaking friends when she was younger. This enabled her to obtain a greater competence in French than her school friends, whose French she calls ‘dreadful’ (“erbarmelijk”):

### Excerpt 3.3

An            en ik heb zelf van thuis uit ook            *and at home, I have always been pushed to,*  
altijd gepusht geweest om, allez ja,            *you know, go and visit . French friends*  
bij . Franse vrienden te gaan vanaf            *from a young age onwards and, you know,*  
dat ik klein was en, allez ja, dus, ik            *so, I think that it really contributes because*  
denk dat dat echt wel mee bijdraagt            *you, when I saw . the others who finished*  
omdat je, als ik zag . diegenen die in            *high school with me they . their French was*  
't zesde middelbaar met mij            *really dreadful, right. they, you finish high*  
afstuderen die . hun Frans was echt            *school but you can't . make a sentence,*  
erbarmelijk, hé. die, ge studeert af            *yeah, you can't talk, nothing, right . well or*  
maar ge kunt geen . geen zin maken,            *. you can't speak, you can't speak it, quoi*  
ja, ge kunt niet praten, niks hé . allez            *((interj.))*  
ja of . ge kunt niet praten, ge kunt  
niet praten, quoi

(I-B-0005-13:30)

After finishing her studies in Belgium, An went to Madrid where she lived with Ricardo and worked for a couple of years, before moving back to Belgium. With hindsight, her stay in Madrid has had a great impact on her linguistic repertoire, as she has continuously used Spanish from then onwards, first at work and at home, and later on mainly with her husband. Depending on where she has worked in Belgium afterwards, the most dominant language in the workplace has been English or French. Due to the specific nature of her work as a lawyer, she also had to acquire writing skills in Spanish, French, and English, though mostly in very specific registers.

Ricardo explicitly calls himself a monolingual (Spanish) and a bad speaker of any other languages, referring to French and English, and to a lesser extent to Dutch (see excerpt 3.4). According to An, her husband's knowledge of Dutch is passive, since she mentions the girls addressing their father in Dutch knowing or assuming he understands.

### Excerpt 3.4

Ricardo        soy monolingüe y y hablo, el resto            *I'm a monolingual and and I speak, other*  
de los idiomas, mal. en fin, mal. el            *languages, badly. well, badly, English, I*  
inglés, hablo el inglés como un            *speak English like a foreigner, I speak*  
extranjero, hablo el francés como            *French like a foreigner, and I speak, I*  
un extranjero, y hablo, y hablo el            *speak Dutch like a Moroccan, I know.*  
holandés como un marroquí, ya sé.

(I-B-0006-19:34)

An and Ricardo mention a variety of reasons with regard to *their opting for a Dutch-medium school* - and the Josaphat school in particular - for their girls. They invoke the better reputation of Dutch-medium schools as opposed to French-medium schools in Brussels in general, as well as their desire to offer their children a

formal education in one of the home languages. The proximity of the Josaphat school was a welcome bonus. In comparison to most of the other families, their choice seems to have been a rather deliberate and considered one, and it is continually (re-)evaluated. A third option could be to enroll their daughters in a European school, to which they have access through Ricardo's status as a civil servant for the European Commission. For now, this option is discarded because of the commuter distance and the absence of a bilingual Spanish-Dutch section, but it may become a genuine possibility in the future.

### 3.2.3 Parental node C: Aisha

Aisha (42) is the mother of five children (aged between 8 and 22), and the only single parent among the informants. She was born in the Northern Moroccan Rif area but came to Belgium when she was still a baby (10 months old) and has lived and worked her whole life in Brussels. Married at the age of seventeen, she had her first daughter when she was twenty. She lives with her children in a house in an immigrant neighborhood, situated further away from the school than the first two families described above, though still at walking distance. She works as a seamstress.

The *linguistic background* of Aisha's family was reportedly monolingual Berber until her generation; the migration process entailed various degrees of multilingualism for herself and her children. A recurrent theme in her account is the importance of giving oneself the best possible odds ("mettre les chances de son côté" I-C-0017-31:35). She frames her *history of language learning* within this same idea. As a child, Aisha spoke Berber at home with her parents, as well as with relatives and neighbors who originally came from the same region in Morocco. Both her parents are illiterate and speak only limited French, so she often had to act as interpreter or translator between her parents and outsiders, for instance neighbors or teachers. She and her brothers and sisters went to school in French, and had foreign language courses of Dutch in secondary school, though she considered these to be insufficient for her needs. Aisha learned Moroccan Arabic at work, from colleagues originally from other regions in Morocco, and finds opportunities to use it with in-law relatives. She also attended Dutch classes for a short period.

The language most spoken *at home* now is French. She reports that she also sometimes uses words or expressions in Dutch, particularly with her children. During the conversation for the data collection this practice was indeed observed, but of course the researcher's presence may have had an influence on the

occurrence of these phenomena. Aisha occasionally drops in some words in Berber as well, at a ratio of *'five a day'* (I-C-0017-9:05) as she puts it, and especially when she is angry with the kids. She continues to use Berber with her parents, but apart from that very little, for instance with acquaintances the same age as her parents, or with newly arrived immigrants. With her brothers and sisters she has always spoken French, and only if her mother is around they switch to Berber in order to let her take part in the conversation. Aisha sends her children to Arabic classes in a nearby mosque. However, she is not very happy with the teaching method as it is not oriented toward 'communicating' and is limited to literary Arabic. Aisha herself has also attended literary Arabic courses for a year and a half, which enables her to help the younger children with their homework.

The *choice for Dutch-medium education* was deliberate and grounded in Aisha's frustration about the 'lack' of language schooling she received herself. To her, it seemed also obvious that her children should learn the two most important languages of the country:

### Excerpt 3.5

Aisha	<p>donc ça, ça a été vraiment un manque, et que je me suis dit : mes enfants n'auront jamais ce problème, c'est exclus. dans ma tête c'était comme ça, je voulais pas que mes enfants vivent ce que j'ai vécu, cette frustration. je me suis dit : je veux, on est en Belgique, il y a-, les gens parlent le néerlandais et le français. ils ((the children)) doivent se communiquer ((sic)) dans les deux langues parfaitement</p>	<p><i>so that, that was really something I lacked, and so I said to myself: my children will never have this problem, it's out of the question. in my head it was like that, I didn't want my children to experience what I had experienced, this frustration. I said to myself: I want, we are in Belgium, there are people who speak Dutch and French. they ((the children)) have to be able to communicate in both languages perfectly</i></p>
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(I-C-0017-30:00)

Moreover, the bad experience she had with French-medium education, strengthened her choice. When the school suggested her oldest son to go to a French-medium school in the second year of primary school, she reluctantly surrendered to the school and her then husband, and from that moment onwards it was "a catastrophe" (see also Chapter 3.2.3):

### Excerpt 3.6

Aisha	<p>donc il a fait deux ans, jusqu'en deuxième primaire, au Josaphat, et puis de là, il a été euh dans une école en français et ça a été euh</p>	<p><i>so he did two years, until second primary, at Josaphat, and then from there, he went euh to a school in French and it was euh</i></p>
INT	<p>et le secondaire aussi après?</p>	<p><i>and secondary also after that?</i></p>

Aisha	<p>non, non, il n'a, il n'a même, il a fait le secondaire mais ça a été la catastrophe. son parcours euhm, depuis ce jour-là, ça a été la catastrophe.</p>	<p><i>no, no, he didn't, he didn't even, he did his secondary but it was a catastrophe. his trajectory euhm, from that day onwards, it was a catastrophe.</i></p>
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(I-C-0017-50:55)

### 3.2.4 Parental node D: Hadise & Aydemir

Hadise (40) and her husband Aydemir (42) are both children from Turkish immigrants who came to Belgium with many of their fellow countrymen in the early 60's. However, they grew up in a different part of Belgium: Hadise spent her youth in Diest, a small town in the Flemish part of Belgium, whereas her husband's parents lived in Brussels. They have four children (aged between 3 and 18) and live in a vibrant immigrant neighborhood, slightly further away from the school in comparison to the other parents in our sample.

Up until Hadise and Aydemir's generation the *linguistic background of the family* is reportedly homogeneously Turkish. Due to the fact that their respective families arrived in different town in Belgium, their *histories of language learning* are quite different. Hadise went to a Dutch-speaking school, and learnt French only after her marriage, when the couple came to live in Brussels. Aydemir went to a Francophone school, where he learned very little Dutch. However, both learned Turkish with their parents and relatives and Turkish is also the language in which they speak with each other.

Their *current language practices* show a similar pattern, in the sense that Turkish is used for most of their home and social life, and French and Dutch for work- and school-related matters, respectively. *At home*, they use predominantly Turkish with each other and the children. When school-related matters pop up, Hadise or the older children switch to Dutch, for instance when helping out with homework. Turkish is also used with relatives and friends, and in the many Turkish shops that can be found in the area. Aydemir works south of Brussels, in the French-speaking part of Belgium, and speaks French with his colleagues. Hadise's job at the Josaphat school, where she attends children in the after school day care, requires the use of Dutch with the children and most of the parents, and occasionally French.

Their *choice for a Dutch-medium school* was straightforward, especially because the mother was already feeling at ease in Dutch. Furthermore, the children are believed to learn French 'on the street' anyway, and according to these parents,

even without a diploma, but with a good knowledge of Dutch, it is easier to find a job in Brussels, as stated in the following excerpt:

### Excerpt 3.7

- INT            et comment vous êtes arrivé à à            *and how did get to choosing to, send your*  
faire le choix de, envoyer vos            *children to a Dutch-medium school? in*  
enfants à une école            *Brussels?*  
néerlandophone<sup>2</sup> à Bruxelles?
- Aydemir        parce que mon épouse était            *because my wife was Dutch, she spoke*  
néerlandais, elle parlait            *Dutch.*  
néerlandophone ((sic)).
- INT            d'accord            *okay*
- Aydemir        moi pas. alors, on voit que, disons,            *not me. so, you can see that, let's say, there*  
il y a certaines choses où, même à            *are certain things that, even in Brussels,*  
Bruxelles, que le néerlandais c'est            *that Dutch is indeed more important. I*  
quand même plus important. moi, je            *think it's more important than French, to*  
trouve que c'est plus important que            *get a job at the post office xx a good base*  
le français. pour trouver travail à la            *and a good a good baggage and*  
poste xx une bonne base et une  
bonne, un bon bagage et
- INT            ouais            *yeah*
- Aydemir        pour ça.            *for that reason.*

(I-D-0013-8:25)

### 3.2.5 Parental node E: Lieselot & Wim

Wim and Lieselot, both 39 years old, grew up in different towns in Flanders and met at university where they studied Law. They have three children, two girls (age 8 and 7) and a boy, who is five, and have been living in Brussels since 1997. Wim has recently set up his own law firm with an associate, and before that he was employed in a law company. Lieselot is a civil servant for the Belgian federal administration. Like families A and B, their house is situated just a couple of meters from the school.

Regarding the *language background of their families*, both were born and raised in Flanders and spoke Dutch at home. Lieselot, however, specifies that in her youth she spoke “West-Vlaams” (West Flemish), differentiating this variety from other varieties of Dutch, including standard Dutch:

### Excerpt 3.8

Lieselot        allez, dat was eigenlijk meer West-Vlaams, hè. in West-Vlaanderen is er zo niet echt, euh, zoiets als een, allez ja, een AN, hé.        *in fact it was rather West Flemish, hè. in West-Vlaanderen ((West Flanders, Belgian province)) there's not really, euh, something like a, well yes, an AN ((Algemeen Nederlands, referring to standard language)), hé.*

(I-E-D009-17:25)

Their *current language use* is mostly Dutch and to a lesser extent French, the latter due to the French-speaking environment of the city they live in. *At home* they speak Flemish/Dutch, both with each other and with their children. Apart from an occasional leisure activity, the children have had until now relatively little contact with French. Wim and Lieselot have frequent contacts with other Dutch speakers in Brussels, and of course they use Dutch when visiting their relatives in Flanders. French is the language spoken with many of their neighbors, who have become friends over the years, and both of them use quite a lot of French in their working environments. As a civil servant for the Belgian federal administration, which is bilingual French-Dutch, Lieselot often works with French-speaking colleagues, for instance to co-write policy documents. She speaks French with the majority of them. According to Wim, about one third of his clientele is French-speaking. Another important share of his work is done in English, partly when working for international clients, but also when English is chosen as a neutral language between French- versus Dutch-speaking clients.

### Excerpt 3.9

Wim            het kan ook zijn omdat het ((a law suit)) tussen Franstaligen en Nederlandstaligen is, dat men een neutrale taal kiest, en dat dan Engels de, de geschreven taal is van documenten, bijvoorbeeld        *it could be as well because it ((a law suit)) is between French-speakers and Dutch-speakers a neutral language is chosen and that English is the, the written language of the documents for instance*

(I-E-D009-6:55)

Both Wim and Lieselot's *histories of language learning* include lessons of French, English, and German taught as foreign languages at their schools in Flanders. Further on, at university, the curriculum involved the reading of legal documents in the same three languages. These classes, however, are valued rather negatively, and, according to the informants, did not contribute much to their current language competence. Both state that they have 'really learnt' French at work but predominantly with friends and neighbors.

### Excerpt 3.10

Lieselot	wel, ik heb dat eigenlijk vooral hier geleerd, mijn Frans	<i>well, I actually learned most of it here, my French</i>
INT	al werkende?	<i>working?</i>
Lieselot	ja	<i>yes</i>
Wim	gewoon in de buurt	<i>just in the neighborhood</i>
Lieselot	en, en, ook hier gewoon, hè ... in 't dagdagelijks leven eigenlijk	<i>and, and, also just around here, hè ... in everyday life actually</i>

(I-E-D009-4:17)

Their *choice for a Dutch-medium school* was in the first place based on the vicinity of the Josaphat day-care center (and later the school) to their home. Wim states explicitly that it was not a deliberate decision pro Dutch in Brussels. However, he then immediately adds that he considers it important to have a solid base in one's mother tongue, plus the fact that in Brussels unavoidably one learns French. The following excerpt illustrates this reasoning:

### Excerpt 3.11

Wim	maar dat is niet principieel dat wij die kinderen niet in 't Franstalig onderwijs gestoken hebben, zeker niet, alhoewel dat ik euh .. ik weet het ook niet, omdat ik, maar ik denk wel dat, euh , een goede basis van u n- uw, uw moedertaal kan, allez ja, kunt ge daaruit, euh, vertrekken. sowieso pikken ze in Brussel op één of andere manier Frans op.	<i>but it's not out of principle that we didn't put the children in French-medium education, for sure, though I euh .. I don't know, because I, but I do think that a good base of your d- your, your mother tongue can, well yes, you can start from there. they'll pick up French one way or the other anyway.</i>
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(I-E-D009-12:50)

In the previous paragraphs, we have described the backgrounds of the participating parents. On the basis of these descriptors, these parental nodes could be seen to represent a number of 'typical' labels frequently encountered in public discourse on Brussels, as outlined in the third column of Table 3.3. Furthermore, in terms of their language backgrounds, they would be grouped in quantitative surveys as in the fourth column:

<i>PN</i>	<i>Names</i>	<i>Labels</i>	<i>Language(s)</i>
<i>PN A</i>	Béatrice & Alain	‘Francophone Brusselers’	French-French
<i>PN B</i>	An & Ricardo	‘mixed Flemish- expat’	Dutch-Other
<i>PN C</i>	Aisha	‘second-generation immigrants (Moroccan descent)’	French(-Other?)
<i>PN D</i>	Hadise & Aydemir	‘second-generation immigrants (Turkish descent)’	Other-Other
<i>PN E</i>	Lieselot & Wim	‘Flemish Brusselers’	Dutch-Dutch

*Table 3.3 A possible categorization of the participating PN’s*

Whether and to what extent these and other labels are meaningful for the parents themselves, and what the parents’ actual language practices are, should be revealed by the forthcoming analysis. In the next part, divided into two chapters, we will focus on how our informants themselves identify with a number of commonly applied sociolinguistic labels. To this end, Chapter 4 tackles more general categorizations, whereas Chapter 5 will home in on a possible identification with Brussels.



PART I  
LANGUAGE LABELS AND SELF-  
REPRESENTATIONS



The purpose of this part is to describe how the parents in our study themselves relate to a number of sociolinguistic categories and labels frequently used in policy-making, research, and in general discourse on Brussels. These labels include *Nederlandstalig/néerlandophone*, *Franstalig/francophone*, *Vlaming/flamand*, *Waal/wallon*, *Belg/belge*, *Brusselaar/bruxellois*, *Europees/européen*, among others. In line with our general research purposes, specific attention will be given to how living in Brussels, and more specifically having a child in Dutch-medium education (considered as an ongoing process), informs such a perspective.

Our first line of investigation, reported on in Chapter 4, focuses broadly on the positioning of our informants-parents toward Belgium and what could be called the Belgian issue, i.e. the political conflict between the ‘Flemish’ and the ‘Francophones’ (see also Chapter 1.2). In the case of the second-generation immigrants, we will also look at whether and how they forward an adherence to their parents’ home country as part of their identity and in what ways such an identification is integrated into an identification with typical ‘Belgian’ categories. Our second line of inquiry, dealt with in Chapter 5, looks into the participants’ disposition toward a possible ‘Brussels identity’.

The analyses for this part are based on the data from the interviews with the five parental nodes (Phase I), and with additional information from the complementary data and the feedback interviews (Phase III). The findings will be presented case by case, after which they will be discussed collectively.



# CHAPTER 4

## BELGIUM, THE ‘BELGIAN ISSUE’, AND BEYOND

### 4.1 PN A: BÉATRICE AND ALAIN

From the point of view of the official and institutional dual organization of Brussels, Alain and Béatrice represent the typical ‘other’ category in Dutch-medium education in Brussels; they originate from one of the traditional language communities and are present in an institution that represents the other traditional language community. In this context, they are labeled and/or categorized as ‘Francophones’. Obviously, their trajectory (current language use, family language background, and schooling, see Chapter 3.2.1) displays largely French language repertoires, which provides grounds for such a classification. Having children in Dutch-medium education, however, has influenced their social networks to some extent, as they have come in contact with Dutch-speaking caretakers, parents, and children, sometimes building close friendships with the parents.

#### 4.1.1 ‘francophone’?

##### Excerpt 4.1

Alain	je détestais l'idée de me- m'identifier à une communauté juste parce qu'elle parlait, euh, parce que je parlais la même langue. et là je me suis senti francophone en fait.	<i>I hated the idea of identifying with a community just because it spoke, euh, because I spoke the same language, and at that moment I felt Francophone actually.</i>
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(I-A-0008-3:59)

In terms of self-positioning, Alain and Béatrice would consider themselves to be open-minded, cosmopolitan, progressive (liberal), and definitely not concerned with language disputes. Alain’s assertion in the excerpt above (excerpt 4.1) is a rather explicit ideological statement against a classification in terms of language, and against linking language and community more generally. In principle, he does

not want to identify (nor be identified) with a group or a community simply because of a common language, and states that he “hates” the mere idea of it. In the course of the interview, at numerous points he also explicitly takes distance from the category 'francophone' (with the connotations this entails within the Belgian context), as illustrated in the following excerpts:

#### Excerpt 4.2

Alain	tout ça et d'ailleurs je me suis engueulé avec assez de francophones sur le sujet	<i>all that and by the way I've had arguments with a lot of Francophones on the subject</i>
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(I-A-0008-1:22)

#### Excerpt 4.3

Alain	je me suis souvent disputé avec des francophones qui disaient, les flamands sont tous fachos, c'est la loi du plus fort, machin xx, et je dis, ben non, il y a, et j'essaie d'expliquer le point de vue	<i>I've often argued with Francophones who said, all Flemish are fascists, it's the law of the strongest, and stuff xx, and I say, well no, there's, and I try to explain the point of view</i>
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(I-A-0008-4:24)

In these excerpts, Alain uses the label 'Francophone' himself, and he does so to refer to certain groups of people (presumably friends and/or family) from which he distances himself, taking up a position that separates him from French-speaking people who do assign people to a certain community based on the language that they speak. Alain's preferred 'neutral' stance, however, is challenged from different sides, and this challenge seems to have emerged as a consequence of having sent his children to Dutch-medium education. For instance, some of their friends and family allegedly accused Alain and Béatrice of educating their children as 'flamingants' (Flemish nationalists). At the same time, one of Alain's Dutch-speaking friends accused Alain during a discussion that he was reasoning like the FDF (*Front des Francophones* – a political party whose main objective is to champion the interests of the Francophones in and around Brussels).

In both cases, rather radical positions based on a language-based societal distinction were invoked in order to make a point. It appears that Alain cannot escape a categorization by others as 'Francophone' (an imposed identity), and having children in a Dutch-medium school apparently places him right at the juncture between the two sides in the discourse on the 'Belgian issue'. The apparent inevitability of a political opposition based on 'language-based' categories upsets Alain, particularly when it is expressed by a friend, in this case a

Dutch-speaking friend. As can be seen in the following excerpt, it even causes him to respond emotionally:

#### Excerpt 4.4

Alain	j'étais vraiment, hm, autant avec mes copains francophones quand on . quand on a des euhm, ou ma famille, quand je défends la position flamande je m'énerve, autant là ((he refers to being tagged a Francophone radical)) j'étais triste, enfin, je me suis dit, j'avais un peu euhm ... peut paraître-, s- ça peut paraître débile hè, mais le	<i>I was really, hm, while with my Francophone friends when we . when we have euhm, or my family, when I defend the Flemish position I get worked up, well then ((he refers to being tagged a Francophone radical)) I was sad, anyway, I said to myself, I was a bit euhm ... might see-, it might seem stupid right, but the</i>
INT	non	<i>no</i>
Alain	je disais avec Béatrice le lendemain .. là on essaie tellement de pas rentrer dans ces, dans ces, euhm	<i>I said to Béatrice the day after .. we try so hard not to get into these, into these, euhm</i>
INT	ouais	<i>yeah</i>
Alain	cette bagarre, ces disputes et tout	<i>this brawl, these quarrels and all</i>
INT	ouais	<i>yeah</i>
Alain	et on est avec des supercopains, et euhm, . et .. et . enfin c- c'est un peu un peu bête de dire ça mais mon, mon sentiment c'était peut-être: même eux, enfin	<i>and we are with great friends, and euhm, . and .. and . anyway i- it's a bit stupid to say this but my, my feeling was maybe: even them, anyway</i>

(I-A-0006-5:02)

The fact that Alain is claimed by his Dutch-speaking friend to reason like a Francophone radical saddens him rather than annoy him, because, as much as he “tries hard to stay out of these quarrels”, “même eux” (*even them*’, his “super copains”) push him into a position he does not wish to be in. This may seem unfair to him seeing that in interaction with Francophones he actually finds himself defending the Flemish point of view (“position flamande”), which could be considered ironic (even more so in the light of his professed desire to stay out of the political quarrels altogether).

However, Alain recognizes that he responded to his friend’s ‘accusation’ by feeling Francophone, as he states in excerpt 4.1 at the beginning of this section. In a defensive reaction, Alain thus acknowledges the imposed category. His access to Dutch-speaking social networks actually makes it harder for him to maintain a ‘neutral’ position with respect to the Belgian language dispute, and harder to avoid

being identified or identify with a certain group or community ‘just because they speak the same language’. The difference in emotional reaction vis-à-vis members of the ‘French-speaking group’ (upset) and the ‘Dutch-speaking group’ (sad) seems to indicate that Alain may be more sensitive to what the Dutch-speakers think of him, and that he indeed distinguishes between both groups, either explicitly or implicitly.

#### 4.1.2 Belgitude

Béatrice, on her part, invokes what she calls her ‘belgitude’, a concept which is not meant to refer to her Belgian nationality as such, but apparently enables her to avoid identifying with the more overtly ethnic identities of ‘Flemish’ and ‘Walloon’:

##### Excerpt 4.5

Béatrice        mais, mais donc tu vois, moi je me sens pas du tout euh, c'est pour ça que moi je revendique beaucoup ma belgitude, tu vois <laugh> et que ça me, la situation actuelle me ... m'horripile euh .. pour plein de raisons autres mais le fait, si la Belgique devait se séparer, pour toutes les raisons qu'on connaît, bon pourquoi pas, c'est comme ça, mais moi, je serais vraiment handicapée quoi, parce que <laugh> je ne me sens pas euh .. ni flamande, ni wallonne, tu vois? et donc, être séparée d'un morceau, c'est comme si tu me tirais en deux quoi, tu vois? donc ça me gêne vraiment beaucoup <laugh>

*but, but so you see, I don't feel at all euh, that's why I assert my belgitude a lot, you see <laugh> and why I, why the current situation ... gives me the creeps euh .. for other reasons as well but the fact, if Belgium were to split, because of all the reasons that we know, well why not, it's one of those things, but me, I would be really handicapped, because <laugh> I don't feel euh .. neither Flemish nor Walloon, you see? and so, being separated from a piece, it's like you would tear me in two, you see? so it really annoys me <laugh>*

(I-A-0010-32:03)

Béatrice states that she feels neither Flemish nor Walloon, and therefore the break-up of Belgium would leave her feeling handicapped. Further on in the conversation, Béatrice asserts her adherence to ‘being Belgian’ once more, and paradoxically uses it to position herself vis-à-vis ‘the Flemish’, who according to her rarely display such a sense of belonging toward Belgium.

#### Excerpt 4.6

Béatrice	oui, mais moi je me sens belge par contre, parce que rarement, euh, les flamands se sentent, il n'y a pas de ce sentiment-là, oui, mais moi je me sens belge et je le revendique en plus, tu vois? mais un belge avec des flamands et des wallons, tu vois?	<i>yes, but I I feel Belgian on the contrary, because rarely, euh, the Flemish feel, there's no such feeling, yes, but I I feel Belgian and I'm sure to assert it, you see? but a Belgian with Flemings and Walloons, you see?</i>
INT	tu es vraiment une des dernières <laugh>	<i>you are really one of the last ones &lt;laugh&gt;</i>
Béatrice	oui, une des dernières	<i>yes, one of the last ones</i>
INT	je suis désolé, moi belge, euh	<i>I'm sorry, me Belgian euh, euh</i>
Béatrice	des derniers bastions ah si, moi je suis super fière de ce côté euh,	<i>the last bastions, ah yes, I am really proud of that part euh,</i>
INT	ah oui, mais fière?	<i>ah yes, but proud?</i>
Béatrice	que de ce côté xx, ah oui, je te jure, mais je sais que c'est très rare chez des flamands de trouver ça	<i>that, of that part xx, ah yes I swear, but I know it's very unusual to find among Flemings</i>

(I-A-0010-37:47)

Interestingly, Béatrice claims a 'Belgianness' that is, according to her, "unusual to find among Flemings". The idea of Belgium, which in institutional and geographical terms can be regarded as an umbrella term for a number of communities, and evoked as such by Béatrice ("but Belgian with Flemish and Walloons"), becomes an ideological stance that is considered more typical for members of one group than for the other. There is an interesting paradox here, in that Béatrice professes to hold an encompassing view of both groups. Yet, at the same time, she actually associates this view to only one of these two groups, i.e. the Francophones, and not the other, i.e. the Flemish. This suggests that she takes for granted the existence of both groups, and that they are opposed to each other. Contrary to what her 'belgitude' would imply, Béatrice in fact positions herself as very much different from the 'Flemings'.

In the following excerpt, Béatrice elaborates on the same issues:

#### Excerpt 4.7

Béatrice	ah ouais ouais ouais, moi je suis super fière parce que, comme je suis entourée de gens qui sont vraiment anti-flamands, enfin, il y en a plein, hein, autour de nous qui sont	<i>ah yeah yeah yeah, I am really proud because, as I am surrounded by people who are really anti-Flemish, well, there are many, right, around us that are like that, I say to myself, and at a push I, I, before</i>
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comme ça. moi, je me dis, et à la limite je, je, avant de mettre les enfants à l'école, j'étais même dans cet esprit-là aussi, honnêtement, parce que ça me cassait les pieds tous ces trucs. et ça, ça m'a vraiment adouci, quoi. parce que tu les rencontres, tu discutes et tout ça, et tu te dis, eh oh, c'est de la politique, c'est pas les gens, hein <laugh> enfin, tu vois ... tu te rends compte que .. c'est débile d'être comme ça quoi, donc moi ça me .. moi je suis super contente de faire ça parce que justement ça m'assagit, ça permet de mettre un peu les gens entre, oh calmez-vous, les uns et les autres on se calme, tu vois, de mettre un peu, un peu de, et donc, ça ferait vraiment, ça me casserait les pieds de plus pouvoir faire ça, et de me retrouver euh, de l'autre côté d'une barrière ou d'une frontière, ça me casserait vraiment les pieds, quoi.

*putting the children in the school, I was even in that state of mind as well, to be honest, because it annoyed me all that stuff, and it, it really softened me, because you meet them, you talk and all that, and you say to yourself, well ey, it's politics, it's not the people, right <laugh> anyway, you see ... you realize that .. it's stupid to be like that, right, so to me it .. I'm really happy to do it ((children in Dutch-medium education)) precisely because it softens me, it allows to put people a little between, oh calm down, let's all calm down, you see, to put a bit, a bit of, and so, it would really, it would annoy me not to be able to do that anymore, and to find myself euh, on the other side of a barrier or a border, that would really annoy the hell out of me.*

(I-A-0010-36:40)

In this excerpt, Béatrice explains how deciding to send her children to Dutch-medium Education has 'softened' her point of view regarding the opposition between the Flemish and the Francophones, which leads her to make a distinction between politics and people ("c'est de la politique, c'est pas les gens"). She states that she is proud of her decision, likes to challenge people in her entourage that hold anti-Flemish opinions, and is happy to be able to counter them. This way, she celebrates a certain hybridity, a being on both sides – in line with her professed 'belgitude'. The idea of having to choose between one or the other, or to find herself on one side of a barrier or a border, would therefore annoy her very much, cf. the expression "ça me casserait vraiment les pieds" (*that would really annoy the hell out of me*).

#### 4.1.3 Beyond the opposition 'francophone'-'flamand'?

As much as Alain and Béatrice would like to move beyond the opposition 'francophone' vs. 'flamand', in practice such a position is not easy to maintain. Many people around them do categorize them in these terms and remind them of their 'being Francophone'. Their own thinking in these matters appears to be much more polarized than they would claim at first. Béatrice's notion of *belgitude*

explicitly aims at transcending the opposition ‘francophones’-‘flamands’; however, this does not prevent her from distinguishing herself from the ‘Flemish’, paradoxically on the basis of the very concept of *belgitude*. Alain’s attitude toward the labels under scrutiny is at least as ambiguous. On the one hand, he professes to refuse the label ‘francophone’ when it is applied to himself, based on his rejection of any identification with a community on the mere basis of language use; on the other hand, he freely uses these labels throughout his account and tries to avoid the obvious label ‘francophone’, not by transcending the opposition, but by expressing a positive attitude toward the opposite label ‘flamand’. Not unexpectedly, this paradoxical strategy is not entirely successful: Alain himself narrates negative reactions toward his attitude from both his ‘Francophone’ family and a ‘Flemish’ friend, which in one case leads him to eventually embrace the label ‘francophone’, albeit reluctantly.

All in all, having children in Dutch-medium education has definitely brought them closer to Dutch-speaking social networks and has changed their way of thinking, but it has also put the contradictions and tensions that occur between various identity options into relief. Those contradictions are not easily resolved and, particularly in the case of Alain, give rise to an emotional account of conflicting affiliations (see also Chapter 8 for a detailed discussion).

## 4.2 PN B: AN AND RICARDO

The mixed language background of the parents from PN B, An and Ricardo, places them in a specific situation with respect to the Dutch-speaking character of Dutch-medium education in Brussels. An would be considered as belonging to the traditional target group, as Dutch-medium education provides language maintenance education that enables her and her children to maintain and strengthen their home language in French-speaking Brussels. At the same time, her Spanish husband Ricardo is an outsider, speaking a language that would be categorized as ‘Other’ in typical surveys on language use in Brussels.

### 4.2.1 Feeling more Flemish

Our first excerpt addresses a number of the issues at hand in a very explicit manner.

#### Excerpt 4.8

An	ja, i-eh dat ik, hoe meer dat ik in Brussel woon hoe meer Vlaams dat ik mij voel, ja-a, awel, omdat ge u meer bewust daarvan wordt, inderdaad	<i>yes, I- eh that I, the longer I live in Brussels, the more I feel like I'm Flemish, ye-es, well, because you become more aware of it, that's right</i>
INT	en voelt ge u dan Vlaams of Nederlandstalige?	<i>and do you feel Flemish or a Dutch speaker?</i>
An	Vlaams als, N- Nederlandstalig	<i>Flemish like ((in the sense of)), D- Dutch-speaking</i>
INT	dat bedoelt ge, denk ik, eh?	<i>that's what you mean, I think, right?</i>
An	meer bewust van uw eigen achtergrond, euhm, taalgebondenheid	<i>more aware of your own background, euhm, language-boundedness</i>
INT	omdat ge zo, omdat ge door de anderen zo gepercipieerd wordt misschien nog meer dan dat ge dat zelf vindt, of niet?	<i>because you, because you're considered as such by others maybe even more than that you consider yourself that way, or not?</i>
An	omdat je voortdurend euh verplicht wordt om om, o-om die keuze te maken, ge wordt voortdurend verplicht van, oké, euhm, Nederlandstalige dus euh d-de campus euh die ge vindt of de, de faciliteiten, het hangt allemaal vast aan de taal die je spreekt vandaar dat je meer ehm daarmee ehm geconfronteerd wordt, terwijl dat dat voor mij eigenlijk ... voor mij zou het eh ja, is de plaats belangrijker en waar dat, en, en de, dan de taal. dus ik zou een aanbod, ik zou graag een aanbod hebben in alle talen, allez ja, of in het Nederlands en in het Frans en via de school een openheid eigenlijk naar de twee, of uitwisseling bijvoorbeeld in de school van, Franstalige leerkrachten, ik zou, ik denk dat dat alleen maar kan, euh, ten goede komen zo eh, de, ge wordt verplicht van een keuze te maken en dat stoot mij ergens tegen de borst en daardoor wordt ge eigenlijk meer bewust van wat een rol dat dat ((language)) hier speelt	<i>because you're continuously euh obliged to to, t-to make that choice, you're continuously forced to, okay, euhm, Dutch speaker so euh t-the campus euh that you find or the, the facilities, it all depends on the language you speak, that's why you, euhm, are confronted more with it, whereas to, to me, it's really ... to me it would eh yes, the place is more important and where and, and the, rather than the language, so a range, I would like a range of possibilities in all languages, well yeah, or in Dutch and French, and through the school an openness really toward both, or an exchange for example in the school of, French-speaking teachers, I would, I think that it could only be for the better that way eh, the, you're forced to make a choice and it upsets me in a way and that's why you become more aware of the role it ((language)) plays here</i>
INT	ge vindt dat een beetje frustrerend of wat, dat ge zo?	<i>you think it's frustrating, or what, that you have to?</i>

An	ja, ik vind dat eigenlijk, kortzichtig ja en, en, het strookt niet met de realiteit, allez ja	yes, I think it's, short-sighted yes and, and, it doesn't fit with reality, allez ((interj.)) yes
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(I-B-0006-3:55)

An's very first statement given in this excerpt suggests that she has started to 'feel' more Flemish as a result of living in Brussels, which led her to feel part of a minority more strongly. At face value, such an observation bears a strong resemblance to Alain's account discussed above. Her approach is different, however, and her account is less overtly emotional than Alain's. To her, it is not other people who make her more aware of her belonging to a certain community; rather, it is the two-fold organization of many of the public services in Brussels. In An's view, living in Brussels pushes one into fixed patterns, and the identities that are (structurally) imposed are monocultural and monolingual, which she regrets.

An proclaims that having to choose constantly between either Dutch or French, for schooling and many other services, makes one more aware of one's own language background, and necessarily of the 'language-boundedness' ("taalgebondenheid") of all public services in Brussels. In other words, in her eyes, educational and recreational facilities and activities are either 'Flemish' or 'Francophone', i.e. contingent upon – or bound by – language. An feels she is pushed to feel more Flemish precisely because of this dichotomous structure, which continuously reminds her of her membership of the Dutch-speaking minority in Brussels. In her opinion, such a division is short-sighted and does not reflect reality. An advocates the possibility of, for instance, bilingual education in which the link language-community would not be as strong and all-pervasive as it is now, and where "*the place*" (in this case Brussels, see also Chapter 5) is more important than 'language.' Note that the practical implementation of, for instance, a teacher exchange, as An suggests, would be feasible in theory given the presence of a French-medium school nearby (see Chapter 3.1).

Interestingly, An volunteers the label 'Flemish' to invoke the category to which she feels more affiliated now. The interpretation of the labels 'Flemish' and 'Dutch-speaking' can vary, however. Whereas the first tends to refer to an identity based on some (fuzzy) type of ethnicity (with obvious political connotations, particularly in the Brussels' context), the second would appear to be purely language-based. When the interviewer asks An for clarification on the matter, she specifies "Vlaams als Nederlandstalig" (*Flemish as Dutch-speaking*' excerpt 4.8). At another point in the conversation, An is even more explicit in defining such a

‘Flemishness,’ where it is presented as one identity among others, and, again, language-bound:

#### Excerpt 4.9

INT	zou je jezelf omschrijven als Brusselse Vlaming?	<i>would you describe yourself as a Brussels Fleming?</i>
	((...))	((...))
An	ik ben euhm <giggle> Europees, Belgisch, euh Vlaams is voor mij, het Vlaams gevoel is niet van, Vlaanderen of, mijn fierheid euh, de Vlaamse leeuw of zo, helemaal niet bij mij is dat eerder, ja, taalgebonden, Vlaams, Nederlandstalig, zo	<i>I am euhm &lt;giggle&gt; European, Belgian, euh to me Flemish is, the Flemish feeling is not like, Flanders or, my pride euh, the Flemish lion or so, not at all, to me it's more, yes, language-related, Flemish, Dutch-speaking, in that sense</i>

(I-B-0006-3:05)

The label ‘Flemish’ is presented here among a set of other labels with which An identifies more or less. She tries to neutralize the potentially nationalistic connotations of the label ‘Flemish’ by distancing it from “de Vlaamse leeuw” (*the Flemish lion*)<sup>21</sup> and linking it with the apparently language-based notion of ‘Nederlandstalig’ (Dutch-speaking). In An’s account, there is no clear-cut division between the labels ‘Nederlandstalig’ and ‘Vlaams’, as the latter is presented as part and parcel of the former and not tied to any political predilection.

#### 4.2.2 Children and choices

In the following excerpt, An explains how having children in Brussels has had an influence on her awareness regarding the institutional divide in the capital.

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<sup>21</sup> The ‘Flemish lion’, the official symbol and anthem of the Region of Flanders, has also clear nationalistic connotations, to which An alludes here.

#### Excerpt 4.10

- An           het het is pas, denk ik ook, als je kinderen hebt dat je verplicht bent om u meer te integreren in een bepaalde gemeenschap, en eh, stel nu dat we geen kinderen hadden en dat we hier gewoon xx een appartement hadden in Brussel, g-ge gaat gaan werken in uw, ja, ge hebt uw vriendenkring, meestal, van daarvoor, ge hebt geen nood om met de burens of met de lokale bibliotheek of zo in aanraking te komen, dus dat speelt allemaal veel minder een rol, 't is maar als je echt, u-uw, meer gaat integreren en, en, gaat engageren dat je
- INT           vanaf dat ge kinderen hebt, hebt ge zo gezegd?
- An           ja, vind ik toch dat dat een groot verschil maakt, zeker als ge in een, buitenlandse. allez, als ge niet van Brussel zelf bent, en als je in een andere vriendengroep zi- euh, zat, euh, dan die echt van hier
- and it's only, I also think, once you have children, that you have to integrate more into a specific community, and eh, imagine we didn't have children and that we just had xx an apartment in Brussels, y- you go to work in your, you've got your friends, in most cases, from before, you don't need to have contacts with the neighbors or the local library or so, so all of it plays a less important role, it's only when you're really gonna integrate and get involved that*
- from once you've had children, you said?*
- yes, I think it makes a big difference, even more if you're in a, foreign, allez ((interj.)), if you're not from Brussels itself, and if you're in another circle of friends, euh, or were, euh, than those really from here*

(I-B-0006-6:20)

In An's experience, as she is not from Brussels herself and arrived in the city with a foreign partner, it was only when she had children that she had to engage with and integrate into social networks that were linked to a particular, in her case the Dutch-speaking, language community. Before this, An and Ricardo had an international ("foreign") group of friends, as a consequence of which her belonging to one or the other language community was not an issue. Due to the parallel Dutch-speaking/French-speaking organization of many aspects of social life in Brussels, she was forced to choose between one and the other. She states this once more at a later point in the conversation:

#### Excerpt 4.11

- An           pero, siempre, te tienes que identificar ((with a language community))
- but, all of the time, you have to identify ((with a language community))*

(I-B-0006-21:40)

### 4.2.3 Menos patrias y más fratrias

To Ricardo, living in Brussels has mitigated his sense of national (Spanish) identity, both at home in Brussels or back home in Spain, but it has not been replaced with any strong and clear-cut affiliation to any other notion of country-bound (or even European) identity. Instead, he proclaims to feel kinship with an increasing number of ‘brotherlands’, reducing his need to belong to any one particular ‘fatherland’, as can be seen in the following excerpt:

#### Excerpt 4.12

INT	tu Ricardo, como te definirías aquí? tu eres un español? expat?	<i>you Ricardo, how would you define yourself here? you're a Spaniard? expat?</i>
Ricardo	yo, yo, sí, yo co- co- como un español que cada vez es menos español	<i>me, me, yes, me a- a- as a Spaniard who is each time less Spanish</i>
An	<laugh>	<laugh>
INT	cada vez más qué?	<i>each time more what?</i>
Ricardo	eh ca-, cada vez más eh . que cada vez tienes menos, menos patrias y más fratrias	<i>eh ea-, each time more eh . that each time you have less, less fatherlands and more brotherlands</i>
INT	ok	<i>ok</i>
Ricardo	eh sí, . que . d- de hecho yo cuando vuelvo a España, cada vez me siento más extranje[ro en mi proprio país]	<i>eh yes, . that . i- in fact when I go back to Spain, each time I feel more like a forei[gn]er in my own country]</i>
An	[pero no te] no te sientes tampoco belga?	<i>[but you don't] feel Belgian either</i>
Ricardo	no	<i>no</i>
An	ni europeo, no te sientes europeo?	<i>nor European, you don't feel European?</i>
Ricardo	no-o, pero yo creo que, cuando uno viene del extranjero y tiene su familia, yo creo que das menos importancia a tu identidad nacional . de verdad. en mi caso. otra gente que está en el extranjero acentúa a su identidad nacional. para mí es lo contrario	<i>no-o, but I believe that, when you come from a foreign country and you have your family, I believe that you grant less importance to your national identity . really. in my case. other people who live abroad accentuate their national identity. to me, it's the opposite</i>

(I-B-0006-17:23)

This allegiance to a transnational identity, as can be gleaned from Ricardo's discourse, may have been one which An used to identify with (see excerpt 4.10). However, for An, present circumstances in Brussels are perceived as a challenge to maintaining such a position. An's words illustrate how the institutional division that pervades Brussels is perceived to deny the possibility of plurilingual and pluricultural identities, particularly since having children.

### 4.3 PN C: AISHA

Aisha, daughter of Moroccan immigrants who came to Belgium in the late 1960s, has lived in Belgium her whole life. In terms of identification, Aisha states she feels Belgian, Brusseler, and European when asked by the researcher.

#### 4.3.1 Handing down traditions

When she is explicitly asked about her sense of belonging toward her parent's country of origin, Aisha responds that she does not feel much of it. Rather, Aisha defines this sense of belonging in terms of traditions and values that were conveyed by her parents, some of which she conveys to her children.

#### Excerpt 4.13

INT	oui et envers envers le le Maroc ou, ou le Rif quel type de sentiment est-ce que vous avez euh maintenant	<i>ok and toward Morocco or, or the Rif what type of feeling do you have euh now?</i>
Aisha	par rapport à mon pays d'origine?	<i>regarding my country of origin?</i>
INT	oui, voilà	<i>yes, that's it</i>
Aisha	pas beaucoup	<i>not much</i>
INT	hm plutôt à une autre culture ou ...	<i>hm, rather toward another culture or ...</i>
Aisha	des traditions euh ... des traditions c'est clair qu'ils qu'ils se véhiculent, malgré donc que j'ai grandi ici, c'est les valeurs que mes parents euh ont, cer- certaines de de leurs valeurs je les partage et certaines je ne les partage pas, c'est mon droit	<i>traditions euh ... traditions it's clear that they are transmitted, despite the fact that I grew up here, they are the values that my parents euh have, so- some of of their values I share and some of them I don't share, that's my prerogative</i>
INT	c'est clair <laugh>	<i>obviously &lt;laugh&gt;</i>

Aisha	mais, mais bon c'est vrai qu'il reste un, il reste un rattachement au, par rapport à mes parents donc au pays	<i>but, but ok it's true there's still a connection with, through my parents, so with the country</i>
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(I-C-0017-38:58)

The connection with her parents' cultural background is made tangible, for instance, by the Arabic classes Aisha makes her children go to at a nearby mosque. Although she is not very happy with the quality of the classes, Aisha insists that her children attend them, since to her the Arabic language of the Quran is part of a Muslim identity and the Muslim values that she wishes to transmit. In this respect, it may be noteworthy that Aisha's oldest daughter, Yasmina, expresses her 'being Belgian' even more firmly than her mother. She states this literally by saying her roots are in Belgium, and that her moving to Morocco is not an option for her. In Yasmina's account of a conversation with her uncle (C-C-A081-43:10), who claims that there is no future for a Muslim of Moroccan descent in Belgium, Yasmina untangles her religious identity from an ethnic identity, and clearly states that she has no problem with being Muslim and feeling Belgian:

**Excerpt 4.14**

Yasmina	ik vind het heel aangenaam om naar Marokko te reizen elk jaar, maar ik vind toch: ik ben Belg. het spijt me. hij zei: ja, maar met de islam, ge kunt dan uw godsdienst niet, niet inleven. ik zei: allez, sorry, voor mij is er geen enkel verschil. ik vind dat er geen verschil is.	<i>I really enjoy going to Morocco each year, but I do think: I'm Belgian. I'm sorry. he said: yeah, but what about Islam, you can't live according to your religion. I said: allez ((interj.)), sorry, to me there's no difference at all. I think there's no difference.</i>
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(C-C-A081-44:20)

**4.3.2 'Quasi-Belgian'**

Another issue that should be mentioned here is that at different points in the conversation, Aisha herself distinguishes between those with an immigrant background and those without, i.e. it appears as a categorization taken for granted in her discourse. Consider the following excerpt, for instance:

#### Excerpt 4.15

Aisha            je crois que l'école est contente            *I believe the school is happy when the*  
quand les enfants ((sic, should be            *children ((sic, should be parents)) are*  
parents)) s'intéressent à leurs enfants            *interested in their children because it's not*  
parce que c'est pas toujours le cas            *always the case unfortunately, whether o o o*  
malheureusement, que ce soit d d d            *o on the side of the Belgians of Belgian*  
de côté des belges d'origine belge            *origin <chuckle> or the Belgians of .*  
<chuckle> ou des belges d'origine .            *foreign origin, let's say*  
étrangère, on va dire

(I-C-0017-14:45)

In this excerpt, the categorization into 'Belgian Belgians' and 'foreign Belgians' is used to overrule a possible interpretation of how the relationship between the school and the parents may function or malfunction. Aisha relates it to the amount of interest parents invest in their offspring's schooling, and not with respect to their background. The distinction is presented somewhat hesitantly, with the first category ("Belges d'origine belge") followed by a short chuckle, and the second one ("Belges d'origine . étrangère") after a short hesitation, as if looking for the precise word, followed by an epistemic marker 'let's say' functioning as a hedge.

Within the context of a discussion on her language use when she was a child, Aisha also mentions having had 'Belgian' or 'quasi-Belgian' friends and neighbors, with whom she spoke French as opposed to the language spoken at home (Berber):

#### Excerpt 4.16

Aisha            on avait plus, à l'époque on avait            *we had more, at the time we had a lot of*  
beaucoup de voisins quasi-belges, en            *quasi-Belgian neighbors, in fact*  
fait

(I-C-0017-25:37)

#### Excerpt 4.17

Aisha            et sinon la majorité, en fait les            *and otherwise the majority, in fact the*  
contacts qu'on avait avec les voisins,            *contacts we had with the neighbors, they*  
c'étaient des voisins belges, pas            *were Belgian neighbors, not Dutch-*  
néerlandophones mais belges euh            *speaking but Belgian euh French-speaking*  
francophones pardon            *sorry*

(I-C-0017-26:08)

#### Excerpt 4.18

Aisha	j'avais des amies belges donc, euh, qui venaient chez moi à la maison, qui venaient dormir, euh je pouvais aller chez eux, pas dormir, mais je pouvais aller chez eux, et avec eux donc mes parents se débrouillaient en français donc, et j'avais une autre voisine euh belge aussi, avec qui euh, qui m'aidait à faire mes devoirs, et là ça se passait très bien aussi	<i>I had Belgian friends so, euh, who came to my house, who came to sleep over, euh I could go to their place, not sleep over, but I could go to their place, and with them my parents got by in French so, and I had another euh Belgian neighbor as well, with whom euh, who helped with my homework, and that went pretty well as well</i>
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(I-C-0017-26:58)

#### 4.3.3 'Foreign Belgians' and 'Belgian Belgians'

Similar observations can be made when Aisha discusses her choice for Dutch-medium education. In the next excerpt (4.19), Aisha explains that the choice for a particular secondary school for her oldest daughter was related to and motivated by the fact that there were not many foreigners in that school at the time of enrolment. She presents it as a deliberate choice, mentioning twice, once at the beginning and once at the end of the fragment, that it was a choice that she made herself.

#### Excerpt 4.19

Aisha	mais j'ai j'ai fait ce choix aussi	<i>but I've I've made this choice ((intentionally)) as well</i>
INT	d'accord, oui?	<i>ok, yes?</i>
Aisha	je voulais pas, ah oui, je voulais pas	<i>I didn't want, oh yeah, I didn't want</i>
INT	un choix	<i>a choice</i>
Aisha	ah oui, je voulais que ma fille soit, excusez-moi, avec des belges, je voulais pas qu'elle soit avec des étrangers, justement, les étrangers on leur, on les côtoie dans la vie de tous les jours, mais les belges c'est encore différent .. je voulais, j j je sais pas expliquer, que mes enfants, c'est comme si ils ont un . un but, ils ont un devoir . c'est comme ça que	<i>ah yes, I wanted my daughter to be, excuse me, among Belgians, I didn't want her to be among foreigners, precisely, foreigners we, we are often with them in our daily lives, but the Belgians that's something else .. I wanted, I I I can't explain, that my children, it's like they have a . a goal, they have a duty . it's like that how</i>
INT	que vous le voyez	<i>how you see it</i>

Aisha	que je le vois	<i>how I see it</i>
INT	et un devoir un but de quoi?	<i>and a duty a goal to do what?</i>
Aisha	un devoir envers justement les les gens belges, qui ont comme ça des aprioris des-. je veux que mes mes enfants sachent fonctionner partout que ce soit dans la communauté où il n'y a que des belges, ou alors dans notre communauté où il y a des étrangers, je veux pas qu'ils .. qu'ils se sentent mal dans les deux communautés donc c'est le choix que j'ai fait pour ma fille de la mettre dans une école . où il n'y a que des flamands et des belges	<i>a duty toward indeed the the Belgian people, who have like assumptions. I want my children to be able to function everywhere whether in the community where there are only Belgians, or whether in our community where there are foreigners, I don't want them .. them to feel bad in both communities so that's the choice that I've made for my daughter, to put her in a school . where there are only Flemings and Belgians</i>
INT	d'accord	<i>okay</i>
Aisha	ça a été un choix	<i>it was a choice</i>

(I-C-0017-37:50)

We can draw a number of observations on the basis of this excerpt. First of all, it shows Aisha not only applying a distinction between Belgians and foreigners, thus again employing the categorization she made earlier, but it also shows that she includes herself and her children within the 'foreigner' category. Such a category also includes the people they frequent in their everyday lives. Picking out a school with few foreigners is, according to Aisha, useful to offer her daughter an environment that will enable her to 'function' in all circumstances, including among 'Belgians'. Secondly, Aisha expresses this ability to operate in all circumstances in terms of a goal, even a duty, that her children ought to pursue. To her mind, they have such a duty toward the Belgians ("les gens belges"), said to have preconceived notions ("des aprioris"), presumably about 'foreigners' like herself. The goal then would consist of knowing how to be among Belgians in order to counter such prejudices. Thirdly, the inclusion of the apologetic 'excuse me' when introducing the categories 'Belgian' versus 'foreigners' may indicate an awareness on Aisha's part of the potential sensitivity or contentiousness of making such a distinction on ethnic grounds, considered politically incorrect. Possibly the markers (chuckle, hesitation, 'let's say') found next to the categories 'Belgian Belgians' and 'foreign Belgians' in the excerpt mentioned earlier (excerpt 4.15) can be interpreted in the same way. But nevertheless, Aisha expresses her view in these terms, literally talking about 'two communities'.

Interestingly, Aisha appears to conflate to some extent the labels 'Belgian' and 'Francophone'. In the last excerpt, she talks about a school in which there are only

‘Flemings and Belgians’, and in a previous excerpt (excerpt 4.15), Aisha clarifies that her Belgian neighbors were not Dutch-speakers but Belgian, with which she means Francophones. Note that such a collapse of Francophones with Belgians, and presented as different from or in opposition to the ‘Flemings’, recalls what we discussed above with respect to Béatrice’s (PN A) interpretation of her ‘belgitude’, who assigns the feeling almost exclusively to Francophones. This idiosyncratic definition of well-worn sociolinguistic labels also reminds us somewhat of An’s (PN B) overlapping use of the labels ‘Flemish’ and ‘Dutch-speaking’.

#### 4.3.4 Opting for the Dutch-speaking community

Turning to Aisha once more, she looks at the Belgian political divide from a certain distance. Apart from considering it a ‘sad’ thing, she frames it in psycho-sociological terms, such as stating that it symbolizes a growing ‘fear for the other’ and an unwillingness to ‘meet the other halfway’ and accept each other’s differences:

##### Excerpt 4.20

INT	oui oui pour revenir sur un sujet qu'on qu'on a abordé avant	<i>yeah yeah coming back to a subject we raised before</i>
Aisha	uhum	<i>uhum</i>
INT	xx donc s s s la lutte francophones néerlandophones [ici en Belgique]	<i>xx well t t the struggle French speakers Dutch speakers [here in Belgium]</i>
Aisha	[ah oui]	<i>[ah yes]</i>
INT	[comment vous vous positionnez?]	<i>[how do you position yourself?]</i>
Aisha	[ça je trouve ça triste hein,] moi je trouve ça malheureux tout simplement je trouve que, nous sommes un pays . avec des différences . communautaires linguistiques euh .. voilà et que il faut le vivre ensemble, je trouve ça vraiment dommage qu'il y ait tant de conflits tant de luttes tant de .. je crois que c'est, tout simplement, une peur de l'autre, et ne pas, les gens ne veulent plus faire d'effort d'aller vers les autres et d'accepter leurs différences, point	<i>[that, I think it's sad,] I find it simply unfortunate I find that, we are a country . with differences . communitarian linguistic euh .. you see and that we have to experience it together I find it really a pity that there are so many conflicts so many struggles so many .. I think it's. simply, a fear of the other, and not, people don't want to make an effort any more to go meet each other halfway and to accept our differences, period</i>

(I-C-0017-46:58)

In contrast to this rather non-committal opinion on the general Belgian political debate, Aisha expresses quite clearly a predilection for the Dutch-speaking community, which she associates with an overall idea of ‘better governance’. Therefore, speaking hypothetically, if she were to choose between the French- or the Dutch-speaking community, she says she would opt for the latter:

**Excerpt 4.21**

Aisha	si j'étais dans l'obligation de faire un choix je choisirai la communauté néerlandophone	<i>if I was obliged to make a choice I would choose the Dutch-speaking community</i>
INT	et pourquoi?	<i>and why?</i>
Aisha	ouh pour, déjà pour la scolarité des enfants, il n'y a pas photo hein, c'est un monde de différence, le, la communauté française e- et la communauté néerlandophone, pour l'enseignement moi j- je suis très contente avec l'enseignement néerlandophone	<i>ooh because, already because of the children's schooling, there's no comparison, right, it's a different world, the, the French community a- and the Dutch-speaking community, regarding education I- I am very happy with Dutch-medium education</i>

(I-C-0017-49:03)

**Excerpt 4.22**

Aisha	ce que j'ai vu, ce que j'ai pu me rendre compte dans ma vie, et les expériences que j'ai, la communauté néerlandophone est beaucoup plus ... tout ce qu'ils mettent en place est mieux géré, c'est vraiment euh, ce que je me rends compte	<i>what I have seen, what I have realized in my life, and the experiences I have, the Dutch-speaking community is a lot more ... everything they put in place is better managed, it's really euh, what I have realized</i>
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(I-C-0017-53:05)

Aisha's fondness for the Dutch-speaking community is based on a range of experiences (excerpt 4.22), particularly with Francophone secondary education, an experience on which she elaborates in some detail (I-C-0017-49:25 until 52:54). According to Aisha, there is no doubt that there are huge differences between both educational systems. Such an opinion obviously resonates with findings from previous research (see Chapter 1.3), which indicated that the perceived quality and reputation of Dutch-medium school in Brussels are important factors to its success. In order to scaffold her opinion of a Dutch-speaking community associated with ‘superior governance’, Aisha also mentions other factors, such as the impressions gathered by her oldest daughter at institutions of higher education (comparing Dutch-medium and French-medium universities), and the after-school and vacation activities that are organized in and by Dutch-speaking

community centers. She deems that these community centers are run efficiently and extend a more generous welcome than other centers not explicitly named (“un meilleur accueil” I-C-0017-53:59).

#### 4.4 PN D: HADISE AND AYDEMIR

As already mentioned in Chapter 3.2.4, both Hadise and Aydemir grew up in Belgium, as children from Turkish immigrants. The Turkish community in Brussels is typically found to have a rather strong attachment to their country of origin, even in the case of the second or third generation (Vandecandelaere, 2012). These parents’ home language is Turkish, and consequently they would be registered among the ‘Other’ category in for instance the school language figures. As mentioned before, Hadise spent her youth and childhood in a Flemish town, whereas Aydemir grew up in Brussels.

##### 4.4.1 La Belgique, c’est ma patrie

As can be seen in the following excerpt, both Hadise and Aydemir express a combination of ‘feeling Turkish’ and considering Belgium as their “patrie” (“fatherland”).

##### Excerpt 4.23

Aydemir	je me sens turc  ((...))	<i>I feel Turkish  ((...))</i>
INT	vous vous sentez aussi . en partie . belge ou?	<i>do you also feel . partly . Belgian or?</i>
Aydemir	ah comme nationalité? ici, la Belgique c'est ma patrie	<i>eh in terms of nationality? here, Belgium is my fatherland</i>
INT	d'accord vous vous sentez turc mais votre patrie c'est la Belgique	<i>ok you feel Turkish but your fatherland is Belgium</i>
Aydemir	dans ma tête c'est le- la langue c'est le turc mais ma patrie c'est ici	<i>in my head i- it's the language it's Turkish but my fatherland that's here</i>
INT	d'accord . ouais	<i>ok . yeah</i>
Aydemir	quand nous on part en vacances on est content de partir parce que c'est les vacances	<i>when we go on vacation ((to Turkey)) we're happy to leave because it's our vacation</i>

INT	ouais comme tout le monde xx	<i>yeah like every one xx</i>
Aydemir	on est content et quand on retour- on retourne on a réussi, euh, et qu'on voit les panneaux euh Liège Bruxelles ou n'importe on est très [contents aussi]	<i>we're happy and when we co- come back we made it euh, and we see the signposts euh Liège Bruxelles or whatever we're really [happy as well]</i>
INT	[ça fait plaisir aussi]	<i>[that's nice as well]</i>
Aydemir	on est chez nous on rentre chez nous	<i>we're home we come home</i>
INT	d'accord . ouais . en gij Hadise?	<i>okay . yeah . ((Dutch:)) and you Hadise?</i>
Hadise	da's dezelfde	<i>that's the same</i>
INT	tzelfde gevoel? Tu- Turks?	<i>the same feeling? Tu- Turkish?</i>
Hadise	ja ik voel me Turks ik ga graag naar Turkije maar .	<i>yes I feel Turkish I like going to Turkey but .</i>
Aydemir	on va discuter ((interrupts and invites to continue the discussion at the dinner table))	<i>((French:)) let's talk ((interrupts and invites to continue the discussion at the dinner table))</i>

(I-D-0013-30:44)

As we can observe, Hadise and Aydemir explicitly state that they “*feel Turkish*”. However, such a feeling is presented as distinct and certainly not incompatible with an identification with Belgium as a “*patrie*”, a fatherland, to which they “*come home*” to when returning from vacation. Feeling Turkish, then, is closely associated by Aydemir with (the Turkish) language, and elsewhere he also mentions that he speaks, thinks, counts and swears in Turkish. We will delve into these issues further in the chapter on language ideologies (see Chapter 7).

The reference to Belgium as their home country is also echoed in the fact that Aydemir spends considerable effort on depicting himself as ‘an ordinary Belgian’ as well. Somewhat similar to Aisha’s assertions discussed above on ‘Belgian Belgians’ and ‘foreign Belgians’ (see excerpt 4.19), Aydemir considers himself a foreigner (“*je suis étranger ici, hein*” “*I’m a foreigner here*” I-D-0013-58:05), although of a ‘Belgian’ kind. Aydemir notably distinguishes himself from foreigners who arrived more recently in Belgium because he carries out the same (financial) duties as the average Belgian, implying that newly arrived immigrants do not, and that they are less Belgian as a consequence.

## 4.4.2 Bordellicque

With regard to the Belgian political conflict, Aydemir's position is a relatively distant one, as he finds the whole matter rather ridiculous and unnecessarily complicated, calling the situation "bordellicque" ("*shambolic*" I-D-0013-34:02). Interestingly, however, he would not hesitate to move to the Region of Flanders if Belgium were to split:

### Excerpt 4.24

INT	et vous pensez que, en cas de séparation, ça va vous toucher? à vous? ou pas vraiment	<i>and do you think that, in case of a split, it would concern you? you? or not really</i>
Aydemir	pas du tout	<i>not at all</i>
INT	à Bruxelles ici	<i>in Brussels here</i>
Aydemir	moi ici, quand je vois pas, je déménage, j'ai des maisons à Diest, je déménage là, c'est tout	<i>here, when I don't see things, I move, I've got houses in Diest, I move over there, that's it</i>
INT	ah si jamais il y a séparation xx	<i>so if ever there is a split xx</i>
Aydemir	moi je me casse, tu vois, on part d'ici on se casse, hein	<i>I'm out of here, you see, we leave from here we're out of here, right</i>
INT	carrément	<i>just like that</i>
Aydemir	non, sérieux, hein! s'ils prennent tout le morceau du gâteau pour le ((sic)) santé, mutuelle, pension, chômage, ou le travail, tout est là-bas, mes enfants parlent déjà le néerlandais, il n'y a que moi il n'y a que moi alors c'est pas grave	<i>no, seriously, right! if they take the whole piece of the cake for the health care, pension, unemployment, work, everything is over there, my children already speak Dutch, there's only me there's only me so it doesn't matter</i>

(I-D-0013-12:55)

Assuming the Flemish Region would take the better piece of the cake, Aydemir says he would take his family to the house the family owns in Diest, where Hadise grew up. He even anticipates having to meet certain requirements for becoming a Flemish citizen, which the family would do beyond a doubt, given the fact that both his wife and his children speak Dutch. Similar to what we have observed in Aisha's account, he expects that Flanders would be better off in the case of the country's break-up, hence his projected move for practical reasons but not identity-related ones.

## 4.5 PN E: LIESELOT AND WIM

In a sense, Wim and Lieselot belong to the primary target group of Dutch-medium education; they are Dutch speakers with a Flemish background who wish to raise their children in Dutch. Unlike An (PN B), can also be said to belong to the primary target group, they identify more overtly with the idea of a Flemish community in Brussels, and appreciate the presence of Flemish institutions in Brussels.

### 4.5.1 The Flemish reflex

Wim, in particular, testifies to his attachment to a certain ‘Flemishness’, as can be seen in the following excerpt:

#### Excerpt 4.25

INT	maar dat brengt ons misschien ineens op wel iets anders hoe zoudt ge dan euh. uzelf euh benoemen wat? Vlaming in Brussel hebt ge daarjuist gezegd, zoiets?	<i>but that brings us perhaps to something different, how would you euh call yourself, what? Fleming in Brussels you just said, something like that?</i>
Wim	... ts mm, ja	<i>... ts mm, yes</i>
Lieselot	Brussel Brussel ja Brusselse Vlaming?	<i>Brussels Brussels yes Brussels Fleming?</i>
Wim	ja ja, Vlaamse Brusselaar	<i>yes yes, Flemish Brusseler</i>
INT	ja allez ge hebt daar wat discussie gehad ..	<i>yes allez ((interj.)) there has been some discussion<sup>22</sup> on this ..</i>
Wim	<chuckle> ik weet het ook niet he, ik denk dat ik ne Vlaamse Brusselaar ben, ik ik merk zo dat ik puur gevoelsmatig vaak nog de Vlaamse reflex heb zo	<i>&lt;chuckle&gt; I don't know either right, I think that I'm a Flemish Brusseler, I I notice that I, purely intuitively, often still have the Flemish reflex</i>
INT	en w- concreet wat is dat dan? gevoelsmatig dat ge zo denkt van, allez	<i>and wb- in concrete terms what is it then? intuitively that you think like, allez ((interj.))</i>

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<sup>22</sup> The researcher refers to a minor discussion played out in the media as to whether Dutch speakers in Brussels should call themselves “Brusselse Vlamingen” or “Vlaamse Brusselaars” (i.e. ‘Brussels Flemings’ or ‘Flemish Brusselers’).

Wim	ja dat ik zo soms zo bepaald- en ja en, dan dan probeer ik mezelf te corrigeren en, want ik vind het eigenlijk vrij belachelijk maar ik ik heb dat nog dus dan	<i>yes that I sometimes certain- and yes and, then then I try to correct myself and, because I really think it quite ridiculous but so I I still have it then</i>
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(I-E-D009-25:50)

His ‘Flemish reflex’, as Wim calls it, is presented as a ‘purely instinctive’ reaction, which he finds rather ridiculous and in need of correction, yet he believes it may be linked to his family background, since he states a little further on in the conversation that his family is rather dedicated to the Flemish cause. According to Wim, this ‘Flemish reflex’ occurs to him when discussing politics, and he distinguishes this response from his behavior in everyday language practices:

#### Excerpt 4.26

Wim	in een discussie in een communautaire discussie in een stuk respect van . rechten van Vlamingen in Brussel of in de, in de . ja, ruimer ook, dan kan ik, dan heb ik het gevoel maar dat is puur gevoelsmatig, heb ik zo soms nog een, Vlaamse reflex. of dat ge dan Vlaams Brusselaar zijt of Brussels Vl-, anderzijds maak ik er geen zaak van in Brussel en begrijp ik dat ook dat niet iedereen Nederlands spreekt de, .. uiteraard niet Nederlands en en ik heb er ook geen probleem mee om om euhm, om Frans te spreken, maar als het dan, gaat over een aantal principes poneren en ge de mogelijkheid hebt . om daarover een aantal beslissingen te nemen dan heb ik . misschien euh	<i>in a discussion, in a communitarian discussion, in a part of respect of, rights of Flemings in Brussels or in the, in the, yes more general as well, then I can then I have the feeling but that's purely instinctively, I sometimes have kind of a Flemish reflex. whether you're a Flemish Brusseler or a Brussels Fl-, on the other hand I don't make a big deal of it in Brussels and I understand it too that not every one speaks Dutch the, of course not Dutch and and I don't have a problem with with euhm, with speaking French, but then if it, is about positing a number of principles and you've got the option of taking a number of decisions then I do have perhaps euh</i>
INT	de reflex van ah toch de rechten van de Vlamingen zo	<i>the response of ah still the rights of the Flemings</i>
Wim	ja ook, ja ff ja . bijvoorbeeld ook, ook ik vind het echt pl- allez ja, wat ik daarnet ook zei, dat sluit daar eigenlijk bij aan .. dat ik zo een stuk euh, een stuk Vlaanderen in Brussel dat aanwezig is	<i>yes also, yes ff yes . for example also, also I really l(ike) allez ((interj.)) yes, what I also said just now, it sort of goes together with it .. that I a piece euh, a piece of Flanders in Brussels that is present</i>
INT	dat vindt ge iets euh	<i>you think it's something euh</i>
Wim	dat vind, ja ik vind dat, ik vind dat belangrijk	<i>I find, yes I find it, I find it important</i>

Lieselot	[ja, dat vind ik ook wel]	[yes, I agree with that]
Wim	[ik zou t jammer] allez i-, ja ik zou t jammer vinden moest da wegvallen	[I'd] allez ((interj.)) I, yes I'd find it a shame if that disappeared

(I-E-D009-27:13)

Wim connects his ‘Flemish reflex’ to explicitly political issues, for instance with respect to “*the rights of the Flemish in Brussels*”. In the same vein, he appreciates the presence of services for Dutch-speakers in Brussels, not only for their practicability (not having to go outside the city, for instance, to find a school, or cultural activities in Dutch) but also because these services represent the Flemish Community in Brussels, i.e. they are “*a piece of Flanders in Brussels*”, an assertion that Lieselot agrees with. However, even if Wim identifies with a Flemish, Dutch-speaking community, he distinguishes this identity from the day-to-day practices in the city: he speaks French whenever necessary.

Just outside the city, however, in areas which are officially Dutch-speaking but where many Francophones live (like Wezembeek-Oppem), Wim states he does make a point of speaking Dutch:

#### Excerpt 4.27

Lieselot	beginde gij in het Nederlands?	<i>do you start in Dutch?</i>
Wim	ja, soms wel, daarstraks was ik in euh Wezembeek-Oppem en dan begon ik he- heel bewust in het Nederlands	<i>yes, sometimes I do, today I was in euh Wezembeek-Oppem and then I started very consciously in Dutch</i>
Lieselot	<laugh>	<laugh>
INT	heel bewust in het Nederlands	<i>very consciously in Dutch</i>
Wim	in het Nederlands en ei- ik kreeg echt geen euh geen gehoor	<i>in Dutch and actual- I really didn't get euh any attention</i>

(I-E-D009-20:52)

#### 4.5.2 “What are they playing at?”

Lieselot holds a somewhat different position, in that she considers most of the issue to be purely political and as such without much relevance for her everyday life (excerpt 4.28). At one point in the conversation, she says, for instance, that she automatically starts speaking French in shops, as it is bound to be easier and faster.

#### Excerpt 4.28

INT	en ge hebt hetzelfde gevoel Lieselot?	<i>and you feel the same, Lieselot?</i>
Lieselot	mm cho ik heb denk ik mi- een minder euh Vlaamse. euh allez reflex dan dan jij denk ik . ik heb dat eigenlijk nog minder dan ts ja ik weet niet hoe dat dat ik, ik ben ook minder met politiek b- afijn j- gij zijt ook niet euh actief in politiek bezig maar .. ik volg op den duur minder eigenlijk euh al die argumenten van xx ja of nee en en ik ben er echt minder mee bezig, ja ik krijg er- ik lig er echt niet wakker- ik heb zoiets van	<i>mm cho ((interj.)) I have I think le- a less euh Flemish euh allez ((interj.)) reflex than than you I think . I've got it even less than ts yes I don't know how I, I'm also less inv- with politics anyway y- you're also not euh actively involved in politics but .. after a while I follow less euh all those arguments of xx yes or no and and I am really less involved, yeah I get- I really don't care- I feel like</i>
INT	whatever	<i>whatever</i>
Lieselot	waarmee zijn ze bezig? xx	<i>what are they playing at? xx</i>
Wim	<laugh> ja, ma ja da's voor een stuk wordt dat ook artificieel gevoed die discussie da wordt zo uitge.. uitgepuurd dat da ge daar op een negatieve manier door beïnvloed wordt	<i>&lt;laugh&gt; yes, but yes that's, partly it's artificially fed that discussion , it's reduced to its bare bones so that you're negatively affected by it</i>

(I-E-D009-29:08)

Not only does Lieselot claim to be a lot less sensitive about the 'Flemish' issues than her husband, she links this to a more general attitude of indifference toward politics and politicians, asking herself: "*what are they playing at?*". Wim, in his response to Lieselot's assessment, agrees that the communitarian discussions are artificially fed (by politics and the media), and he contends that these discussions are reduced to a simple linguistic dichotomy ("*its bare bones*"), which to him may not be legitimate. Again, he could be seen to contrast larger ideas to actual practices. The different positions taken up by Wim and Lieselot in these matters is also reflected in the following excerpt, in which they are asked how other people would categorize them:

#### Excerpt 4.29

INT	en denkt ge dat eh andere mensen jullie eh bijvoorbeeld die Franstalige vrienden of zo .. als als als Vlamingen percipiëren of als Brusselaars of als? ik blijf er efkes over voortgaan ma-	<i>and do you think that eh other people eh for example these francophone friends or so .. consider you to be be Flemings or Brusselers or..? I'm continuing on this same topic but</i>
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Lieselot	ik denk toch eerder als Vlamingen eigenlijk	<i>I think more as Flemings actually</i>
Wim	ja ik wou juist ne- zeggen van nie	<i>yeab I was just no- gonna say not ((as Flemings))</i>
Lieselot	nee?	<i>no?</i>
INT	dus gij van nie	<i>so you'd say not</i>
Wim	nee	<i>no</i>
Lieselot	ah ik denk da wel, ik denk da wel	<i>ah I do think so, I think so</i>

(I-E-D009-35:37)

The fact that Lieselot thinks most other people would consider them as Flemings is linked to her experience at her civil service job, where there appears to be a clear distinction between the Francophones on the one hand and the Flemings on the other:

#### Excerpt 4.30

Lieselot	ja, misschien dat ik dat doortrek vanop het werk eh want daar is dat natuurlijk wel echt eh allez ja DE Vlamingen en DE Fran- ja dat is gewoon zo ja, als ge over de collega's spreekt in abstracto	<i>yes, maybe I extend the notion from work eh because there's it's of course really eh allez ((interj.)) yes THE Flemings and THE Fran- yes it's like that yes, when you speak about colleagues in an abstract way</i>
Wim	ja maar dat is, dat is dat is een, dat is eigenlijk een microklimaat op uw werk binnen Brussel, dat euhm die niet hetzelfde is dan van de mensen hier in de stad	<i>yes but that is, that's that's a, that's actually a microclimate at your work within Brussels, which euhm which is not the same as that of the people here in the city</i>

(I-E-D009-36:46)

Lieselot suggests that the clear-cut division between 'Francophones' and 'Flemings' at work might be the reason for her maintaining the distinction in other contexts. In his response, Wim refers to his wife's work place as a microclimate that is different from the 'climate' experienced by "the people in the city", however generic a category this may be.

For Lieselot, 'being Flemish' is a purely practical matter, rather than a political one: she acknowledges it as part of her life but distances herself from any political implications the label might imply. Note that she does agree with her husband regarding the presence of Flemish institutions in Brussels as something important. Flemishness is a much more political matter for Wim, who, at the same time, seems more embarrassed about his 'Flemish reflex'. In his account, however, he

separates political opinions from his own everyday language practices, and more generally, from what happens ‘in the city’: his opinion on the importance of ‘a piece of Flanders in Brussels’ is presented as standing aside from his language practices (i.e. speaking French or not, see excerpt 4.26), the communitarian political discussion is called artificial (excerpt 4.28), and Lieselot’s workplace is according to Wim a microclimate different from that of ‘the people in the city’ (excerpt 4.30). He adjusts his language practices according to a certain territoriality, talking French when necessary within the officially bilingual Brussels Capital Region, but insisting on speaking Dutch when on Flemish ‘territory’.

#### 4.6 BELGIUM, THE BELGIAN ISSUE, AND BEYOND: DISCUSSION

##### *Labels*

The aim of this chapter was to provide an emic perspective on how our informants-parents relate to a number of sociolinguistic labels that are often applied in research and policy-making with regard to Brussels, and more specifically to Dutch-medium education in Brussels. Our data suggest that the application of such coarse categorizations is problematic. Firstly, all informants can be observed to relate to a multiplicity of identity ‘categories’ or ‘labels’ in various and varied ways. Secondly, what it means to be x or y appears fundamentally unstable to our respondents, as the definition of the various categories in itself is polysemous, subject to qualification, and even contradictory at times. Put differently, the labels are assigned multiple roles, depending on the context in which they are used, and the informants can be seen to appropriate and reappropriate these labels as they see fit. From an etic perspective, the usage of these labels by the respondents themselves may often even seem incongruous.

Take, for instance, Alain’s (PN A) struggles with what it means to be Francophone, and Aisha (PN C) discriminating ‘Belgian Belgians’ from ‘foreign Belgians’, An (PN B) stating that she is ‘Flemish in the sense of Dutch-speaking’, and Wim (PN E) attempting to relate his ‘Flemish reflex’ to living in Brussels. At the same time, however, Wim’s Flemish reflex appears to be consigned to political discussions, i.e. meta-sociolinguistic behavior, and does not apply to social practices in Brussels itself, even if the reflex does recur whenever he finds himself ‘on Flemish territory’. We could thus characterize many of these accounts as ambivalent, even incompatible, but certainly pragmatic.

Although the issues relevant to each of the informants vary greatly, the examples listed here converge in that a combination of identity options is usually not seen as problematic or contradictory in the eyes of the informants themselves, cf. for instance Ricardo's suggestion that as one accumulates 'brotherlands', a single fatherland may become less important. The identity options forwarded by most informants are simply part of who they are or have become (cf. also the notion of historical body discussed in Chapter 1.1.3). As such, we can easily link the options to the informants' individual trajectories (as briefly sketched in Chapter 3.2). At times, however, our participants may feel that a particular combination of identity options does present an incompatibility to 'the outside world'. This is expressed rather explicitly by An (PN B), when she regrets having to exclusively identify with a single language community upon having children in Brussels, when her own sense of linguistic identity may be less easily contained or pinned down. Alain's account stands out as he may be the only one to problematize the imposition of linguistic identity as an identity marker as such. We will look into his account more closely in Chapter 8.

#### *The Belgian issue*

Since our interest also lies with Dutch-medium education in Brussels as a potentially politically-charged choice, we also looked into how the 'Belgian issue' is dealt with in our conversations. In this respect, we observed a difference in the way informants with or without a strong link to Belgian roots deal with this issue. The informants with a relatively straightforward Belgian trajectory and non-migratory background (PN A, PN E, and An from PN B) all quite early on in the discussion naturally drifted toward the political aspects of 'Dutch-medium education in Brussels'. In contrast, in conversations with the second-generation immigrants (PN C, PN D) and Ricardo (PN B), the issue was not spontaneously raised but only prompted by the researcher. This does not imply a total indifference toward these aforementioned political aspects, for these parents do take up a position. However, rather than being personally invested in them and openly choosing a side, they respond to them from the sidelines, commenting upon the sadness (Aisha, PN C) or ridiculousness (Aydemir, PN D) of the issue. By contrast, our second-generation immigrant informants do display a positive view of the Dutch-speaking institutions in Brussels overall, including Dutch-medium education. The alleged superiority of these institutions over French-speaking ones is presented as unquestionable (e.g. Aisha's (PN C) assertion that "il n'y a pas photo" *there's no comparison*). These observations align with what we know from previous quantitative research (see Chapter 1.3), in which the quality

and good reputation of Dutch-medium schools is mentioned as an important factor in explaining why parents choose to put their children in such schools. We should, however, be cautious about this interpretation: what would seem to be a certain predilection for one language community over another, can of course also be a posthoc framing of their choice for Dutch-medium education, and/or related to the particular school in our research and its educational program.

### *Language and identity*

A final but related line of inquiry is to what extent and in what ways the parents relate particular identity categories to language use and language practices, cf. May's (2005) assertion that particular languages remain for many people an important and constitutive factor of their identity (see Chapter 1.1.2). Even though we will deal with this issue in more detail in the chapter on language ideologies, we can already point to a number of instances in which our informants link language to identity. For example, Aisha (PN C) associates the Arabic language with the 'traditions' that she wishes to uphold, related as they are to her Muslim religious identity. Aydemir (PN D), when talking about Turkish culture, invariably mention the Turkish language as part of who he is, 'inside his head'. Finally, Wim's (PN E) negotiation of a 'Brussels Flemish' identity is partly based on the distinction he makes between language use in the city on the one hand, and politics on the other. In the next chapter then, we will home in precisely on the identity options that the city of Brussels itself affords to our informants.

# CHAPTER 5

## BRUSSELS, AN URBAN IDENTITY

Large cities have always been considered different from the nation states in which they are located. As David Block (2006, p. 45; referring to Cohen, 1997) puts it in his discussion on global cities, “they have reached a point in their development that they are de-nationalized as regards lifestyle and points of reference (London is not *really* England (or Britain), New York is not *really* America and Paris is not *really* France)” (italics in original). Arguably, urbanization and globalization do not only affect huge metropolises (‘global cities’, cf. Sassen, 2001) this way, but also smaller cities (particularly in the ‘Western’ world), as Vertovec (2007) mentions in his discussion on superdiversity. Both in Montreal or Amsterdam, for instance, researchers have found youngsters professing a local identity, linked to the city they live in, rather than to broader ethnicity labels, either linked to the nation state they live in or the ethnicity of their ancestors (Lamarre & Lamarre, 2009; Welle, 2011). Such a ‘city’ category serves to bypass the traditional (often experienced as imposed from the top-down) affiliations, such as ‘Franco vs. Anglo’ in Montréal, or ‘Dutch vs. immigrant’ in Amsterdam. A local identity may embrace all kinds of (linguistically or culturally) mixed forms while at the same time enabling an identification with a coherent entity that is rooted in common local practices and distinguishable from the rest of the country. Particularly among second-generation migrant youngsters, local identity is seen to provide a solution that seamlessly welds an identification with the country of residence with one with the culture of origin. Rather than being nested in national identity, local identity forms an alternative to it (Welle, 2011, p. 262).

In Brussels, Janssens’ language survey results (2007, 2013) indicate that many inhabitants of the city indeed identify as Brusselers<sup>23</sup>. He relates these findings

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<sup>23</sup> In 2006, 41.7% of the respondents in Janssens’ sample responded they identified with ‘Brussels’, compared to ‘Belgian’ (a larger 64%) and ‘European’ (a smaller 34.9%). In 2012, this figure rose to 55.0% and became the category which most respondents identified with, more than with ‘Belgian’

explicitly to the cultural and linguistic diversity in the city, as the label ‘Brussels’ offers a referential framework that can encompass multiple languages and a variety of cultural backgrounds. In the present chapter, our focus will therefore lie on how the participants in our study, all with children enrolled in Dutch-medium education, identify with a local ‘Brussels’ identity, and by which images of ‘Brussels’ such an identification is scaffolded.

## 5.1 PN A: BÉATRICE AND ALAIN

### 5.1.1 Zinneke

It should not come as a surprise that Alain and Béatrice (PN A), both born, raised, and having lived most of their lives in Brussels, relate strongly to ‘being from Brussels’. Béatrice is particularly proud of her Brussels’ roots, and she celebrates the hybridity that these roots entail, crystallized in the concept of ‘zinneke’ (excerpt 5.1). A ‘zinneke’ was originally a local word to name mixed-breed street dogs that were thrown in the river Zenne/Senne, hence the name, but it came to refer to all inhabitants of Brussels, themselves of ‘mixed’ origins.

#### Excerpt 5.1

Béatrice	moi je suis plutôt une zinneke, donc je suis un peu, je me considère entre les deux	<i>I'm more of a zinneke, so I'm a bit, I consider myself an in-between</i>
INT	ouais un peu mélange ouais ..	<i>yeah a bit of a mix yeah ..</i>
Béatrice	oui, je vraiment, dans certains cas je, je me sens très très éloignée des wallons et dans d'au- et, et plus proche des flamands et dans d'autres cas. mais ça je crois que c'est spécifique aux bruxellois d'ailleurs, parce qu'un bruxellois	<i>yes, I really, in some cases I, I feel very very distant from the Walloons and in oth-, and, and closer to the Flemings and in other cases. but that I think is specific for Brusselers by the way, because a Brusseler</i>
INT	tu te sens pas du tout wallonne quoi?	<i>you don't feel Walloon at all?</i>
Béatrice	moi? non dis	<i>me? hell no</i>
INT	rien à voir	<i>not at all</i>

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(38.4%) and the local *commune* (36.2%). The question was not asked in the 2001 survey (Janssens, 2013).



INT	ah oui tu crois, avant euh, tu, avant . que que Emma ((Béatrice's daughter)) xxx	<i>ah yes you think, before euh, you, before . that that Emma ((Béatrice's daughter)) xxx</i>
Béatrice	ouais, ouais, ouais, ouais, je disais ça tout le temps, je trouve (trouvais?) ça drôle, je sais pas, ça me vient naturellement	<i>yeah, yeab, yeab, yeab, I said that all of the time, I think (thought?) it's funny, I don't know, it's something natural</i>

(I-A-0010-41:45)

We already mentioned in Chapter 3.2.1 that Béatrice recalls her mother and particularly her grandmother talking ‘Brusseleir’, which she describes as a mix of French and Dutch. In excerpt 5.2, we can see how Béatrice claims to some extent the same pedigree for herself, stating that she sometimes inserts ‘Flemish’ words in her language, calling it ‘her Brussels side’, and thus explicitly reasserting the link between a Brussels urban identity, which she claims for herself, and (in this case a linguistic) hybridity. Clearly, language competence in a strict sense is not the issue here, since only a couple of words are involved, linked to specific pragmatic circumstances (i.e. being angry). Such language behavior, according to Béatrice, is not the result of having children in a Dutch-medium school (or increased contact with Dutch-speakers); rather, it is presented as a part of what she is and has always been: “I say it all of the time” and “I used to say it all of the time”.

The fact that Béatrice regards (or wishes to regard) such language behavior as a part of her identity is underscored by comments that she makes a bit further on in the conversation, in which she presents it as behavior that is ‘natural’ to her (“donc pour moi, c’est assez naturel” ‘*so to me, it’s quite natural*’ I-A-0010-42:30), and instinctive (excerpt 5.3). Again, the ‘reflexes’ she talks about are explicitly aligned with a Brussels identity:

### Excerpt 5.3

Béatrice	j’ai des réflexes comme ça ouais, .. mais ça c’est de nouveau du brux- à mon avis, c’est bruxellois, tu vois	<i>I have reflexes like that yeab, .. but that’s again brux- in my opinion, that’s bruxellois, you see</i>
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(I-A-0010-43:05)

The notion of a mixed language is also historicized, not only with respect to Béatrice’s own story through the link with her mother and grandmother, but also in relation to a ‘past’ version of the city. It is the language that used to be spoken, and/or is spoken by the old folk:

#### Excerpt 5.4

Béatrice        et à l'époque, t'avais plein de petits        *at the time, you had plenty of old folk euh*  
vieux euh .. ouais ils parlaient tous        *.. yeah they talked like that*  
comme ça

(I-A-0010-43:34)

In sum, we observe how Béatrice claims a Brussels identity, depicted in the image of a 'zinneke'. It is rooted in her family background, linked to an 'old' Brussels, and exemplified in language behavior that is presented as characteristic for 'bruxellois'. Interestingly, as we will see in Chapter 6, such an image of the local identity (defined as a 'being of both') might also offer Alain and Béatrice a notion of a coherent self that can be projected onto the children, as it provides a framework that may incorporate the Francophone background of the family and having the children in Dutch-medium education. The notion of a Brussels local identity is also useful because it serves to counter external comments and/or pressure (see excerpt 4.7 in Chapter 4).

## 5.2 PN B: AN AND RICARDO

### 5.2.1 "Brussels is very diverse"

When compared to Béatrice's account above, the identification with a local Brussels identity is much less straightforward for An and Ricardo. In the previous chapter, we discussed An's frustration with the two-fold organizational structure in Brussels and how this eventually has led her to feel 'more Flemish'. From her point of view, the current situation generates a 'halfhearted' Brussels, and makes it impossible for a Brussels identity to 'stand up for itself', as she puts it:

#### Excerpt 5.5

An                zo creëer je eigenlijk een halfslachtig        *this way you create a halfhearted Brussels*  
Brussel eh ge hebt eh ge ge hebt        *eh there's eh. there there's no identity of a*  
geen identiteit van Brussel die, of        *Brussels that, or stands up for itself, and*  
voor zichzelf opkomt, en euh.. allez        *euh.. allez ((interj.)) yeah, that's ehm that's*  
ja, da's ehm das mijn visie                *my perspective*

(I-B-0006-1:55)

Her frustration with this situation and her perspective on Brussels as a city that cannot stand up for itself, essentially a political viewpoint, does not, however, prevent her from identifying to some extent with the city she lives in, albeit not unreservedly:

### Excerpt 5.6

An            eh hm ja ik zou mij wel . ik voel mij            *eh hm yes I would . I don't really feel*  
nog nie echt, Brusselaar maar, ik            *Brusseler yet but, I do feel at home here yes,*  
voel mij hier wel thuis ja, Brussel is            *Brussels is so cosmopolitan it's also hard to*  
zo kosmopoliet ge kunt ook            *say that Brussels. yeah Brussels is Belgian*  
moeilijk zeggen da Brussel. ja            *but Brussels is also, very international, so*  
Brussel is Belgisch maar Brussel is  
ook, heel internationaal, dus

(I-B-0006-3:35)

As we can observe, the identification with Brussels is not expressed in terms of a local identity, An “does not really feel Brusseler”, but it is expressed in terms of ‘feeling at home’. Furthermore, the image of Brussels that An invokes is one related to cosmopolitanism and internationalism. It is an image of a multifaceted contemporary global city, and as such quite different from the image of a ‘zinneke’ conveyed by Béatrice (PN A), which is rooted in locality and history. An concludes:

### Excerpt 5.7

An            Brussel is heel veelzijdig hè            *Brussels is very diverse hè*

(I-B-0006-2:40)

Ricardo’s ideas on this issue are similar to those his wife holds. Whereas he does not explicitly identify with Brussels (“pero yo no, no tengo una identificación con Bruselas” *‘but I don’t, I don’t identify with Brussels’* III-B-D012-32:51), he states that he has developed some affection for it (“tienes un afecto” *‘you have some/an affection’* III-B-D012-28:31), which he relates to his personal trajectory in the past decade: living and working in Brussels, having children ‘from Brussels’, having children who go to school in Brussels. Like An, he also summons a cosmopolitan image of Brussels:

### Excerpt 5.8

Ricardo        Bruselas es una especie, estas en            *Brussels is a kind of, you’re in the middle*  
medio de ninguna parte, es una            *of nowhere, it’s a kind of a no man’s land,*  
especie de terra nullius, no? . pues            *right? . so so so . so there’s people from*  
pues pues . pues hay gente de todas            *everywhere*  
partes

(III-B-D012-30:15)

Brussels is described here as ‘kind of no man’s land’ (“terra nullius”), meaning a land belonging to no one, rather than being deserted, as it actually houses people from everywhere.

## 5.2.2 “Tu de bruxelloise no tienes nada”

At a later point in the interview, when some of the previously raised issues relating to An’s sense of belonging and a possible link with Brussels are discussed, Ricardo intervenes.

### Excerpt 5.9

An	((@ Ricardo:)) me pregunta si como. como me identificaría . como. eh. flamenca bruxelloise o como.. ((@ INT:)) wat heb je gezegd?	((@ Ricardo in Spanish:)) he asks me whether. how. how I would define myself . like . eh. Flemish bruxelloise or like .. ((@ INT in Dutch:)) what did you say?
INT	ik weet het niet hè ja het kan vanalles zijn	well I don't know it could be many things
An	<laughter>	<laughter>
Ricardo	flamenco-bruxelloise? tu no eres flamenca-bruxelloise	((in Spanish:)) Flemish-bruxelloise? you're not Flemish-bruxelloise
INT	era una sugestión una sugerencia	it was a suggestion a suggestion
Ricardo	tu de bruxelloise no tienes nada	you don't have anything of a bruxelloise
An	nonononono pero como me siento . como me me . percibo	nonononono but how I feel . how I. I. perceive myself
Ricardo	pero bruxelloise no	but bruxelloise no
An	pues pero de Brujas todavía me identifico	ok but I still identify with being from Bruges

(I-B-0006-16:55)

Apparently, to Ricardo it is quite clear that An is definitely not ‘bruxelloise’, and even when An makes it explicit that the question was about self-perception or feelings, he repeats his initial statement. Perhaps most interesting here is that Ricardo voices a negative attribution of identity, i.e. he says what someone is not. It is one of the few occurrences of such ‘negative’ expression, of ‘non-belonging’ in our data (for another example, see PN D, this chapter, section 5.4). Additionally, the fragment illustrates how an identity option is dialogically negotiated and constructed in discourse. An firstly takes the initiative to return to the previous discussion and raise the issue of her sense of belonging with her husband (hereby briefly assuming the role of the interviewer). Secondly, the dismissal by Ricardo of her having any bond whatsoever with Brussels obviously

influences her response, as she eventually says she still identifies with being from Bruges, her home town in Flanders.

In any case, we can observe that for An and Ricardo, the degree of identification with a city identity is rather low. Their relatively recent arrival and the uncertain duration of their stay probably play a part in this. However, An does propose an image of Brussels as a place that is *not really* Belgium (“*Brussels is Belgian but Brussels is also very international*” excerpt 5.6), which echoes almost literally Block’s (2006) words quoted above on the global city as a de-nationalized entity. Ricardo’s assertion of Brussels being ‘a kind of terra nullius’ can be interpreted in the same light. Arguably, it is An and Ricardo’s perception of the cosmopolitan nature of the city that makes them ‘feel at home’,<sup>24</sup> as it mirrors their own family’s make-up.

### 5.3 PN C: AISHA

#### 5.3.1 A pragmatic attachment

Aisha, like Alain and Béatrice (PN A), spent her entire life in Brussels, but unlike them she does not speak about the city as much. She acknowledges a Brussels component to her identity when the interviewer explicitly asks for it (excerpt 5.10), but she does not specifically address the issue in other circumstances.

##### Excerpt 5.10

INT            comment vous eh, vous, vous-            *how do you eh, you, yourself do you feel*  
                 même vous vous sentez bruxelloise?        *bruxelloise? or ..*  
                 ou ..

Aisha            oui moi je me sens bruxelloise            *yes I do feel bruxelloise*

(I-C-0017-39:08)

We could call Aisha’s relationship with the city she lives in as a more pragmatic one, for it is not idealized into an abstract sense of belonging such as we found among some of the other parents. Aisha does mention the ethnic and linguistic heterogeneity as one of Brussels’ defining trademarks at different points in the conversation. However, she presents it as a fact, not as an image of Brussels that she holds dear or that provides her with some kind of identity framework. In the

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<sup>24</sup> In this respect, An’s assertions about on Brussels being anonymous and therefore ‘easygoing’ (“ongedwongen” III-B-D012) that we collected during the feedback interview add to this idea of cosmopolitanism.

next excerpt, for instance, she invokes the fact that people in Brussels are often multilingual, which explains why she never had any problems communicating with the school:

#### Excerpt 5.11

Aisha	parce que bon ici à Bruxelles, évidemment les gens ne sont pas seulement néerlandophone ou seulement francophone en majorité, en générale, donc on a toujours, on est toujours arrivé à communiquer, moi avec le peu de néerlandais que je connaissais	<i>'cause well here in Brussels, obviously people are not just Dutch-speaking or French-speaking in, in general, so we always, we were always able to communicate, me with the little Dutch I knew</i>
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(I-C-0017-13:08)

At another point in the conversation, Brussels is described as consisting of “all sorts of communities” with “people from all origins” (excerpt 5.12), a description very similar to the notion of cosmopolitanism we find in An’s account above. However, Aisha mentions it in the context of the Belgian political impasse<sup>25</sup>, and it serves merely as an illustration to support her claim that people should try to work together.

#### Excerpt 5.12

Aisha	et franchement je crois qu’ici en tous cas déjà à Bruxelles on le voit vraiment avec toutes les sortes de communautés qu’on, qu’on a, euh des gens de toutes origines, mais ce serait grave si tout le monde commençait à se faire la guerre	<i>and honestly I believe that here in any case already in Brussels you can really see it with all sorts of communities we, we have, euh people from all origins, but it would be bad if everyone started to make war</i>
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(I-C-0017-47:52)

All in all, the extent to which Aisha identifies with Brussels could be considered relatively low. In this respect, her position actually aligns with Aydemir and Hadise’s account (PN D), which we discuss below.

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<sup>25</sup> At the time of the conversation (November 2010, see Appendix A), negotiations to form a new Belgian federal government had come to a prolonged stalemate after the most recent general elections. Eventually, the coalition formation talks would last a total of 541 days, the longest recorded government formation in history (Guinness Book of Records).

## 5.4 PN D: HADISE AND AYDEMIR

### 5.4.1 “Je dis pas, dans ma tête, que je suis bruxellois”

Similarly to what we could observe in Aisha’s account (PN C), Brussels does not seem to play a role in the identity positioning of Aydemir and Hadise, which, as we have discussed in the previous chapter, is generally based on a combination of ‘la patrie’ (a nation, in this case Belgium) with the Turkish culture and language. In the following excerpt, we can see how Aydemir, despite having spent most of his life in Brussels, explicitly states that he does not feel ‘bruxellois’:

#### Excerpt 5.13

Aydemir	vous vous sentez anversoïis ou vous sentez belge?	<i>do you feel anversoïis ((from Antwerp)) or do you feel Belgian?</i>
INT	beh. là je suis bruxelloïis, quoi, ça fait 10 ans que je suis à Bruxelles. je vais à Anvers et je xx que j’ai vécu là, jusque mes 18 ans	<i>well. now I’m bruxelloïis it’s been ten years since moved to Brussels. I go to Antwerp and I xx that I lived there, until I was 18</i>
Aydemir	ah tu dis que tu es bruxelloïis tu dis pas que tu es belge?	<i>ah you say you’re bruxelloïis you don’t say you’re Belgian?</i>
INT	moi je suis bruxelloïis, et- et belge aussi	<i>me I’m bruxelloïis , and- and Belgian too</i>
Aydemir	moi je dis pas, dans ma tête, que je suis bruxelloïis	<i>I don’t say. that in my head I’m bruxelloïis</i>
INT	non? pas du tout?	<i>no? not at all?</i>
Aydemir	belge, disons (?) c’est ma patrie je vois franchement je vois pas de différence Bruxelles Anvers Liège disons . dans ma tête .. quand je rentre . quand je rentre de vacances on est euh assez éloigné de x pays alors on rentre on est content de rentrer en Belgique content de rentrer en Belgique pas eh content de rentrer à Bruxelles	<i>Belgian, let’s say (?) it’s my home country I see honestly I don’t see the difference Brussels Antwerp Liège let’s say . in my head .. when I return . when I return from vacation we are euh quite far from x country so we get back we xx happy to get back to Belgium happy to get back to Belgium not eh happy to get back to Brussels</i>

(I-D-0013-32:28)

Interestingly, the topic is initiated by Aydemir, not by the researcher: the fragment was recorded when the whole family and the researcher were sitting around the dinner table, discussing an emotional attachment to Turkey and Turkish traditions more generally (see the discussion in the previous chapter, section 4.4). Aydemir

then reverts the interviewer-informant pattern – probably facilitated through the ‘dinner table talk’-setting, a more convivial and literally ‘closer’ setting than the previous conversation phase, which had happened in the living room – by asking the researcher a question about his own sense of belonging, proposing two options, i.e. Belgian or from Antwerp (the researcher’s region of origin). Aydemir is somewhat surprised at the answer, as the researcher declares that since he’s been living in Brussels for a number of years, he is a “bruxellois” now. Aydemir reacts to this statement by saying that ‘in his head’ he never says he is bruxellois. As an illustration of this, he explains that when he gets back from vacation, he is happy to be back in Belgium, not particularly Brussels, and for him, in this respect there is no difference between Brussels, or other Belgian cities, such as Antwerp or Liège.

This observation is very much different from the assertions formulated by Welle (2011) about second-generation immigrants in Amsterdam discussed above, for whom a city identity provides an alternative that can neutralize possible tensions between (linguistic, social, cultural) affiliations that are either related to the home or the host country. Hadise and Aydemir do not claim such a city identity (in fact, the conceptualization of ‘Belgian Turks’ as opposed to ‘Turkish Turks’, also briefly elaborated by Hadise and Aydemir (I-D-0013-46:45), may serve this purpose). Possibly, the differences between our results and those found by Welle can be explained by an age/generation factor, in that her respondents were young adults.

## 5.5 PN E: LIESELOT AND WIM

### 5.5.1 “You’re a bit of both”

For Wim and Lieselot (PN E), the question as to what extent they adhere to a Brussels’ identity prompts a rather ambivalent response. Their response seems to reflect the tricky position that the (political, institutional, cultural) Flemish presence holds in Brussels. In the previous chapter (4.5), we saw how Wim appreciates the presence of these Dutch-speaking institutions in Brussels as ‘a piece of Flanders in Brussels’. As we can observe in the following excerpt (5.14), he also relates this position to that ‘part of him’ that is ‘still Flemish’, immediately adding that on the other hand (“anderzijds”), he also feels “Brusselaar”.

### Excerpt 5.14

Wim	da's een da's een stuk wat mij nog waarom dat ik nog Vlaming ben hoewel ja dat ik eh bijvoorbeeld aan Vlaamse Brusselaar of Brusselse Vlaming zou geven ik voel mij anderzijds ook wel Brusselaar ik kan mij echt als . Brusselaar na- ten opzichte van. Vlaanderen ook eh. voelen dus euh.	<i>that's a that's part of me which still why I'm still a Fleming though yes that I eh would give for instance to Flemish Brusseler or Brussels Fleming I do also feel on the other hand Brusseler I can really feel as a . Brusseler in relation to Flanders so euh.</i>
Lieselot	joa ba ja	<i>yeah well yes</i>
INT	ja da wou ik net vragen als ge dan . terug naar u familie komt of zo in Vlaanderen euh	<i>yes that's what I wanted to ask when you . go back to your family or whoever in Flanders euh</i>
Wim	ja ma dan dra- gedraag ik mij anders <laughter> da's een stuk allez ge hebt-	<i>yes but then beb- I behave differently &lt;laughter&gt; that's partly allez ((interj.)) you've got</i>
INT	dan voelt ge u Brusselaar	<i>then you feel Brusseler</i>
Wim	ge hebt die gespleten . dingen denk ik eh	<i>you got those divided . things I think eh</i>
INT	ja . ja	<i>yes . yes</i>
Wim	en dan en dan ga ik die kant wat meer . euh, een stukje uitdagen	<i>and then and then I sort of . euh, start provoking that side a bit more</i>
Lieselot	ja da's waar, ik heb dat ook wel	<i>yes that's true, I also have it in fact</i>
Wim	een stukje uitdagend dan, anders poneren euh	<i>a bit provocative then, bring up things differently euh</i>
Lieselot	ge verdedigt Brussel dan altijd, hè, dat is zo	<i>you always defend Brussels, right, it's like that</i>
Wim	ja de d d d ja, dus we zij- ge zijt allebei een beetje	<i>yes the th th th yes, so we are- you're a bit of both</i>

(I-E-D009-28:18)

As can be observed in this excerpt, Wim explicitly formulates the two-sidedness of feeling Flemish and Brusseler, in “you got those divided things” and “you’re a bit of both”. The two components of this composite identity, however, are presented as particularly manifest when the person in question finds him/herself on ‘foreign soil’, as it were: feeling Flemish in Brussels distinguishes them from other Brusselers, and feeling Brusseler in Flanders distinguishes them from other Flemings. Wim asserts that his behavior is different when he visits his family in

Flanders, claiming a more defiant Brussels' identity for himself in those circumstances. Lieselot immediately confirms that in such contexts, "you always defend Brussels". Their Flemish-Brussels identity is thus performed differently in different spaces, spaces which they explicitly distinguish between.

### 5.5.2 Brussels and opportunities

In contrast to An (PN B), Wim and Lieselot do not find it problematic that one has to choose activities in one language or the other in Brussels. Quite to the contrary, as can be seen in the following excerpt:

#### Excerpt 5.15

Lieselot	ja en ik, ook voor de kinderen hè . voor de kinderen, het aanbod is ook wel eh xx, eigenlijk enorm plezant dat ze dat hebben hè	<i>yes and I, also for the children hè . for the children, the range of activities is also really eh xx, in fact it's great that they have this hè</i>
Wim	‘t is gi- ‘t is bijna . ‘t is disproportioneel groot	<i>it's gi- it's almost . it's disproportionately large</i>
Lieselot	eh ze kunnen eigenlijk naar een Franstalig stuk, ze kunnen naar een Nederlandstalig stuk, ze ku-, allez x die, al die kansen hè, ik vind dat wel een belangrijk punt	<i>eh in fact they can go to a French-spoken play, they can go to a Dutch-spoken play, they ca-, allez ((interj.)) x those, all these opportunities hè, I think that's an important point</i>

(I-E-D009-30:36)

Wim and Lieselot regard the dual organization of much of cultural life in Brussels not as a problem, but in terms of the opportunities it entails, particularly for the children, such as for instance the fact that one can go to a Dutch-spoken or French-spoken play. According to Lieselot, Brussels is 'a mix', and the presence of Flemish institutions is said to contribute to this mix and to offer an enrichment for the city's cultural life (I-E-D009-30:07). As we will see in Chapter 6.5, the notion of a mixed city as playground of opportunities plays an important role in the way Wim and Lieselot construct and imagine their children's future.

## 5.6 BRUSSELS, AN URBAN IDENTITY: DISCUSSION

In this chapter, we investigated our informants' identification with Brussels, and looked into the 'images' of Brussels that emerged from their accounts. We know from previous research that identification with a local entity is on the rise

internationally (see, among others, Welle, 2011), and quantitative research by Janssens on and in Brussels (Janssens, 2007, 2013) suggests that this may be the case for Brussels as well. From our data, however, it appears that the level of identification with Brussels as a local identity varies considerably among our informants and the way they depict such a city identity appears to be quite diversified as well. We can generally discern three ways of dealing with Brussels as an identity option: Brussels as a ‘local’ identity, a pragmatic way of ‘being from Brussels’, and Brussels as a ‘mix’.

#### *Brussels as a ‘local’ identity*

In our data only one informant (Béatrice, PN A) can be observed to demonstrate a clear adherence to a local ‘Brussels’ identity. She constructs such an identity through the image of a hybrid *zinneke*, which she describes as ‘*in between*’ (“entre les deux”) the Walloons on the one hand and the Flemish on the other. To Béatrice, this notion of ‘being bruxelloise’ serves to avoid other categorizations (in her case ‘Francophone’ as an identity category) in a similar way as the notion of *belgitude*, discussed in the previous chapter. In order to claim such a local identity, Béatrice anchors her professed identity as a ‘real’ Brusseler to her own personal trajectory, having grown up in Brussels, and to a local identity rooted in the past. She does so through referring to ‘Brusseleir’, a local vernacular said to be a mix of French and Dutch, which she links to her mother and her grandmother as well as to the ‘old folk’ in the ‘old days’ (“à l’époque”). Béatrice then subscribes to this pedigree by proclaiming that she also inserts ‘Flemish’ words into her language, and that this comes “naturally” to her.

#### *A pragmatic approach to ‘being from Brussels’*

Like Béatrice (PN A), Aisha (PN C) and Aydemir (PN D) spent their entire life living in Brussels, but in their accounts they deal with ‘being from Brussels’ in a much more pragmatic way. Aydemir (PN D) even literally states that *‘in his head’* he never says he is from Brussels. Aisha (PN C), although she identifies as being Brusseler, does not appear to carry some kind of image of the city with which she identifies. Although she comments on the specific urban characteristics of the city in which ‘*all sorts of communities’ ‘from different origins’* live together, these comments are given as observations, and are not translated into an image of a cosmopolitan urban community, such as the one presented by An (PN B), for instance. Contrary to the findings from Welle (2011) and other scholars, the ‘second-generation immigrants’ in our sample were thus found to be the ones who least related to a local ‘city’ identity.

### *Brussels as a 'mix'*

Like PN C and PN D, both the parents in PN B and PN E do not profess a strong identification with Brussels as such, but they do construct an image of Brussels as 'a mix' in their accounts. However, they differ somewhat in the type of diversity which they identify. Whereas An and Ricardo (PN B) invoke the sociocultural and linguistic diversity typically associated with the idea of a 'global city' as being one of Brussels' main assets, Wim and Lieselot (PN E) refer rather to the 'traditional' mix of French-speaking and Dutch-speaking facilities in Brussels. To An, the notion of an international, cosmopolitan city is what makes her 'feel at home' in Brussels. What does seem to bother her – and what she posits as an impediment to the construction of a Brussels' identity that can "stand up for itself" – is the divided nature of the political organization of the city.

It is possible that An's family circumstances (and the trajectory that led to them) can partly explain why her position in this matter differs somewhat from the one proposed by Wim and Lieselot (PN E). Although all three of them are originally from Flanders and in a sense immigrants in Brussels, their frame of reference is not the same, as An's is marked by a much more international dimension. By contrast, Wim and Lieselot, although not against bilingual initiatives such as bilingual education, celebrate the presence of Flemish institutions in Brussels as it contributes to the 'mix' that Brussels is. In their eyes, the existence of parallel institutions offers opportunities and possibilities rather than obstacles.

In conclusion, we can observe that an identification with Brussels as a 'city' identity is not overtly and consistently marked among our informants. In this sense, our findings do not corroborate previous research. In fact, only one parent (Béatrice, PN A) clearly presents herself as being 'bruxelloise'. If such an identity can indeed be viewed as a 'de-nationalized' construct (Block, 2006), in the case of Béatrice it does not include the idea of a cosmopolitan internationalism; rather, it is firmly linked to her own trajectory and grounded in local history. Furthermore, whereas Welle (2011) found that a local identity serves among second-generation migrants as an alternative to conflicting identities related to the country of residence on the one hand and the culture of origin on the other, our second-generation migrant informants were the ones who identified the least with Brussels as a 'city' identity. As we have seen in the previous chapter, such a combination of identities does not appear to be necessarily problematic to these informants, cf. for instance Aydemir (PN D), who "feels Turkish" but still considers Belgium as his "fatherland". A city identity possibly serves Béatrice (PN

A) the most, as her self-representation in terms of a 'hybrid' identity may provide a coherent framework that can solve the 'conflict' between being considered a Francophone and sending the children to a Dutch-medium school. To sum up, the label 'Brussels', if forwarded as an identity marker, may tick several boxes, deployed to express a local sense of identity, refer to its diversity, or just simply used as a pragmatic marker. In this sense, our findings on the label 'Brussels' align with those presented in the previous chapter.

PART II

IDENTITY LABELS IN CONTEXT



In the previous part, we discussed how our informants represent themselves in terms of a number of sociolinguistic 'labels'. From our data, it appeared that the use of these labels cannot be reduced to a single and simple definition: they are used in combination; they can refer to various phenomena; labels that are presented as self-evident by the informants are not always unambiguous; and sometimes the labels prompt internal reflection, even conflict, and sometimes they do not.

In this part, we will investigate how these labels and associated identity issues are used in a number of discursive contexts relevant to our research objectives. In the course of our data processing, a number of specific lines of inquiry emerged in this respect, which we will deal with in the following three chapters. Chapter 6 focuses on our informants as parents who project or imagine a future for their children, and the role that language and identity play in these projections and aspirations. In Chapter 7, we will discuss the ways in which the parents' language ideologies come forward in their accounts. Chapter 8 homes in on one particular case study and describes how a speaker constructs identity in the conversation.

The analyses for this part are based on the data from the interviews with the five parental nodes (Phase I), and with additional information from the complementary data and the feedback interviews (Phase III). The findings will be presented case by case.



# CHAPTER 6

## IMAGINING IDENTITIES

Since Anderson's (1983) notion of imagined communities (see Chapter 1.1.3), the role of imagination has had a considerable impact on research and theory-building on language, identity, and community in general. Since we have placed parents at the core of the investigation, the concept is particularly relevant for this study. As parents pick out certain activities and select a particular school for their children, it is very likely they imagine certain futures for these children as they do so. These parents are bound to aspire to certain goals and ideas, including linguistic ones. In a study focusing on bilingual mothers, Mills (2003, p. 172) found that: "A very significant aspect of the construction of identity on which all the respondents dwelled was that of education and aspiration," which applied both to the mothers themselves and to their children. Such aspirations were found to be forwarded as fundamental to what it means to 'be a mother'. For our study, we can usefully extend this proposition to 'being a parent'.

In a similar vein, Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004, p. 17) contend that "imagination plays a crucial role in the process of creation of new identities." In this sense, it could be argued that the parents in question are continuously re-constructing their own (projected) identities through imagining a (linguistic) future for their children. According to Hall (1990, quoted in Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004, p. 17)): "the process of imaginative production of identity [... is] often aided by new linguistic terms, by visual art, and by literary narratives, which together create new practices of self-representation and thus new imagined communities". We posit that parents, although on a much smaller scale, engage in a very similar process of imaginative production when imagining their children's future. Imagination in this sense is the keyword in this chapter, and our aim is to find out how parents 'imagine' identities for themselves and for their children by investigating how this process is played out in the parents' narratives. With respect to our specific research context, the question can then be raised as to what extent, and in what ways, having children in Dutch-medium education in Brussels is related to these processes of imagining. If one of the obvious reasons to opt for Dutch-medium

education in Brussels is the potential it offers to learn (or support) Dutch (see also Chapter 1.3), we can ask in what ways adding Dutch to the children's repertoire (through sending them to Dutch-medium education) fits in with the parents' aspirations. Inevitably, this leads us to the question as to why people wish to learn languages in the first place. Leaving parents aside for now, a plethora of research has been dedicated to uncovering people's motivations for language learning in general. In the following paragraphs, we will briefly explore how these concepts could be applied to our research.

## 6.1 A (PROJECTED) DESIRE TO LEARN LANGUAGES

As mentioned, social psychological studies about language learning motivation abound, including a large body of quantitative research in which various proposed models of language learning motivation are tested and applied, mostly from a second language (acquisition and use) perspective (Gardner & Lambert, 1959; Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Gardner, 1985; Clément, 1980; MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998; Dörnyei, 2003; Dewaele, 2009; for Brussels, see Mettewie, 2004; Ceuleers, 2008). Dörnyei (2005) proposed a view on integrative motivation from the perspective of the self, the 'L2 Motivational Self System', which distinguishes between three components (Dörnyei, 2005, pp. 105-108): the 'Ideal L2 Self', or "the representation of all the attributes that a person would ideally like to possess (e.g. hopes, aspirations, desires)" (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 100); the 'Ought-to L2 Self', defined as attributes that one believes one ought to possess (i.e. various duties, obligations, or responsibilities) in order to avoid possible negative outcomes; and the 'L2 Learning Experience', which resonates with the idea of language trajectory introduced above (Chapter 1.1.3). Although our interest here is not on language learning as such, it is noteworthy to see how Dörnyei reformulates the concept of L2 motivation in terms of what a 'self' desires or feels obliged to be/do, i.e. in relation to a theory of identity.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> This re-orientation aligns with a more general shift in second language acquisition (SLA) research, i.e. the so-called social turn (Block, 2003). In defiance of the psycholinguistic approaches that were de rigueur in SLA research, Firth and Wagner (1997) petitioned for more attention to the social variables related to language learning. Pavlenko (2000) convincingly argues, for instance, that different identities (linguistic, racial, gender, ethnic, cultural, social) may play a key role in mediating access to linguistic resources and interactional opportunities (see also Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001). Norton (2000) explored the link between language learning and the construction of identities, and other scholars have looked into the link between language and emotions (Pavlenko & Dewaele, 2004; Pavlenko, 2006). When Dörnyei is moved to reformulate L2 motivation in terms of the 'self', claiming his increasing openness to "paradigms that would

A theoretical approach to language learning motivation that is quite different from the social psychological strand can be found in Piller and Takahashi (2006). These authors propose a critical perspective on desire which is intimately related to the notion of power (Foucault, 1980) and informed by the Bakhtinian notion of heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981). Rather than considering motivation (or desire) as a trait that learners have (or do not have), Piller and Takahashi view it as a complex and multifaceted construction that is both internal and external to language learners, and situated within wider discourses. Individuals' desires and expressions thereof are thus believed to be structured by the discourses of desire, and the values, beliefs, and practices circulating in a given context. The difference with Dörnyei's whole-person approach (and the social psychological approach in general) is that desire is considered to be discursively accomplished, as opposed to the idea of a pre-discursive inner subject. The research focus is thus not on the individual, but rather on the discourses on motivation or desire that are or are not shared by individuals.

Piller and Takahashi (2006) also relate their theoretical framework on desire to the Foucaultian notion of power. Foucault (1980) assumes that power operates at every level of social life, including the individual's. Piller and Takahashi use this idea to frame the observation that individuals can take up certain macro discourses on desire that may result to/eventually be counterproductive to their own stakes (Piller & Takahashi, 2006, p. 61). They refer to Japanese women living in Sydney whose desire to learn English is linked to a desire ('akogare') toward the image of the West, a desire to live an idealized 'Western' life. However, by reproducing this discourse, these women make their happiness contingent on the fulfillment of this dream, eventually leading to accounts of self-representation in terms of "silenced, incompetent, and depressed" victims (Piller & Takahashi, 2006, p. 80). Such an account recalls what Bourdieu (1984) – in his discussion on symbolic violence – calls *méconnaissance* or misrecognition, the 'false beliefs' that are imposed by the dominant classes and misrecognized and incorporated by the dominated classes.

A similar link between language learning and desire was expounded by Kramersch (2009), who uses the concept of desire in relation to her work on the *multilingual subject*, a term posited to capture the 'subjective dimensions'<sup>27</sup> of the multilingual

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approach motivation from a whole-person perspective" (2005, p. 94), it is plausible that he was referring to these approaches.

<sup>27</sup> We are aware of the potential incompatibilities between Kramersch's somewhat 'holistic' approach and the discourse analytic approach in the Foucauldian tradition, which underlies not only Piller

language speaker or learner. The idea of the ‘subject’ differs here from similar notions like individual or person, in that it is considered a symbolic entity; and language, as a symbolic system, is said to create and shape who we are, as subjects. Within this framework, desire in language (a term borrowed from Kristeva, 1980), is claimed to represent the need to identify (positively or negatively) with others, their language, and their ways of speaking. Taken in this sense, desire is always dialogically and intersubjectively constructed, it is about “exploring various possibilities of the self in the real or imagined encounters with others” (Kramersch, 2006, p. 102). What interests us most in Kramersch’s elaboration of desire as part of what drives the multilingual subject, however, is its focus on the *experiences* of learning and using someone else’s language:

Language [...] is not just an unmotivated formal construct but an embodied reality. It is not simply an agglomeration of encoded meanings that are cognitively internalized and then applied in social contexts; rather, it is the potential medium for the expression of their innermost aspirations, awarenesses and conflicts. (Kramersch, 2006, p. 99)

This position can in fact be related to what we have said on the constructed nature of ‘language’ and ‘identity’ (Chapter 1.1): even if we as researchers believe it is useful to consider these notions as discursive constructs, most people would not necessarily do so in their everyday lives. And as Fishman (1997) argues, such a ‘detached’ scientific view of the link between language and identity may fail to capture the degree to which language is *experienced* as vital by those who speak it (quoted in May, 2003, p. 107, italics in original).

These references to the importance of experiences<sup>28</sup> can help us bridge the gap between research on language learning motivation and our own specific research

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and Takahashi discussed above but also Scollon et al.’s emphasis on discourses and practices as focal point of investigation.

<sup>28</sup> The foregrounding of experiences echoes much of the linguistic anthropological work done on language socialization. To put it succinctly, language socialization is concerned with the “question of how, in the course of acquiring language, children become speakers and members of communities” (Duranti, Ochs, & Schieffelin, 2011). Our study is not directly linked to language socialization as such – it does not engage with socializing practices of infants/novices and their caretakers/teachers, so we will not use this framework in the rest of the study. However, one could argue that many of the issues discussed in our study can be seen to be ‘surrounding’ or framing these socializing practices. For instance, both ‘school’ and ‘parents’ are recognized as important actors in the transmission of (intergenerational) linguistic and other semiotic resources. Hence, it can be expected that not only the parents’ (or the school’s) language practices and dispositions toward language use will have an influence on the children’s linguistic behavior, but also the parents’ position toward the language policy that is adopted in the school, and vice versa. Furthermore, it is useful to conceive of language socialization as a life-long process (Carrington & Luke, 1997), particularly in complex multilingual contexts in which the onset of various

interest. As mentioned in Chapter 1, one of the aims of our study is to look into how parents experience having children in Dutch-medium education in Brussels, beyond what motivated their choice in the first place. In this chapter, we propose to consider their choice, and their subsequent experiences, in terms of the desire that they project onto their children. Different from Kramsch (2006, 2009) is that ‘desire in language’ is not limited here to the construction of an “inwardly generated identity” (or ‘subjectivation’, cf. Taylor, 1992, p. 49); rather, it is also projected ‘outwardly’ onto other individuals, in our case by parents onto their children. At the same time, however, this desire remains a projection or an expression of these parents’ own innermost aspirations, awarenesses and conflicts, as the future (language) identity they conceptualize or imagine for their children obviously reveals more about themselves than about their offspring.

Once more, we will present the cases in succession, but this time we will first discuss the cases of PN C and PN D, then turn to PN A and PN E, and finally look at PN B.

## 6.2 PN C: AISHA

### 6.2.1 “Et pour moi, ça a été une frustration, ça.”

We start our analysis with the case of Aisha (PN C). In Chapter 3, we explained that Aisha is a single mother, born from Berber parents who came to Belgium as immigrant workers from Morocco. She represents a second generation of immigrants who have (more or less) lived their entire lives in Belgium. As briefly mentioned before (Chapter 3.2.3), Aisha presents the enrollment of her children in a Dutch-medium school as a conscious and informed choice that has the explicit intention of widening the range of possibilities available to her children, compared to the limited number of possibilities she herself encountered. She thus frames her decision within her own experiences and language (learning) trajectory, which she explicitly and at various points expresses in terms of a feeling of ‘manque’ (a *lack(ing)*), leading to ‘frustration’ on her part. This is particularly so

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acquisitional and socialization processes may occur at various points in a life-span (Bayley & Schecter, 2003; Lamarre & Rossell Paredes, 2003). In this sense, the parents in our study can be regarded as novices with respect to a number of practices into which they are being socialized. Nevertheless, even though this is something to keep in mind, it is not the focus of our investigation.

with respect to Dutch and English, as we can observe in the following two excerpts:

### Excerpt 6.1

Aisha	j'ai fait du professionnel, enfin, j'ai fait une année de secondaire. on avait aussi, malheureusement je crois qu'une heure ou deux, euh pourtant je me souviens par contre que j'aimais cette langue ((le néerlandais)) et que j'étais toujours première	<i>I went to vocational school, that is, I did a year of secondary school. unfortunately we had, I believe but one or two hours, euh still I remember that I liked this language ((Dutch)) and that I was always first ((of the class))</i>
INT	ah oui?	<i>oh yes?</i>
Aisha	ça, ah oui	<i>that, oh yeah</i>
INT	d'accord	<i>alright</i>
Aisha	je, j'avais le plus de pourcent, ça! personne me battait, mais malheureusement, c'est pas suffisant pour pouvoir euh communiquer et c'est de ce fait que j'ai directement mis mes enfants à la crèche déjà, en néerlandais	<i>I I had the highest percentage, nobody beat me, but unfortunately it's not enough to communicate and it's because of this that I directly put my children in daycare already, in Dutch</i>
INT	[à l'école néerland- ouais]	<i>[in a Du- school yes]</i>
Aisha	[c'é- c'était mon choix] que c'est-. ça me manquait que je puisse pas parler le néerlandais, déjà à l'école, et puis après, quand j'ai travaillé. donc j'avais des collègues néerlandophones euh et malheureusement, qui, eux, ne parlaient pas le français. donc je communiquais ce que, ce que j'avais appris à l'école mais je me rendais compte que c'était pas suffisant, et j'avais vraiment envie de maîtriser les deux langues. et c'est pour ça que j'ai mis mes enfants directement	<i>[i- it was my choice] that it is-. I missed out((the fact)) that I couldn't speak Dutch, at school already, and then later on when I worked. so I had Dutch-speaking colleagues euh and, unfortunately, who themselves didn't speak French, so I communicated what, what I had learned at school. but I became aware that it wasn't enough and I really wanted to master both languages. and that's why I directly put my children</i>
INT	à la crèche quoi	<i>in daycare</i>
Aisha	à la crèche déjà en néerlandais et puis dans dans des écoles néerlandophones	<i>in daycare already in Dutch and then later in in Dutch-medium schools</i>

(I-C-0017-11:30)

## Excerpt 6.2

Aisha	et pour moi ça a été une frustration, ça. vraiment, qu'on n'avait pas suffisamment d'heures à l'école pour pouvoir s'exprimer, ne fut-ce que tenir une conversation, que ce soit le néerlandais ou que ce soit l'anglais. je n'avais pas anglais à l'école et c'est toujours quelque chose-. je suis adulte maintenant, bon, faudrait que je fasse des cours, mais ça me manque aussi que j'ai pas eu l'anglais à l'école. je dis: zut, les mots, des bêtes petits mots a a . ma fille me dit: mais maman! j'ai pas eu d'anglais moi, hein, euh	<i>and for me this was frustrating, really, that we didn't have a sufficient number of hours at school to be able to express ourselves, if only to have a conversation whether in Dutch or in English. I didn't have any English at school and it's always something-. I'm an adult now, ok, I should take some courses, but I miss not having had English at school. I say: damn, words, stupid small words t- t- . my daughter tells me: but mum! I didn't have any English, right, euh</i>
INT	rien du tout	<i>none at all</i>
Aisha	rien du tout	<i>none at all</i>

(I-C-0017-29:14)

In Aisha's story, her personal frustration, which as she explains derives from negative experiences and a lack of opportunities, is presented as the primary motivation for providing her children with the opportunity to learn Dutch. She relates both of the examples given of such negative experiences, i.e. not being able to communicate with Dutch-speaking colleagues at work and feeling a certain shame (toward her daughter) at not knowing even a minimum of English words, directly to her (vocational) schooling trajectory: "je communiquais ce que j'avais appris à l'école mais je me rendais compte que c'était pas suffisant" (*I communicated what I had learned at school but I became aware that it wasn't enough*' excerpt 6.1) et "je n'avais pas d'anglais à l'école" (*I didn't have any English at school*' excerpt 6.2). Later attempts to counter this 'omission' ("manque") were also thwarted by practical difficulties and structural constraints, such as the absence of parents who could pay for tuition fees, or a study abroad experience.

In response to this, Aisha thus rather vocally asserts her desire to give her children a better life, as can be seen in the following excerpt (already presented in Chapter 3.2.3, excerpt 3.5):

### Excerpt 6.3

Aisha        donc ça, ça a été vraiment un manque, et que je me suis dit : mes enfants n'auront jamais ce problème, c'est exclus. dans ma tête c'était comme ça, je voulais pas que mes enfants vivent ce que j'ai vécu, cette frustration. je me suis dit : je veux, on est en Belgique, il y a-, les gens parlent le néerlandais et le français. ils ((the children)) doivent se communiquer ((sic)) dans les deux langues parfaitement

*so that, that was really something I lacked, and so I said to myself: my children will never have this problem, it's out of the question. in my head it was like that, I didn't want my children to experience what I had experienced, this frustration. I said to myself: I want, we are in Belgium, there are people who speak Dutch and French. they ((the children)) have to be able to communicate in both languages perfectly*

(I-C-0017-30:00)

Sending her children to Dutch-medium school – with the social and cultural corollaries she ‘knows’ or imagines (partly rooted in her experience as well) that this involves - is thus for Aisha a way of imagining her children’s language identity and re-imagining her own. Aisha’s parental choice can also be explained as a desire to enhance her children’s professional opportunities by offering them the possibility to learn languages (in particular Dutch and English) and skills (cf. her emphasis on communication) which are deemed more useful on the local (imagined) language market. This is not so much different from a desire to learn foreign languages in general (cf. Kramsch, 2009) - a task which Aisha had set herself as well, but which had been impeded by practical constraints. Her desire is now projected onto her children, and can in this sense be considered similar to other types of wishes or desires that parents can entertain for their children. Her disappointment in her son’s trajectory (see excerpt 3.6 in Chapter 3), calling his move to French-medium education ‘desastrous’, can be seen in the same light. Although he enjoyed good opportunities at the outset, the outcome is not what Aisha had hoped for, conceivably turning him into a newer version of herself, and potentially suffering from the same “manque”.

The boosting of opportunities is not limited to language learning in Aisha’s story. It emerges as a more widely applicable theme that guides much of her conversation, which is ‘to give oneself the best possible odds’ of succeeding in life (“mettre les chances de son côté”, see excerpt 6.4). Dutch-medium education is described as a way of learning how to communicate in many languages, and as such it is considered a crucial strategy in her desire to push ‘the odds’ in her children’s – and her own – favor.

#### Excerpt 6.4

Aisha je trouve qu'on doit mettre les chances de son côté, et parler le plus de langues possibles *I think you should push the odds in your favor, and speak as many languages as possible*

(I-C-0017-31:35)

'Learning many languages' is, however, only one aspect of a general package of strategic decisions assembled by Aisha to counter obstacles and create as many opportunities as possible for her children. This is illustrated by the notion of 'pushing the odds in one's favor', understood as the deliberate and determined accumulation of opportunities and skills ("chances"), repeated at a later point in the conversation when she comments upon her oldest daughter's study program. The following relatively long excerpt is taken from that conversation. Aisha explains that because her daughter's religious convictions and practices (in casu, wearing a veil) may become an obstacle in her later professional life, she recently changed her university major:

#### Excerpt 6.5

Aisha on s'est rendu compte que . avec le voile on n'est pas accepté partout .. c'est soit le retirer, mais ma fille ne veut pas, c'est son choix *we realized that . with the veil you're not accepted everywhere .. it's either take it off, but my daughter doesn't want it, it's her choice*

INT oui *yes*

Aisha .. et les portes se ferment .. *.. and doors close ..*

INT oui . [vous parlez des universités?] *yes . [do you mean at university?]*

Aisha [et ça on se xx]. non non non non, je parle du choix d'études à l'université. si on fait un choix par exemple de faire du droit . *[and that we xx]. no no no no, I'm talking of the choice of major at university. if you choose for example to study law .*

INT oui *yes*

Aisha elle voulait faire par exemple du droit. ben, on s'est rendu compte que le foulard . *she wanted to do for example law. well, we realized that the veil .*

INT c'est un problème *it's a problem*

Aisha c'est exclu euh . elle a fait de l'économie, donc elle a choisi l'économie, mais elle s'est rendue compte que par exemple avoir une fonction . in de ((sic)) gemeentehuis par [exemple] *it's out of the question euh . she did economics so she chose economics, but she realized that for example to get a job . ((in Dutch:)) at the town hall ((in French:)) for [example]*

INT	[impossible]	<i>[impossible]</i>
Aisha	impossible	<i>impossible</i>
INT	ouais	<i>yeab</i>
Aisha	donc on s'est rendu compte en première année .. que . les chances s'amenuisaient. évidemment, donc cette année elle a décidée de .. de mettre plus de chance de son côté. donc elle était en troisième en économie euh [wetenschap]	<i>so we realized in her first year .. that . there were fewer opportunities. obviously, so this year she decided to .. push the odds in her favor even more. so she was in the third year of economics euh [science]</i>
INT	[déjà]	<i>[already]</i>
Aisha	oui et . euh . elle s'est rendu compte que voilà, il faut mettre encore plus de chances de son côté. et donc elle a été voir la secrétaire, euh, à la VUB ((university)). ils ont beaucoup discuté. elle lui a dit : si tu fais ingénieur commerciale ((sic)), tu auras un peu plus de chances	<i>yes and . euh . she realized that well, she has to push the odds in her favor even more. and so she went to see the secretary, euh, at the VUB ((university)). they talked a lot. she told her: if you do commercial engineering, you'll have more opportunities</i>

(I-C-0017-34:14)

This anecdote about her daughter's change of major at university illustrates how external societal limitations may impede the imagining of particular identities. To Aisha and her daughter, wearing a veil is regarded as a part of their identity, but they realize that this may become an obstacle for attaining certain positions in Belgian society. The choice to change study majors is then put forward as a way of creating openings and opportunities within the range of possibilities available – a range partially constrained by external conditions. The choice can be seen as a creative way of keeping a previously imagined future on track. However, it also shows how a plurilingual-cum-Muslim identity is at odds with society, at least in the perception of the stakeholders themselves. To Aisha, 'many languages' do not suffice to prevail over the limits she perceives to be imposed on her:

#### Excerpt 6.6

Aisha	la langue ça ne suffit pas, je pense, pour avoir du travail. les études ne suffisent pas . quand on est musulman	<i>language ((knowledge)) is not enough, I think, to find work. studies are not enough . when you're Muslim</i>
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(I-C-0017-33:46)

### Excerpt 6.7

Aisha            on s'est rendu compte qu'on n'était        *we realized we weren't free and we cried a*  
pas libre et on a beaucoup pleuré            *lot*

(I-C-0017-34:08)

This excerpt is a testimony of frustrated desire, with an acknowledgement on the respondent's part of the strong emotions involved (*'we cried a lot'*). It is also a telling illustration of how various societal categories with which one might identify – or be identified with – can conflict on a practical level. Particular religious practices and beliefs are perceived to neutralize the benefits of having an extensive language repertoire at one's disposal. But it is only now that the issue of the veil has arisen, now that Aisha's daughter can aspire to obtain jobs at a certain level, jobs that Aisha could never have imagined for herself:

### Excerpt 6.8

Aisha            donc malheureusement, euh, on se        *so unfortunately, euh, one realizes that it's*  
rend compte que c'est un grand        *a big obstacle and we hadn't thou-,*  
obstacle et on n'y avait pas pens-,        *honestly, it hadn't occurred to me 'cause*  
enfin, sincèrement, je n'y avais pas        *well, I never encountered any problems and*  
pensé parce que . voilà je n'ai jamais        *we, we really hadn't thought it could be an*  
rencontré de problèmes et on, on n'y        *obstacle, the veil. and finally one realizes*  
avait vraiment pas pensé que ça        *that . we are deprived in a way because they*  
pouvait être un obstacle, le foulard.        *talk of freedom, but no ... for a young girl*  
et finalement, on se rend compte        *they say: yes . young girls should study. they*  
que . on est privé quelque part parce        *are hindered at times, it's true that that*  
qu'on parle de liberté, mais non ..        *happens in certain families. but one*  
pour une jeune fille on dit : oui . les        *realizes that 'no', that even after-, even if*  
jeunes filles doivent faire des études.        *you have studied, eh, it's 'no', because you*  
on les empêche parfois, ça arrive        *wear a veil ... and that we hadn't thought*  
dans certaines familles,                *of it before*  
effectivement. mais on se rend        *of it before*  
compte que 'non', que même après-,        *of it before*  
même si on a fait des études, eh ben,        *of it before*  
'non', parce que vous avez le foulard        *of it before*  
... et ça on n'y avait pas pensé avant        *of it before*

(I-C-0017-35:30)

This fragment illustrates how wearing a veil has become an obstacle within certain contexts, such as the ones imagined for Aisha's daughter. The fact that this is so unexpected, even shocking to Aisha and her daughter, attests to the strength of the previously held faith in language knowledge as a leveler of the playing field in Belgium. The crying – as confessed to – may then be testimony to the abrupt loss of such faith, understandably an upsetting affair. Whether these societal constraints are real or subjective, is the less relevant question here. Rather, the fact that they are mentioned as such and are invoked as parameters in Aisha's account

may be more important for our purposes. Fundamentally, it proves they are seen as relevant by the informant and treated as constitutive elements in her life story.

## 6.3 PN D: HADISE AND AYDEMIR

### 6.3.1 An eye-opening experience at a job fair

As we briefly mentioned in Chapter 3.2.4, Hadise and Aydemir provided two reasons for choosing Dutch-medium education (I-D-0013-8:25). Firstly, the fact that Hadise grew up and went to school in Dutch-speaking Flanders eases the follow-up of school matters at home (such as homework). Secondly, the (perceived) importance of Dutch on the job market was mentioned. Aydemir elaborates on this second reason by telling an anecdote about an experience he had at a job fair in a town in the periphery of Brussels. Apparently, the person responsible for hiring people started off by sending out all applicants who did not speak any Dutch. This experience had a significant impact on Aydemir, as is revealed in the following excerpt:

#### Excerpt 6.9

INT	[et donc du coup eh . ça vous a fait réfléchir]	<i>[and so, euh, this got you thinking]</i>
Aydemir	[moi j'ai eu peur(?) ça va-] ça fait réfléchir franchement	<i>[me I got scared(?) it goes-,] it really gets you thinking</i>
INT	et le [néerlandais, eh ?]	<i>and [Dutch, eh?]</i>
Aydemir	[et là] . ils devaient pas être engagés pour être ingénieur ou dans les bureaux, hein, c'était juste des ouvriers qui prennent ((sic)) de- des valises, des bagages, des, rien de spécial, hein .. pas de qualification ou rien, l'ouvrier de base	<i>[and there] . they weren't going to be hired as engineers or in offices, right, they were just workers who take suitcases, luggage, nothing special, right .. no qualification or whatever, basic jobs</i>
INT	ouais, le critère langagière, ouais, de base, quoi . d'accord . et donc, du coup, le choix pour une école	<i>yeah, a basic, yeah, language criterion . okay . and so, the choice for a school</i>
Aydemir	ça, ça m'a influencé beaucoup aussi	<i>that, that has influenced me a lot as well</i>
INT	ouais, cette expérience-là?	<i>yeah, that experience?</i>

Aydemir ouais ouais

*yeah yeah*

(I-D-0013-11:38)

Again (cf. Aisha (PN C) above), we see how an emotionally charged personal experience is advanced within a parent's narrative to frame his or her choices. For these parents, sending their children to a Dutch-medium school is not just a matter of abstract considerations of the 'importance of Dutch on the job market', but it is rooted in personal experiences such as the one described above. It may even entail imagining their children raising their hands at a job fair like the one mentioned in the excerpt above when asked who speaks Dutch. Dutch-medium education, then, is regarded as the means to obtain this goal.

Another issue that is particularly relevant to Hadise and Aydemir's case when it comes to imagining future identities for their children is their way of combining their Belgian citizenship (to which they explicitly adhere) with a strong sense of belonging to Turkey (cf. our discussion above in Chapter 4.4). In the next excerpt we can observe Hadise reflecting on the 'Turkishness' of her children. She frames it within a broader notion of 'Turks always being really Turkish', thus explicitly presenting her children and herself as being part of 'the Turkish community':

#### **Excerpt 6.10**

Hadise	maar de Turken die z- die zijn . altijd echt .	<i>but the Turks they a- they are . always really .</i>
INT	Turks	<i>Turkish</i>
Hadise	Turk . ik weet niet waarom, maar wij, . wij geven g-, wij geven geen les, eh, omdat ze echt . Turks voelen of zo	<i>Turkish . I don't know why, but we . we d(on't) give, we don't teach them, eh, so that they'd really . feel Turkish or so</i>
INT	[nee nee nee, dat denk ik ook niet]	<i>[no no no, I wouldn't expect so either]</i>
Hadise	[wij doen helemaal niks, hè] ((she addresses a few words to her son in Turkish))	<i>[we don't do anything, right?] ((she addresses a few words to her son in Turkish))</i>
INT	het is gewoon vanzelf zo	<i>it's just like that</i>
Hadise	da's gewoon vanzelf, dat is, euh . helemaal anders, hè? dat is eigenlijk innerlijk dat ze dat hebben. dat kunt ge niet laten leren, die hebben dat.	<i>it's just like that, it's, euh . totally different, right? it's really on the inside that they have it. you can't teach it, they just have it.</i>

(I-D-0013-36:06)

As we can observe, the ‘Turkishness’ is presented by Hadise as a very ‘natural’ thing: “*it’s really on the inside*” and “*they just have it*”, it is not taught in classes. Her husband, on the other hand, somewhat contradicts her, asserting that his children are raised ‘the Turkish way’, not ‘the Belgian way’, indicating a family-based socialization into habits and practices that they conceive as being Turkish:

**Excerpt 6.11**

Aydemir	mes enfants . ils sont élevés dans la tradition turque aussi . et aussi de l’islam : mangent pas de porc, boivent pas d’alcool, euh. par exemple, ma fille peut pas emmener, il n’y a pas de petits copains, en fait, peut pas. on est dans la culture . euh, turque, traditionnelle turque, pas . traditionnelle belge	<i>my children . they are raised in the Turkish tradition as well . and also with Islam: they don’t eat porc, they don’t drink alcohol, eh. for example, my daughter cannot take, there are no boyfriends, can’t. we are in a culture euh . traditional Turkish ((culture)), not the . traditional Belgian ((culture))</i>
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(I-D-0013-46:44)

Obviously, for Aydemir and Hadise, the Turkish language represents one of the major elements of their education and their children’s. It is a continuation of their own parents’ education and creates a symbolic link with Turkish culture in general. However, when the subject of speaking Turkish at home arose within our conversation, Aydemir took up a rather defensive stance, as if he had preemptively to defend himself against criticism (real or imagined) on speaking Turkish at home:

**Excerpt 6.12**

Aydemir	pourquoi mes enfants, ils, ils vont se priver du turc quand je peux les apprendre ça, pourquoi? je trouve, pourquoi? je trouve ça dommage, je trou-, je trouve ça même . triste que si je leur apprendrais pas le turc. je trouve si, ss, s’ils-, en tant que turc, si on leur apprend pas ça, c’est triste, ça	<i>why should my children have to do without Turkish when I can teach them, why? I think, why? I think it’s a pity, I fi-, I find it even . sad if I didn’t teach them Turkish. I think that if, i-, if they-, being a Turk, if one doesn’t teach them, it’s sad</i>
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(I-D-0013-1:53:30)

This excerpt illustrates how within this family the notion of ‘being Turkish’ is closely linked to the transmission of the Turkish language but not equated with it. As we have seen, however, ‘Turkishness’ is presented as a given, as something ineffable (cf. Hadise’s words above “*it’s really on the inside they have it. you can’t teach it, they just have it.*”). The Turkish language then, and the transmission of it, even if considered an important aspect of what it means to be Turkish, is as such not

necessary for the construction of a Turkish identity of the children, since they already ‘have it’. Such a point of view is quite different from those expressed by our other respondents, who reflect on how learning a language may inform the children’s identity.

The excerpt also suggests that Aydemir considers himself a piece in a chain of knowledge handed down from one generation to the next, and not fulfilling this role is considered a pity, or even a sad thing. The defensive stance (“*why should my children have to do without?*”) is harder to explain. It was not directly triggered by the interviewer (which could have happened, for instance, if he had referred to the common opinion that speaking another language than Dutch at home might have an influence on the children’s language acquisition). The excerpt immediately follows an interaction between the interviewer and Aydemir on the fact that both their children speak another language than the school language with (at least one of) their parents, and Aydemir highlighting the similarity of both cases (“*comme nous, quoi, c’est comme nous*” ‘*like us, it’s like us*’ I-D-0013-1:52:38). It is also possible that Aydemir’s defensive reaction echoes past discussions with other people objecting to the transmission of the Turkish language, but in any case, it reaffirms his alignment with a tradition which he hopes his children will preserve and continue. At the same time, however, he imagines his children as fully accepted Belgian citizens (see also Chapter 4.4) and Dutch-medium education seems to be part of the way to accomplish this.

## 6.4 PN A: BÉATRICE AND ALAIN

### 6.4.1 “Quelle cadeau on leur donne!”

When looking at the case of PN A from the same perspective of ‘imagining’, the stakes in terms of economically driven goals are perhaps different, but some similarities may be discerned. Like Aisha (PN C), Béatrice imagines a multilingual linguistic future for her children that derives from her own experiences as a frustrated language learner. She equates Dutch-medium education with linguistic immersion, facilitating her children’s learning process and thus doing away with all the obstacles for language learning she herself experienced. The choice for Dutch-medium education is informed by a desire to remove obstacles for their children (as in the two cases presented above), and presented even as a gift (“*un cadeau*”) only a parent can give:

### Excerpt 6.13

Béatrice	j'aimerais bien parler cinq langues <laugh>. c'est pour ça d'ailleurs que je suis contente que les enfants fassent ça, sans y penser . je trouve ça génial .. je me dis, quelle cadeau on leur donne . c'est super d'être .. d'apprendre des langues	<i>I'd love to be able to speak five languages &lt;laugh&gt;. that's why I'm happy that the children can do it, without thinking . I think it's great .. I say to myself what a present we give them . it's great to be .. to learn languages</i>
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(I-A-0010-12:00)

In terms of identity, both Alain and Béatrice posit a hybrid 'Brussels' identity for their kids, represented in the image of the Brussels' *zinneke*, speaking a mélange of Dutch and French (cf. the discussion in Chapter 5.1). The following excerpt, in which Alain comments on a birthday party, illustrates this:

### Excerpt 6.14

Alain	hier à l'anniversaire . c'était moitié français, moitié néerlandais, ça paraît dans tous les sens, ça. c'était du Bruxelles en plein, quoi !	<i>yesterday at the birthday party . it was half French half Dutch, it was moving in all directions. that was so Brussels!</i>
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(I-A-0010-52:54)

Clearly, as Brusselers, this image is accessible and familiar to them. In times of urbanization and the revival of a city identity, it may be an attractive and 'hip' image, one of an urban citizen who – in times of language-related nationalism – defines him/herself beyond the traditional confines but is not without roots, even if these roots are related to a city, not to a nation (see also Chapter 5.1). Nevertheless, Béatrice and Alain's account is somewhat contradictory in this respect. As we will see in the next chapter, most of their utterances actually disclose a discourse on language, nation and identity that is rooted in a poly-monolingual (Dutch-French) and a poly-monocultural view rather than one steeped in the notion of 'hybridity' (Bhabha, 2004) they ostensibly celebrate. Their somewhat ambivalent position toward an identity based on language-culture-nation (Francophone or not) is discussed elsewhere (in Chapter 4.1 and Chapter 8), but here it serves to underline that the image of a *zinneke* is indeed one that is projected onto their children. This *zinneke* image is dynamically constructed by the ongoing project of having children in Dutch-medium education, as it is called upon 'in defense of' the educational choice they made.

## 6.5 PN E: LIESELOT AND WIM

### 6.5.1 “I think it will take a rather natural course”

The situation for the parents from PN E, Wim and Lieselot, is rather different from that of their counterparts. As they both have Dutch as their first language and speak the language at home with their children, they can be considered to belong to the original target group for Dutch-medium education in Brussels. To them, their children growing up in Brussels is what makes the difference with respect to their own cultural and linguistic trajectories, as can be seen in the following excerpt:

#### Excerpt 6.15

INT	wat denken j-, als ge hier ((in Brussels)) zou blijven wonen? zouden jullie kinderen .. euh . diezelfde band dan met Vlaanderen hebben, of niet, of net dan Brusselaarkes .	<i>what do you think, if you stayed here ((in Brussels))? would your children .. euh . have the same link with Flanders, or not, or just Brusselers .</i>
Wim	ja	<i>yes</i>
INT	meertalige Brusselaars waarschijnlijk	<i>multilingual Brusselers probably</i>
Wim	die hebben euh, ja, die hebben-, alle <i>z</i> i-i-ik benijd hen omwille van die totaal andere euh omgeving waarin dat ze opgroeien in vergelijking met het vrij eentonige waar dat wij opgegroeid zijn. ik vind dat voor hen (goed ?) en dat is een	<i>they have euh, yes, they have, alle<i>z</i> ((interj.)) I-I-I envy them because of the totally different euh environment in which they grow up in comparison with the rather monotonous one where we grew up. I think it's (good?) for them and it's a</i>
Lieselot	een verrijking, vallà	<i>an enrichment, there you go</i>
Wim	da-dat gaat, o-ongetwijfeld gaan die, dat zijn, dat gaan geen Vlamingen zijn	<i>i-it goes, un-undoubtedly they're gonna, they are, they're not going to be Flemings</i>
INT	ja . ja, en hoe gaat dan, denkt ge, hun band zijn met euhm ((Flanders))	<i>yes . yes, and how do you think their link with euhm ((Flanders)) will be?</i>
Lieselot	met . met	<i>with . with</i>

Wim            bwoa, ik denk dat dat vrij . natuurlijk allemaal verloopt. ze hebben natuurlijk ook contacten via, via grootouders en naar de grootouders gaan dus .. z- nu nu zijn ze nogal vrij Franstalig georiën-, euh, Nederlandstalig georiënteerd, maar ik denk hoe ouder dat ze gaan worden, hoe minder dat dat zo zal zijn en ik zou het ook . w-wat meer in die richting willen sturen dat dat euh .. maar ze moeten daar eigenlijk die taal eerst, euh, ze moeten eerst het Frans wat gaan . voldoende beheersen om daar voldoende mee in contact te kunnen komen .. dus dat zal wel wat moeten, euh

*well, I think it it will take a rather . natural course all of that. they have of course also contacts via . via grandparents and going to their grandparents so .. th- now now they're oriented rather French-speaking, euh, Dutch-speaking, but I think the older they'll be, the less that will be the case and I would also . push it a little bit more in that direction that that euh. .. but therefore they should first ((learn/speak)) the language, euh, they first have to start . sufficiently master French to have enough contact with it .. so that should be, euh*

Lieselot        ja, en ook, allez, via, via vrienden en vriendinnen komen ko- komen ze sowieso in een netwerk dat tweetalig is, hè. hè, dat hadden wij eigenlijk, eh, . qua vriendenkring totaal niet natuurlijk. dus hier sowieso automatisch, allez, belanden ze daar toch in, dus euh, ook al is hun talenkennis dan misschien niet perfect, maar.

*yes, and also, allez ((interj.)), through, through friends they come co- come into contact anyway with a network that is bilingual, right. right, we didn't really have that, eh, . in terms of a network of friends totally not of course. so here anyway automatically, allez ((interj.)) they end up in it, so euh, although their language knowledge may not be perfect, but.*

(I-E-D009-38:30)

Just like the parents mentioned before, these parents also refer to their own trajectory, which according to Wim took place in a ‘monotonous’ (“eentonige”) environment, in order to imagine their children’s future, emphasizing the enriching experience they believe growing up in Brussels to be. Wim even states that he envies his children, indicating a regret for missed opportunities he himself may have had but did not. In terms of identity, Wim posits that their children will ‘not be Flemings’, but the link with Flanders will remain ‘natural’, referring to frequent contacts with family outside of Brussels.

The identity issue is directly linked to language, as Wim suggests that his children’s peer group now may be predominantly Dutch-speaking, but that this may change as the children get older. He might even nudge them in this direction, but conditions this future nudge to them ‘knowing enough’ French for getting to know French speakers. Lieselot both comments upon and wraps up what is said before by referring to her children’s current networks as being bilingual anyway, quite different from her own network of friends when she was little. She also attenuates her husband’s previous remark on the language knowledge required for

certain social contacts, stating that the children end up in bilingual networks anyway, ‘even if their language knowledge is not perfect’.

Wim and Lieselot’s statements converge in many ways with the ones expressed by Alain and Béatrice (PN A). On the one hand, they forward the hybrid nature of social (linguistic) life in Brussels as an enriching experience that they are offering to their children. On the other hand, they are more tentative when it concerns their offspring’s language (learning) in this respect, professing a monoglossic rather than a heteroglossic (mixed) view on language, Wim stating that his children should first have sufficient knowledge of French before he would push them to mingle with French speakers is a case in point. Next, all four of them explicitly acknowledge the importance of the ‘other’ language (Dutch for PN A, French for PN E, see also Chapter 4) as an asset that could make a difference in terms of their children’s future trajectories. Contrary to the parents from PN A, however, Wim and Lieselot have less trouble imagining their children growing up in a ‘mixed’ environment while at the same time maintaining the link with their own – in their case a Dutch-speaking or Flemish – background (cf. *I think it will take a rather natural course*). Obviously, the fact that their children are attending a Dutch-medium school helps to maintain and support this position.

## 6.6 PN B: AN AND RICARDO

### 6.6.1 Keeping one’s options open

Contrary to Alain and Béatrice (PN A), who seem to feel compelled to defend their presence in Dutch-medium education toward various actors (see also Chapter 4.1), An and Ricardo do not seem forced to take up such a defense. An does opine strongly on the institutional dichotomy in Brussels, as we have seen before, but this hardly affects the way she imagines her children’s future in terms of sociolinguistic identity. The next excerpt directly followed a passage we have discussed before (excerpt 5.5 in Chapter 5), in which An regrets there is no such thing as an outspoken Brussels’ identity. In response to this statement, the researcher suggests that since her children are growing up in Brussels, perhaps they will enact such an identity. An responds as follows:

### Excerpt 6.16

INT	ja, denkt ge dat de kindjes als ze hier zouden blijven wonen .. een Brusselse identiteit ergens zo?	<i>yes, do you think the children if they stayed here .. a Brussels' identity in some way?</i>
An	<inhale> ..	<inhale> ..
INT	want die gaan wel van Brussel zijn, niet van Brugge, niet van xx	<i>'cause they'll be from Brussels, not from Bruges, not from xx</i>
An	euhm, ik hoop het, ik hoop het maar dat is, ja, wat zijn uw roots hè? het is zo, eh, ze zitten al veel in Spanje. euhm, in Brugge komen ze ook regelmatig, dus euh .. maar ik vermoed . d- ja. de school en, en, hmm. ge hecht u toch ergens aan een gemeenschap, dus ik vermoed van wel, maar ja, in Brussel, op op hun manier, in die zin dat je <inhale> ja, Brussel is heel veelzijdig, hè	<i>euhm, I hope so, I hope so but that's, yes, what are your roots, right? it's so, eh, they already spend a lot of time in Spain. euhm, in Bruges, they go there regularly as well, so euh .. but I suspect . th- yeah. the school and, and, hmm. you do get attached to a community in some way, so I suspect so, but yes, in Brussels in in their own way, in the sense that you &lt;inhale&gt; yeah, Brussels is very diverse, hè</i>
INT	aha . absoluut	<i>uhum . absolutely</i>
An	maar ik vermoed van wel	<i>but I suspect so</i>

(I-B-0006-02:08)

After the initial hesitation in the second line, which may indicate that perhaps An takes the time to think about the question, she says *'she hopes so'*, quickly continuing with the quasi-rhetorical question as to what constitutes one's roots. In her children's case, the places she enumerates as places of belonging are manifold, as they *'spend a lot of time in Spain, in Bruges (with her family)'*, besides Brussels. Next, she considers some contexts that will eventually become more important (the school peer group), leading her to a more confident statement on her daughters' future sense of belonging (*I suspect so*) than the initial *'hope'*. She then immediately invokes the diversity of Brussels (see also Chapter 5.2), which she celebrates, to imagine her children being from Brussels *'in their own way'*, suggesting there are many ways to be from Brussels. The notion of 'belonging to' is reframed, directed away from nation or language group, to a strong but less uniform link with the place where one lives, which in this case allows for many ways of being. However, the fact that An initially responds with *I hope so* does suggest a wish on her part that her children will have roots, even if she cannot envisage exactly what those 'roots' would be.

In general, however, An and Ricardo are not too preoccupied with their children's future identities as many options still abound, such as moving to Spain, for

instance. Therefore, Dutch-medium education is not essential to how they imagine their daughters' future selves. An even evokes the possibility of Dutch-medium education closing doors rather than opening them, which is a position quite contrary to the one espoused by the other parents:

**Excerpt 6.17**

An	dat wil niet zeggen dat we, misschien voor het middelbaar onderwijs, niet, eh, niet zouden switchen ((to a European school)).	<i>that does not imply that we'd not, perhaps for secondary education, eh, would not switch ((to a European school)).</i>
INT	zouden switchen	<i>would switch</i>
An	mm, jah, misschien zouden switchen, afhankelijk van de situatie waarin dat we zitten of de mogelijkheden hier voor het secundair onderwijs. om de deur open te laten naar eventueel, ja, omdat ze eventueel in het buitenland zouden kunnen gaan studeren. Spanje, wie weet? maar ik vind dat niet evident want euh ja uw, je wilt de deuren, ge wilt alle mogelijke deuren openhouden maar tegelijkertijd ... door de keuze te maken van het Nederlandstalig onderwijs sluit je misschien ook een paar ... deuren, hè?	<i>mm, yeah, maybe would switch, depending on the situation in which we are or the possibilities here for secondary education. to leave a door open to perhaps, yes, because they perhaps could go and study abroad. Spain, who knows? but I don't find it obvious because euh yes, your-, you want doors, you want to leave open all possible doors but at the same time ... by choosing Dutch-medium education one perhaps also closes a couple of ... doors, right?</i>

(I-B-0005-16:02)

The trope of 'leaving as many doors open as possible' somehow recalls Aisha's (PN C) idea of 'pushing the odds in one's favor', in the sense of gathering as many opportunities as possible to enhance the future lives of their children. Interestingly, the parents' opinions diverge on the role of Dutch-medium education within this package of future possibilities; for Aisha it implies an improvement with respect to her own possibilities; to An and Ricardo, it may even represent an impoverishment of their resources, at least in contrast to an international school as they conceive of it.

## 6.7 IMAGINING IDENTITIES: DISCUSSION

In this chapter, we discussed the ways in which our parents imagine identity options, for themselves and for their children, and the role that is assigned to Dutch-medium education within these imaginings. We theoretically conceived of

this in terms of a desire that is outwardly projected, and we therefore conceptualized our informants as parents projecting linguistic hopes, wishes and aspirations onto their children.

It may be stating the obvious, but our parents want to give their children the best possible start in life. Even if this is never explicitly expressed, it would appear that this is fundamental to what it means to ‘be a parent’ (cf. Mills, 2003). And language plays an inextricable part in this parental desire, both in terms of the decision they make for their children and the future they project for their children accordingly. This is clearly visible in the stories we presented, whether directly, in terms of ‘leaving as many doors open as possible’ (PN B) or ‘to give oneself the best possible odds’ (PN C), or indirectly, for instance when Béatrice (PN A) talks about ‘the gift’ (“quelle cadeau on leur donne”) they give the children, being able to learn languages from a young age. Often, these opportunities are imagined (and discursively constructed) on the basis of our informants’ own individual trajectories, and sometimes even more specifically from certain events that are forwarded as meaningful within their narratives. Examples are Wim’s (PN E) mentioning of the enriching experience of growing up in Brussels compared to the dullness of the environment of his childhood, Aisha’s (PN C) frustrations about not being able to communicate with people, or Aydemir’s (PN D) experience at the job fair.

Furthermore, we have observed how within the recounted narratives, the informants themselves earmark as influential the possibilities offered by societal structures as well as the constraints these impose. Parents imagine new identity options for their children in a bid to empower themselves and their children to resist or escape categorization. An (PN B) bypasses the issue of the possible rootlessness of her daughters through suggesting that the diversity of Brussels allows for many ways of ‘being in Brussels’ (cf. also Chapter 5.2). Aydemir and Hadise (PN D) are clearly looking for ways to be fully perceived as Belgian citizens while maintaining a Turkish linguistic and cultural tradition. Aisha’s (PN C) story, which was discussed more extensively, is of course the most salient example. Her attempt to widen the range of opportunities for her children – through ‘learning many languages’ – is hampered by society’s response to what she and her daughter consider to be another essential aspect of identity, i.e. the public display of a symbol of their faith. Moreover, her utterances in excerpts 6.7 and 6.8 are an expression of the strong emotions involved upon realizing that even with studies and languages, a young Muslim girl in Brussels is – in Aisha’s words – ‘*not free*’ to become whoever she wants.

The role of Dutch-medium education within the construction of (or the process of imagining) a social and linguistic future identity for these parents' children is diverse. Both Aisha (PN C) and Aydemir (PN D), 'second-generation immigrants', consider it as a means to attain a goal, offering their children linguistic, social and cultural skills that are highly esteemed on the local language market. As said before however, this goal is not to be seen as an abstract consideration of the 'importance of Dutch in Brussels', but grounded in and discursively produced as personal experiences. To Béatrice and Alain (PN A), having their children in Dutch-medium education is both presented as a way to remove the obstacles for language learning in life, and the choice is legitimated by drawing on their professed hybrid 'zinneke' identity. For Wim and Lieselot (PN E), on the other hand, Dutch-medium education is a social, cultural and linguistic extension of life at home, and in this sense it fulfills the typical role of language heritage education (cf. Baker, 2006). The support this offers them enables these parents to depict themselves and their children as 'Vlaamse Brusselaars' (Flemish Brusselers, see Chapter 4.5). Finally, An (PN B) offers us an interesting look at the limits Dutch-medium education might impose on her daughters' imagined future, especially when looking at it from an international perspective. Having their daughters go to school in Dutch may also have consequences for the family as a whole, as moving to Spain for instance would become more difficult the further her children advance in their school careers. The suggestion of Dutch-medium education closing doors rather than opening them is not only contrary to the position expressed by the other informants, but it is also very much atypical of the positive 'success stories' usually found in both official and informal discourses. At any rate, regardless of individual informant differences, what links these parents' accounts, similar to Mills's (2003) findings, is that education and aspiration not only play a large part in the construction of these parents' identities, but also, and even more saliently, in the construction of their children's projected identities.



# CHAPTER 7

## LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES

From the outset of this study, we chose to look at multilingualism through a social rather than a linguistic lens (see Chapter 1, cf. Heller (2007)). One of the (inevitable) corollaries of this line of thinking in sociolinguistic research is a strong emphasis on ideology as an important (explanatory) variable. The underlying idea is that most discourse is ideologically loaded, with the notion of ideology commonly understood here as a set of beliefs or attitudes shared by members of a particular social group (Bloor & Bloor, 2007). The following quote is illustrative of this underlying assumption:

All language is political [...] every act of language is potentially political, in that, even if I do not have conscious political motivations in making a given utterance, it is still capable of positioning me in a particular way vis-à-vis my hearer or reader, who may infer I had motivations I didn't know I had. They may even be right. (Joseph, 2006, p. 17)

In the following paragraphs, we will first delve into the concept of language ideologies in more detail. Next, we propose to situate those ideologies within the broader, more encompassing notion of discourse systems, as proposed by Scollon et al. (2012). Finally, we will then analyze our data in terms of its ideological dimension. To be more specific, we aim to uncover the language ideologies that come forward in the parents' accounts, and to identify in what ways can they be related to these parents' self-representations in terms of language and identity.

### 7.1 LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES WITHIN DISCOURSE SYSTEMS

A very intuitive way of defining language ideology would be 'thoughts about language', i.e. a set of beliefs on a particular language - or language in general – taken for granted by members of a 'community'. In an overview of the literature on language ideology, Kroskrity (2007, pp. 496-517) points out that while scholarship on language ideologies has been extremely productive in recent

decades (Woolard, 1998; see also Blommaert, 2006), no single accepted definition has been formulated as yet. In Kroskrity's opinion, a definition like Rumsey's (1990, p. 346) of language ideology as "shared bodies of commonsense notions about the nature of language in the world", though perhaps one of the most straightforward ones, does not sufficiently acknowledge the linguistic and social variation (within groups and within individuals) that provides impetus for social change.

Kroskrity (2007, pp. 501-511) suggests that we should look at language ideology as a cluster concept, with five overlapping but analytically distinct layers within language ideology research:

(1) Language ideologies as linked to group interests or individual interests. This position refutes the possibility of a neutral, disinterested position (cf. Joseph's quote above "all language is political"), as language ideologies are often tied to political-economic interests.<sup>29</sup>

(2) Language ideology as a multiplicity of ideologies, in order to capture the plurality of (divergent) opinions related to various divisions within sociocultural groups. A case in point is provided by Gal's (2011) historical overview of competing language ideologies in 19<sup>th</sup> century Hungary. She convincingly shows how there is not one ideology of language(s) but a range of positionings instead that are involved in a continuous power struggle.

(3) Language ideologies and the extent to which speakers themselves are aware of it. Giddens (1984), for instance, discriminates between *discursive* and *practical* consciousness in this respect. The former is equated with a form of reflexive monitoring that enables speakers to discuss language ideologies explicitly (such as when they say: "I think that Spanish is a sexy language"), whereas the latter refers to ideologies that are enacted in everyday life in a relatively implicit, automatic fashion (such as when adults simplify their language to address children).

(4) Language ideologies as mediators between social structures and forms of talk (Woolard, 1998; Irvine & Gal, 2000; Jaffe, 2009a). In this light, Irvine and Gal (2000) proposed three influential semiotic concepts: iconization, fractal recursivity and erasure. *Iconization* refers to the process whereby linguistic features are seen to embody social categories, with the connection between linguistic and social groups appearing to be inherently, even necessarily linked. *Fractal recursivity* "involves the projection of an opposition, salient at some level of relationship, onto some other level" (Irvine & Gal, 2000, p. 38). *Erasure* then is the semiotic

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<sup>29</sup> This echoes Nelde's (1997) contention that language conflict is a secondary symbol of socioeconomic, political, religious, historical or psychological conflicts.

process by which adhering to certain social ideologies leads one to turn a blind eye to sociolinguistic distinctions.

(5) Language ideologies and the role they play in various types of identity construction (e.g. nationality, ethnicity). A well-known example of this is the role *standard language ideology* played in the creation and legitimation of the nation-states in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (and continues to do so up until the present day, see e.g. Wright, 2003). Lippi-Green (1997, p. 64) defines the standard language ideology as “a bias toward an abstracted, idealized, homogenous spoken language which is imposed and maintained by dominant bloc institutions and which names as its model the written language, but which is drawn primarily from the speech of the upper, middle class”.

Other recognizable (and competing/coexisting) categories of language ideology besides the ideology of the standard that may play a role in identity construction include the *ideology of dialect* and the *ideology of bilingualism* (Boudreau & Dubois, 2007, pp. 104-106). The ideology of dialect can be linked to the concept of *authenticity*, as it indexes a local, small-scale cultural identity that provides – even if superficially – a sense of ‘roots’ in times of globalization.<sup>30</sup> We already touched upon the ideology of bilingualism in Chapter 1.1.1. We quoted Heller (2000) who suggests that perhaps the celebration of hybridity and mixedness is but a different cover of the same ideology of the standard, but with different functions assigned to each ‘language’ (thereby reflecting a monoglossic ideology of bilingualism, see García, 2009a, p. 7). In this light, Gal (2011) points out that one language can be related to identity (authenticity), and another to instrumentality (universality). This phenomenon can also be extrapolated to a larger scale, such as the present European ‘management’ of languages, in which the ideal multilingual speakers “embody the ‘transcendence’ of the constructed contrast between authenticity and universality *not* through use of a single standard, but by themselves ‘having’ at least one language for each value. In the current EU catch phrase: ‘one language for business, and other(s) for pleasure’” (Gal, 2011, pp. 34-35).

Another useful distinction in the field was made by Vološinov (1986, pp. 91-93) on *behavioral* vs. *established* ideologies (see also Rampton, 2006). Established ideologies refer to “established systems of ideology – the systems of art, ethics, law, etc.” (for instance, the Real Academia Española and its dictionary which

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<sup>30</sup> These regional linguistic forms are sometimes instrumentalized or commodified, i.e. turned into economically useful commodities (Heller, 2007), mostly in the realm of tourism (see e.g. Kallen (2009) on the use of Gaelic in Ireland). An example from our own work is the use of the Walloon dialect in the (virtual) linguistic landscape of the Belgian Francophone town of Malmedy (Van Mensel & Darquennes, 2012).

stipulate what is and what is not correct Spanish), whereas behavioral ideologies refer to the day-to-day enactment of “unsystematized and unfixed inner and outer speech which endows our every instance of behavior and action and our every ‘conscious’ state with meaning” (for instance, how an Argentinian writer deals with ‘local’ vs. Castilian synonyms in his writing). In Vološinov’s thinking, these different levels of ideology affect each other dynamically, with behavioral ideologies crystallizing into established ideologies (for instance, the Real Academia Española recently added a great number of ‘American’ words to its dictionary), and established ideologies guiding behavioral ideologies.

Moreover, Vološinov distinguishes several strata in behavioral ideology, depending on the social scale on which experience and expression are measured. The lower, fluid stratum contains “experiences born of a momentary and accidental state of affairs [with] no chance of further social impact or efficacy”. The upper strata of behavioral ideology are considered as directly linked with ideological systems, though more mobile and sensitive. Whereas the concrete interpretation of these strata may remain vague, Vološinov provides us with a concept of ideology emerging in multiple interacting layers, with different ontological values attached to each layer/stratum, and referring to/dependent on different scales. Moreover, the concept’s incorporation of fluidity and interaction between strata (see also Rampton, 2006) allows us to reject a rigid framework and take the *variability* of ideological instances into account, while acknowledging at the same time that some of these ideological instances are more stable or structural (i.e. the upper strata) than others.

### *Discourse systems*

So far, our discussion has been focused on language ideologies as such. At this point however, we would like to expand the scope by adding some of the theoretical ideas as formulated by Scollon, Scollon and Jones (2012). The authors propose a broad framework to theoretically construct the notion of discourse, which they call a *discourse system*. They refer to it as their alternative term for what Foucault discussed as the ‘orders of discourse’ (Foucault, 1969) and Gee calls ‘Discourses with a capital D’ (Gee, 2010).<sup>31</sup> The authors broadly define a

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<sup>31</sup> Gee (2010) distinguishes between *small d discourses* and *Discourses with a capital D*, where the first category refers to the study of the functional use of language in society, and the second one to an even broader subject, looking as it does at entire systems of communication. Scollon et al.’s proposition differs in the sense that the notion of a discourse system – the way we understand it – encapsulates both small d and big D discourse. This does not mean that it contradicts a theoretical

discourse system as:

the broad range of everything that can be said or talked about or symbolized within a particular, recognizable domain. [...] a “cultural toolkit” consisting of four main kinds of things: ideas and beliefs about the world, conventional ways of treating other people, ways of communicating using various kinds of texts, media, and “languages,” and methods of learning how to use these tools. (Scollon et al., 2012, p. 8)<sup>32</sup>

Now, the concept of discourse systems incorporates the idea of ideology but leaves space for habitualized practices that are *not necessarily* ideological. This recalls the lower, ‘fluid’ strata in Vološinov’s conceptualization of behavioral ideologies. Scollon et al. (2012) establish the link between discourse systems and ideology as follows: smaller discourse systems can participate in or be embedded in larger discourse systems, but not all of them can be considered ideologies. Some discourse systems, however, are ‘hegemonic’ (Gramsci, 1971), in the sense that they co-opt smaller discourse systems. Ideology, then, can only be said to be a characteristic of a discourse system when it produces ‘statements’

which have for participants self-evident status and which cast those that do not agree into the pariah class of infidel or non-believer. It is when statements take on the ability to cast the people who accept them or reject them as either belonging or not that these statements take on the status of ideologies. (Scollon et al., 2012, p. 129)

One of the practical (and methodological) consequences is that in order to understand discourse, it is not enough to account for ideology but also for the *social practices* members engage in, “the forms of discourse they favor, the kinds of relationships that exist between participants and between participants and outsiders, and the ways people learn to be participants and how they are eventually accepted as such by others” (Scollon et al., 2012, p. 130). After all, what people do is at times inconsistent with the ideologies they profess. Importantly, this notion allows for a view that includes practices as a – at least partial –

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distinction between different layers of discourse; rather, it offers us a slightly different theoretical viewpoint on the same phenomena.

<sup>32</sup> Contrary to other concepts such as ‘discourse communities’ and ‘communities of practice’ (see also Chapter 1), discourse systems do not refer to bounded groups of people, but to broader systems of communication in which members of communities participate. As a corollary, each of us simultaneously participates in many different discourse systems; interdiscourse communication can be seen not just as something that occurs *between* people, but something that [also] occurs *within* people; people participate in discourse systems in a variety of ways, some more centrally and some more peripherally (Scollon et al., 2012, pp. 8-10).

constituent of ideology, while at the same time it warns us against an all too conventional ideological reading of particular practices, dissociating practices from concomitant beliefs.

In this chapter then, we will single out explicit – in Giddens’ (1984) words discursive – language ideological statements made by our informants during the interviews.<sup>33</sup> The more behavioral ideologies that emerge from our informants’ language practices (Phase II) will be discussed in Part III. We will present the cases in the order most opportune to the analysis.

## 7.2 PN B: AN AND RICARDO

### 7.2.1 Two different worlds

At first sight, An’s description and narration of her experience with language and language practices aligns with the notion of ‘language repertoires’ as presented in Chapter 1.1.1. She mentions considerable language variability when describing the language(s) spoken in her family, as well as with respect to her own language learning trajectory (see Chapter 3.2.2). Among other things, she contrasts ‘legal’ language with ‘normal’ language (I-B-0005-10:40); her husband Ricardo’s competence in Dutch is described as ‘limited to home-Dutch’ (“Huisnederlands” I-B-0005-14:42); she repeatedly distinguishes written language from spoken language; she recognizes individual learning variability (according to age, aptitude, or personality) to explain the differences in learning pace between two of her daughters (I-B-0005-17:25-18:31).

Despite the acknowledgement of language variety within and across languages, An does attribute different values to different varieties, and she also displays a preference for a view of language as a bounded entity and a dislike of mixing practices. To begin with, An has a rather clear viewpoint on what constitutes a ‘better’ language, which she formulates in terms of ‘richness’. Her Spanish language use, for instance, is said to have been richer when she lived in Madrid, in contrast with the ‘now’ of the interview (I-B-0005-9:47-10:25). An relates this perceived richness to a ‘work language repertoire’ which included writing and reading, whereas at the time of the interview her Spanish practices are ‘limited’ to

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<sup>33</sup> Incidentally, the analyses in this chapter can be situated within the study of Folk linguistics, a body of research that looks at nonlinguists’ overt comments about language in order to uncover the organizing principles behind language beliefs (Niedzielski & Preston, 2003; Meadows, 2013).

conversation only. The emphasis on good writing skills in various languages is also reflected in a comment related to An's aspirations for her daughters' proficiency in Spanish, as she states that she finds it important for them to learn how to read and write as well (I-B-0005-17:07). Such a strong emphasis on literary competence in both home languages reflects the importance granted to certain (literacy) skills as a prerequisite to benefiting from bilingualism at all, at least within An and Ricardo's social (and economic) environment. Ricardo's statement of how important he thinks the presence of a good library at home is (III-B-D012-48:50) echoes this prioritization of literacy skills.

Secondly, the aforementioned descriptions of various language varieties do appear to coincide in An's account with (conceptually contrasting) essentialist views on language. Language is correlated with a particular 'world', hence providing a link to a categorization in terms of language communities as the one we described in Chapter 4.2. For instance, when asked whether sending her children to French-medium education had ever been an option, An literally refers to the two languages (Dutch and French) as two different worlds ("da zijn dan twee verschillende werelden hè" *'that's two different worlds'* I-B-0005-14:52). This idea also seems to inform An's opinion on bilingualism in general, as she states that she feels it is important to have one 'strong' language, which she relates to a reference frame in which one is able to think, reason, and formulate concepts:

### Excerpt 7.1

An	<p>((on bilingual education)) ik denk toch echt dat dat een meerwaarde is, maar anderzijds denk ik dat je . dat je toch moet opletten. heel veel mensen zeggen van, ja: hoe meer talen hoe beter en . thuis één taal en dan op school een andere taal en dan. ik denk dat je toch één hoofdtaal moet hebben die de referentie is waarin dat je leert redeneren, denken, concepten maken</p>	<p><i>((on bilingual education)) I really think that it's a plus, but on the other hand I think that you . that you should be careful. many people say like, yes: the more languages the better and . at home one language and then another language at school and then. I think you need to have one main language that serves as a reference in which you learn how to reason and think, conceptualize</i></p>
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(I-B-0005-13:49)

An is backed by Ricardo in the idea that 'full' language mastery is related to the construction of ideas:

### Excerpt 7.2

INT	<p>y, hablabas de identidad nacional. y identidad lingüística?</p>	<p><i>and, you talked about national identity. what about linguistic identity?</i></p>
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Ricardo	evidentemente española, evidentemente española. es es el, es el, mi idioma materno. pero . no porque tengo una afición al idioma .. es el idioma en que, construyo mis ideas mejor. eh, porque soy monolingüe, y hablo el resto de los idiomas, mal.	<i>obviously Spanish, obviously Spanish. it's it's the, it's the, my mother tongue. but . not because I feel affection for the language .. it's the language in which, I formulate my ideas best. eh, because I'm a monolingual, and I speak other languages, badly.</i>
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(I-B-0006-19:29)

Ricardo calls Spanish his mother tongue, not because of some emotional attachment, but because it is the language in which he ‘formulates his ideas best’. In the same context, he also calls himself a monolingual who speaks other languages badly, an assertion which implies a rather exacting interpretation of what it means to ‘speak a language’. Elsewhere, when discussing possible disadvantages of bilingual educational programs such as the one on offer at European schools, Ricardo and An posit their belief in ‘a single main language’ as being pivotal to the ability to reason, motivating their choice for a monolingual school (III-B-D012-13:40).

### *Contaminating languages*

Yet another example of An’s conception of languages as delimited linguistic codes can be found in the next excerpt (excerpt 7.3), in which she describes increased code-mixing of French and Spanish as a form of contagion:

#### **Excerpt 7.3**

An	ja ik voel da wel, als ik, euh, toen dat ik in Madrid was, was mijn Frans zo aan 't verminderen of, het besmet mekaar, omdat je, je hebt zo van die faux frères ((sic)), en euhm, en nu is, is mijn Frans weer, ah ja, op hetzelfde niveau als mijn Spaans denk ik, 't is alle twee ietske	<i>yes I do feel it, when I, euh, when I was in Madrid, my French was deteriorating or, they ((Spanish and French)) contaminate each other, because you, you've got those false friends, and euhm, and now my French is, is, oh yes, at the same level as my Spanish I think, they're both a bit</i>
INT	ja, euh, ietske, wat minder dan? of, euh	<i>yes, euh, a bit, a bit less then? or, euh</i>
An	ja, mijn Spaans is minder en mijn Frans is dan weer beter dus, 't is weer euh, gebalanceerd	<i>yes, my Spanish has deteriorated and my French has improved again so, it's euh, they're balanced out again</i>

(I-B-0005-11:34)

In this excerpt, An applies the trope of a ‘disease’ to code-mixing between two languages, as they are said to ‘contaminate’ each other. In other words, two homogeneous codes are considered as to ‘make each other ill’ when elements that

are deemed typical for one code are inserted into the other. The two linguistic codes are also seen as communicating vessels, since in An's experience learning one language negatively influences competence in another. Her assertion that now both languages are 'balanced out' confirms this observation. With regard to this excerpt, we can also notice how the beliefs or convictions that An expresses are linked to personal experiences and recounted as anecdotes, notably concerning her extended stay in Madrid. The observation again confirms the usefulness of considering our informants in terms of their trajectories.

In sum, An acknowledges different varieties and registers in her description of language practices, but her and her husband's ideas and beliefs on language are clearly permeated by a monoglossic ideology (García, 2009a) and a poly-monolingual view on bilingualism. This, together with her high expectations for her daughter's written language skills and her focus on one 'strong' language (in casu Dutch), aligns well with the language policy and ideology that underlies Dutch-medium education, as described in Chapter 1.2.2 (see also Blommaert & Van Avermaet, 2008).

## 7.3 PN E: LIESELOT AND WIM

### 7.3.1 Learning by doing

Like An, Wim and Lieselot allude to a range of language repertoires and registers during the interview. For instance, Lieselot mentions the 'passive knowledge' of Dutch of her French-speaking colleagues at work, which is said to be "okay" ("hun passieve kennis van het Nederlands is eigenlijk wel ok" I-E-D009-3:00). Also, both have studied texts in what they call 'legal' French, English, and German at university, registers which they link to a particular vocabulary range and explicitly present as different from the language spoken in the 'outside world':

#### Excerpt 7.4

Lieselot	wij zijn bezig met iets juridisch, en daardoor va- val je altijd terug op die vaste terminologie, dus op den duur, ge, ge haakt u daaraan vast en ge, ge redt het eigenlijk wel. maar het is dan als je dan, buiten die context komt dan, dan dan vind ik soms, ja, bepaalde constructies niet terug.	<i>so we deal with something legal, and therefore you always fall back to that fixed terminology, so in the end, you, you cling to it and you, you can actually manage. but then if you, come outside of that context then, then then sometimes I can't recall, yes, certain constructions.</i>
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(I-E-D009-8:25)

A similar awareness to the existence of language varieties can be observed with respect to the type of Dutch they speak. In a discussion on dialectal varieties, which are presented as opposed to the standard Dutch language (“AN” or ‘Algemeen Nederlands’), Lieselot herself mentions that in her parental home she used to speak “West-Vlaams” (‘West Flemish’, see Chapter 3, excerpt 3.8), and that she has made an effort to polish (“bijgeschaafd”, thus suggesting a coarse object) her language in order to make herself understandable (“en dan, heb ik zo wat een beetje een effort gedaan om mij wat verstaanbaarder <laugh> te maken” ‘and then I made an effort to make myself more understandable <laugh>’ I-E-D009-18:33). Although the sequence is forwarded in a somewhat jokey manner, it is illustrative of how our informants evaluate different (substandard) varieties of Dutch according to the prestige these varieties may have in society.

Again like An, Wim and Lieselot believe in principle that (their) children should have a strong foundation in one language, in this case their first and home language, before learning other languages, although recently their opinion on this matter has somewhat shifted because of a number of experiences. The first one relates to their offspring’s knowledge of French. According to Wim and Lieselot, the youngest of the children, who has started at a very early age with French courses, feels a lot more comfortable when talking French in comparison with his older sisters (I-E-D009-11:24). Apparently, the older girls do not seem very interested now in learning or talking French, which the parents somewhat regret. The second experience involves the Dutch language proficiency of many of the non-Dutch-speaking (‘niet-Nederlandstalige’) pupils at school:

#### Excerpt 7.5

Wim	maar ook wel da-, dat wat mij opvalt da's die kinderen die, totaal nie- geen Nederlands thuis spreken, dat ik echt euh, ik ben echt onder de indruk van dat resultaat van hun Nederlands	<i>but also tha-, that what strikes me are those children who, don't speak any Dutch at all at home, which I find really euh, I'm really impressed with the result of their Dutch</i>
INT	de kindjes op 't school bedoelt ge?	<i>you mean the children at school?</i>
Wim	ja	<i>yes</i>
INT	positief dan?	<i>in a positive way?</i>

Wim	ja, echt euh, dus die echt geen enkele, geen enkele, geen enkel Nederlands spreken, gelijk ook niet die extra-cu-, en euh, bij Emma in de klas zijn er die eh, ja, allez, die Arabisch spreken, Frans en eigenlijk Nederlands, maar, maar, perfect hè!	<i>yes, really euh, so those who don't have any, any, don't speak any Dutch, like also those who don't ((attend)) extra-cu-, and euh, in Emma's class there are some who eh, yes, allez ((interj.)), who speak Arabic, French and in fact Dutch, but, but, perfect right!</i>
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(I-E-D009-13:17)

Here, Wim's expression of surprise indicates that the 'perfect' Dutch of these children who don't speak any Dutch outside the school runs counter to his expectations, an observation which challenged his belief in the importance of having a solid foundation in only one main language before learning other languages. In sum, these examples are illustrative of how the experience of certain language practices may change beliefs about language and language learning.

In terms of language learning, both Wim and Lieselot profess a strong belief in learning by doing ("maar ge hebt enorm veel Frans geleerd, al doende, hier" *but you have learnt a lot of French, by doing, here*' I-E-D009-56:21) and practicing ("als je dat niet praktiseert, als je die taal nooit spreekt" *if you don't practice, if you never speak the language*' I-E-D009-4:08). In contrast to the language that is taught in school, Wim and Lieselot define 'really learning/knowing a language' as what happens in everyday communication (see also excerpt 3.10, Chapter 3.2.5), the 'trivial, usual conversations' which according to Lieselot are the hardest but at the same time enable her to learn most, as they implicate a wide vocabulary range, dealing with a variety of topics ("vanalles en nog wat" *pretty much anything*' I-E-D009-8:52). Wim makes similar comments about learning English, stating that his English is not great, but that he learned it 'just by doing it'. Such an emphasis on practices appears to be a recurring theme in Wim and Lieselot's account. Moreover, it echoes our observations in Chapter 4.5, where Wim explicitly posits a distinction between his political stance (the 'Flemish reflex') and his actual language behavior (*I don't have a problem with with euh, with speaking French*' excerpt 4.26). Perhaps we could say that precisely the framing of practices and beliefs as being 'different' (as if assigning a different ontological status to both phenomena) enables Wim to apply coherence (a meta-narrative) to what in the Belgian context appear to be paradoxical ideological positions.

## 7.4 PN C: AISHA

### 7.4.1 Different languages for different purposes

Aisha frames language (knowledge) as a means to communicate, to come closer to the ‘other’ (“d’avoir un échange avec autrui” *‘to have an exchange with others’* I-C-0017-31:32). We also discussed, in Chapter 6.2, how Aisha’s experience of a lack (“un manque”) of language knowledge drives her hopes and expectations for her children. So Aisha’s motivations to have her children learn a range of languages are presented as very much integrative in nature, as a means of getting closer to others, an observation which contrasts with the findings from our quantitative study as well as other studies (see Chapter 1.3), in which mostly pragmatic or instrumental reasons were forwarded.

Alongside Aisha’s rather idealistic notion of multilingualism, we can discern a view of multilingualism that aligns with the distinction between the notions of identity (authenticity) vs. instrumentality (universality) (Gal, 2011) which we discussed in the introduction to this chapter. The distinction is most visible in Aisha’s discourse with respect to learning Dutch and Arabic. Whereas knowledge of Dutch is imbued with creating ‘opportunities’ (“s’il avait eu le néerlandais, il aurait plus de chances maintenant” *‘if he’d had Dutch, he would have more opportunities now’* I-C-0017-51:58), learning Arabic is linked to Aisha’s identity as a Muslim and as a child of immigrants. She herself brings up the Arabic classes her children have to attend when discussing a sense of belonging toward “le pays” (i.e. Morocco), which, as we have seen (Chapter 4.3.1), is formulated in terms of traditions that are conveyed (“les traditions qui se véhiculent”, excerpt 4.13). The Arabic language is considered one of these traditions, and particularly as it is the language of the Quran. So, within this view on multilingualism, different languages serve different purposes, and clearly Dutch (but also English) is invested with much more instrumental value than Arabic. Note in this respect that Berber, Aisha’s heritage language, seems to have fallen out of the array of languages that Aisha deems worthwhile to learn. The fact that Aisha associates Berber with elderly people (her parents and their generation) or recently arrived immigrants (“les primo-arrivants”) obviously correlates with this observation.

With regard to language learning and language learning methods, Aisha displays relatively outspoken ideas and convictions on how it should be done. We already discussed her aversion for French-medium education in Chapter 4, but more generally she voices a preference for “immersion totale” (‘full immersion’),

particularly as such a method is oriented toward learning ‘how to communicate’, which as we have seen is a goal that she has set for herself and her children (see also Chapter 6.2). Aisha thus collapses the notion of good language learning entirely with a communicative purpose, and the following excerpt in which she dismisses the Arabic classes as ‘lousy’, because they “involve only reading and writing” and not “communicating”, illustrates this.

#### Excerpt 7.6

Aisha	ils ont une méthode qui est nulle qui-. les enfants y vont, ils apprennent à écrire, à lire, mais pas à communiquer. ils ont une méthode tellement nulle que, ils n'arrivent pas, pff, c'est, ils apprennent des mots très xx. c'est pas l'immersion totale, par exemple.	<i>they have a lousy method. the children go there, they learn how to write, how to read, but not how to communicate. they have a method that is so lousy that, they're not able, pff, it's, they learn words that are really xx. it's not total immersion, for example.</i>
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(I-C-0017-42:05)

In sum, we can see how Aisha displays an ideology of multilingualism that assigns an instrumental value to some languages and an identity-related value to others. This aligns with relatively recent attempts by EU policy makers to design a language policy which is able to encapsulate the multiple forms of multilingualism encountered in Europe, such as the proposition of a ‘personal adoptive language’ besides the first language and a language of international communication (Maalouf, 2008). It may not be surprising that Aisha, as the daughter of immigrants, addresses the social currency of her background language(s) within her multilingual repertoire, whereas the parents of Belgian (and Spanish) origins hardly touch upon this issue. Quite plausibly, however, these parents seem to take the value of their home languages for granted, living in a society that favors a multilingualism of certain ‘prestige’ languages (Dutch, French, and also English) to which they have easy access. The situation is rather different for Aisha (and, as we will see, for Hadise and Aydemir), in that the type of multilingualism they engage in (including ‘immigrant’ languages) may be perceived as ‘marked’ within majority discourse in Belgian society.

## 7.5 PN D: HADISE AND AYDEMIR

### 7.5.1 ‘Pure’ language

We have already seen how Hadise and Aydemir attach a lot of importance in presenting themselves as ‘Turkish’ (see Chapter 4.4). ‘Feeling Turkish’ is forwarded as an essential part of their identity, and (speaking) the Turkish language is regarded a core element of such identification. To these informants, language and ‘culture’ – at least when related to their immigrant identity - are clearly intrinsically connected. In this sense, it is an evident example of Irvine and Gal’s (2000) notion of iconization, in that the language becomes iconic for ‘a way of living’, for a certain cultural framework. However, language is not solely considered in an abstract, essentialist way. Aydemir and Hadise also acknowledge variety, for instance when they distinguish between the Turkish language they speak and the Turkish that is spoken in Turkey. At one point in the conversation, Aydemir mentions that moving to Turkey is not an option for the family, among other reasons because the children would be traumatized (“ils vont être traumatisés” I-D-0013-42:35). This hypothetical trauma is anticipated due to the difference between the Turkish they speak at home and the Turkish of Turkey, and because the children only know spoken Turkish, not written Turkish. Similarly, everyday Turkish is also contrasted with ‘school Turkish’. In the following excerpt (excerpt 7.7) we can observe how Aydemir and his son are trying to formulate the exact differences between both varieties.

#### Excerpt 7.7

Son	on parle en dialecte	<i>we speak a dialect</i>
Aydemir	non c'est pas un dialecte, c'est pas de l'argot non plus	<i>no it's not a dialect, it's not slang either</i>
Son	non	<i>no</i>
INT	tu as, il y a un petit accent peut-être	<i>you've got, there's a slight accent maybe</i>
Son	il y a un petit accent	<i>there's a slight accent</i>
Aydemir	mais ça, dans, c'est comme tous les régions mais on n'a pas le, le- le turc eh, littérale	<i>but that, in, it's like all regions but we don't have the the- eh literary Turkish</i>

Son/daughter (?)	pure	<i>pure</i>
Aydemir	comme il est écrit, pure, bien comme il faut. parce que quand on entend- parce que nous ici, on voit des chaînes turques à la télévision, avec la parabole, et les Turcs qui parlent en Turquie, ils ont . c'est tout à fait autre chose, c'est différent	<i>how it's written, pure, how it should be. because when we hear, because us here, we watch Turkish channels on television, with the satellite dish, and the Turks who talk in Turkey, they have . it's totally something else, it's different</i>

(I-D-0013-43:34)

After discarding the notions of dialect and slang, Aydemir eventually describes the family's way of speaking as 'not being of the literary variety'. He connects the latter variety to a notion of pureness and of normativity ("bien comme il faut" *'how it should be'*), and thus implies that his own way of speaking is somewhat 'impure'. In a similar vein, the family distinguishes between how Turkish immigrants with Dutch as the 'host' language speak – separating Turkish and Dutch – and those with French as the host language – mixing Turkish and French. Whereas Hadise and the children mention it as an observation ("als die aan het spreken zijn, die mengen dat, ik weet niet waarom" *'when they're talking, they mix it, I don't know why'* I-D-0013-20:30), Aydemir utters an evaluation of the phenomenon, stating that the Turkish of the Dutch-speaking Turks is qualitatively better, because they don't mix ("le turc des Turcs néerlandophones est de meilleure qualité, parce que ils ne le mélangent pas" I-D-0013-21:10). Interestingly, the children state – though somewhat hesitatingly - that among friends they do switch between French, Dutch and Turkish, thus engaging in what their father would call 'improper' language practices.

### Excerpt 7.8

INT	en mengen jullie soms de talen ?	<i>and do you sometimes mix languages?</i>
Daughter	<chuckle> . soms	<i>&lt;chuckle&gt; . sometimes</i>
Son	meestal Turks en Frans	<i>mostly Turkish and French</i>
INT	Turks en frans ?	<i>Turkish and French?</i>
Daughter	. ja	<i>. yes</i>

(I-D-0013-19:08)

Incidentally, this corresponds with Aisha's daughter's reported language practices ("soms switcht ge gewoon van het Frans naar het Nederlands naar het Engels")

*'sometimes you just switch from French to Dutch to English'* C-C-A081-40:08). Apparently, 'mixing' practices are a lot more acceptable among the younger generation than among their parents.<sup>34</sup> In any case, we can observe a relatively straightforward classification of language varieties as being 'good' or 'bad'. However, the distinction made by Aydemir appears to become irrelevant – or *erased*, in Irvine & Gal's (2000) words – when 'language' is more generally associated to identity and belonging. An example of this can be found in the text when 'language' is first mentioned in an enumeration of what would facilitate a possible return to Turkey at an older age, i.e. "la langue, culture, nourriture" (*'language, culture, food'* I-D-0013-38:02).

## 7.6 PN A: BÉATRICE AND ALAIN

### 7.6.1 "La langue est le véhicule de la culture"

Many of the issues we discussed with respect to Alain and Béatrice can indirectly be linked to beliefs they have on what language is. We have seen before how these parents would like to see themselves as Brusselers (cf. Béatrice's claims on being a 'zinneke', Chapter 5.1.1) and imagine their children as such as well (Chapter 6.4). Furthermore, this label is directly linked to language knowledge in their discourse, in the sense that they are based on a purported hybrid linguistic identity, i.e. a combination of French and Dutch. However, as we will show here, Alain and Béatrice do in fact hold a poly-monocultural and poly-monolingual view on language(s) and bilingualism, which contrasts with the proposed hybridity. The following excerpt is illustrative:

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<sup>34</sup> We have no data regarding this issue from the children of the other parents. We can, however, refer to the "Quiere koffie"-excerpt, recorded by PN B, and discussed in Chapter 10. Ricardo (PN B) also commented on this excerpt by adding that his daughters regularly 'dutchify' Spanish words or 'hispanify' Dutch words (III-B-D012-56:10). The example he gives is "tsjoepen", in which the root from the Spanish verb "chupar" ('to suck') is blended with the Dutch morpheme "-en" indicating an infinitive. Such blending at the word level is not uncommon among bilingual children (De Houwer, 2009) and should not be seen as a matter of confusion, but rather as a reflection of creativity (Vihman, 1999).

### Excerpt 7.9

Béatrice      mais effectivement euh, je pense que oui, oui, oui, la langue est le véhicule de la culture, donc, de, de fait, tu apprends une autre culture, une autre façon de penser, qui n'est pas forcément mauvaise <laugh>, mais qui est différente, et qui est différente de la tienne

*but effectively euh, I think that yes, yes, yes, language is a vehicle for culture, so, de, de facto, you learn another culture, another way of thinking, which is not necessarily wrong <laugh>, but different, and which is different from yours ((referring to herself))*

(I-A-0010-31:25)

In this excerpt, Béatrice proposes a perspective that sees language and culture as inextricably related, stating that language is a conduit for culture (“la langue est le véhicule de la culture”). These lines were uttered in response to the question as to whether the fact that Béatrice’s daughter Sarah is attending a Dutch-medium school might affect Sarah’s sense of identity, to which Béatrice responded affirmatively, as we can see. As such, she distinguishes between a ‘Flemish’ culture and her own culture, a distinction based on the language with which these cultures are associated. In the following excerpt, Béatrice refers to an argument she often hears from people who question the utility of sending one’s child to Dutch-medium education (or bilingual education in general):

### Excerpt 7.10

Béatrice      ils ((bilingually educated people) se sentent à l'aise dans aucune langue, ils se sentent, euh, si tu leur demandes leur langue maternelle, ils sont incapables de la donner parce qu'en fait, ils ils pensent toujours à moitié dans une langue et dans une autre, et ils ne maîtrisent finalement aucune langue totalement, et donc ça m'inquiète <laugh>, très honnêtement. tu vois? de se dire, euh, en fait, finalement, ils vont apprendre effectivement deux langues mais ils ne seront vraiment bons dans aucune

*they ((bilingually educated people)) don't feel at ease in any language, they feel, euh, if you ask them for their mother tongue, they can't give it because in fact, they they always think half in one language and half in another, and in the end they don't master any language fully, and so that worries me <laugh>, to be really honest, you see? to say that, euh, in fact, in the end, they're effectively going to learn two languages but they won't be really good at any of them*

INT            mm et pourquoi c'est mauvais ça?      *mm and why is that bad?*

Béatrice      parce que, pour exprimer tes pensées etcetera, tu sais jamais aller au bout de l'idée parce que tu ne 't sais pas exprimer

*because, to express your thoughts et cetera, you'll never be able to get to the bottom of the idea because you don't know how to express yourself*

(I-A-0010-25:45)

The argument goes that children who are educated bilingually never achieve complete mastery in any of the two languages, and, as we can see, Béatrice is receptive to this argument. Upon the question by the researcher as to why this would be problematic, she clarifies that one strong language is needed to express thoughts, to get to the bottom of ideas, a comment which is very much reminiscent of An and Ricardo's (PN B) assertions on the subject discussed above. Béatrice's belief appears to be rather resilient, as the counter-examples that she herself enumerates a little later in the conversation do not erase her misgivings on the issue. In fact, we might suggest that what plays a part in this is a projection of her own linguistic insecurity (see below) onto bilingual children in general and her own children in particular, since to Béatrice, 'being between two' (cultures-cum-languages) might undermine the child's self-confidence. This, we can observe in the next excerpt (excerpt 7.11).

#### Excerpt 7.11

Béatrice	mais, tu vois? que tu, tu empêches finalement le gamin d'être sûr de lui parce que finalement, euh, il est toujours entre deux, quoi	<i>but, you see? that you, in the end you hinder the kid to be sure of himself because in the end, euh, he is always between two, quoi ((interj.))</i>
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(I-A-0010-27:00)

The same emphasis on language as essential to one's identity is echoed in her husband's reflections on his experiences of speaking Dutch in the company of Dutch-speakers. Alain states that due to an insufficient proficiency in Dutch, rendering him incapable of being funny or subtle in the language, he is not able 'to be himself' at those occasions:

#### Excerpt 7.12

Alain	je ne parviens pas à être moi-même, parce que je suis pas assez bon, en néerlandais, que pour faire mes petites blagues, pour intervenir, tac, tac, tac, machin, et donc je suis toujours en retard. et quand je veux dire un truc, je dis une banalité parce que c'est plus facile à dire une banalité en fait, et donc, c'est chiant, quoi	<i>I can't be myself, because I'm not good enough, in Dutch, to tell jokes, to interject, 'tac, tac, tac, machin' ((to be on the ball)), and so I'm always late. and when I want to say something, I say something banal because it's easier to say something banal in fact, and so, it's really annoying, quoi ((interj.))</i>
Béatrice	ah oui, l'humour, ça ça veut dire que tu as atteint effectivement une certaine maîtrise du langage	<i>ah yes, humor, it it means that you have effectively reached a certain language proficiency</i>

Alain	l'humour, ou faire une réflexion un peu fine, un peu, un peu, ouais, ben, c'est clair, plus tu veux être fin, plus tu dois maîtriser la langue, quoi	<i>humor, or to make a subtle observation, a bit a bit, yeah, it's obvious, the more you wish to be subtle, the more you have to master the language</i>
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(C-A-A013-23:30)

Béatrice's affirmative reaction to Alain's statement in the excerpt can also be interpreted in light of the linguistic insecurity mentioned above, an insecurity that is specifically related to speaking Dutch.<sup>35</sup> She worries about what 'native speakers', including children, might think of her and does not feel at ease when speaking Dutch ("mais moi, je me sens mal à l'aise" *'but I, I don't feel at ease'* C-A-A013-1:31), and this worry actually prevents her from speaking it altogether, remaining quiet at social occasions ("je suis extrêmement passive, donc j'écoute" *'I am extremely passive, so I listen'* C-A-A013-23:58). In particular when she is around Dutch-speaking children, she takes her own perceived linguistic insufficiency 'really badly' ("super mal"):

### Excerpt 7.13

Béatrice	mais c'est bizarre parce que ce sont des enfants et en même temps, moi je prends ça super mal. mais ce sont des enfants, hein, je je je ne leur dis rien évidemment, hein, je fais ça dans ma tête	<i>but it's weird because they're children and at the same time I take it really badly. but they're children, right, I I I don't say anything to them of course, right, I do it in my head</i>
INT	ouais, ouais, je me souviens que tu m'avais dit ça l'autre fois aussi	<i>yeah, yeah, I remember that you told me that the other day as well</i>
Béatrice	je le prends super mal. je suis toujours vexée. en fait, je suis vexée, c'est plutôt ça	<i>I take it really badly. I'm always hurt. in fact, I feel hurt, it's more that</i>
INT	c'est quoi, une frustration? de ne pas parler le néerlandais, c'est ça?	<i>what's that, a frustration? not to talk Dutch, is that it?</i>

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<sup>35</sup> We should mention that when we discussed this matter during the feedback interview (III-A-D012-33:30), Béatrice clearly dismissed the connection between her linguistic insecurity on the one hand and her high expectations on the other, stating that her insecurity is not related to perfectionism on her part, but rather to feeling 'scrutinized' ("quand on me regarde de travers" III-A-D012-34:14).

Béatrice	oui, évidemment, évidemment, après le nombre d'années, dis, que j'ai appris, dis, c'est, c'est hallucinant, de ne toujours pas savoir parler euh, fluently	<i>yes, obviously, obviously, after the number of years, say, that I've learned, say, it's, it's outrageous, to still not know how to speak, euh, ((in English:)) fluently</i>
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(C-A-A013-14:16)

As we can observe, the anxiety Béatrice experiences seems partly to derive from her frustrated language learning trajectory. In her opinion, the large number of Dutch courses she attended in her lifetime did not produce the desired effect, and this awareness sustains her insecurity. Interestingly, she does not experience the same stress with respect to speaking English. According to Béatrice, the difference in perception relates to the fact that she usually speaks English with non-native speakers of English (“non-anglophones”), which sets the threshold for normative language use significantly lower than when talking ‘Flemish to Flemish mother tongue speakers’ (“flamand à des flamands dont c’est la langue maternelle” C-A-A013-16:52). As a consequence, Béatrice says she is less embarrassed, less uptight than when talking Dutch, and that she doesn’t care at all (“je m’en tape, oui” *I couldn’t care less, yes*’ C-A-A013-27:14) about her range of expression in English being limited, for instance. Additionally, within this context she mentions her English to be ‘anything but subtle’ (“ni subtile ni fin” C-A-A013-27:10), and therefore she does not call herself a French-English bilingual (“ce n’est pas du bilinguisme, quoi” C-A-A013-26:59), implying a rather exacting definition of bilingualism (cf. An (PN B) above). However, Béatrice’s anxiety (or the lack of it) cannot solely be explained by a perceived gap in language skills between herself and her interlocutors. In fact, Béatrice also alludes to the political context to explain why the stakes might be higher when she speaks Dutch:

**Excerpt 7.14**

Béatrice	mais il y a peut-être aussi une frustration en tant que Belge, qui est censé d’être(?) né en Belgique et être bilingue, de ne pas xx. du coup on met la barre plus haut	<i>but there’s also maybe a frustration as a Belgian, who is supposed to be born in Belgium and be bilingual, not to xx. and so we set the bar higher</i>
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(C-A-A013-22:54)

This observation chimes with one of the findings of our quantitative study (discussed in Chapter 1.3.3), in which French-speaking parents from a Belgian background were observed to be more preoccupied with what Dutch-speaking parents in the school thought of them, compared to parents from an immigrant background. The potential political edge to being (considered) not simply a parent

in the school but a French-speaking parent in a Dutch-medium school is clearly sensed by Béatrice, and her high demands as to her competence in Dutch can be interpreted in this sense. She literally says: “avec les néerlandophones, je me dis, oh la la, au secours, qu’est-ce qu’ils doivent penser? au secours” (*with Dutch speakers, I say to myself, oh la la, help, what will they think? help*) C-A-A013-26:02). In sum, we can observe here how the perception or presupposition of sensibilities related to the macro-political context is played out in Béatrice’s (reported) language behavior and how it informs an emotional evaluation of this language behavior. Béatrice’s beliefs on language discussed above – (a) language as iconic (Irvine & Gal, 2000) for culture and (b) ‘real’ language being strongly connected with advanced reasoning – obviously relate to our observations here, in that they provide an ideological explanation for her high linguistic expectations as well as for her misgivings on being considered an ‘Other’.

Like many of our other informants, Alain and Béatrice distinguish a range of language varieties and registers. Examples include their awareness of regional differences of Dutch pronunciation, the distinctions they make between child language and adult language, oral and written language, native and non-native speech, and their identification of sociolects such as the English spoken in an American television series (“c’est vraiment du, du slang” *it’s really, slang*) C-A-A013-18:18), and so on. Not unexpectedly, some of these varieties are endowed with a greater value than others. Béatrice’s description of her English as ‘Globish’ (a word designating a type of ‘international English’ and presented as being inferior to ‘real English’, C-A-A013-16:59) is one example, but we can also observe it with respect to her utterances about her first language; Béatrice contends that French speakers from France speak a ‘richer’ language than French speakers from Belgium, including herself, a richness she associates with a wider vocabulary range and a more eloquent style (I-A-0010-39:37). Incidentally, and in line with our remarks on An’s (PN B) emphasis on written skills as an indicator of language knowledge, when asked for a self-evaluation of her French language knowledge, Béatrice immediately mentions her good orthography (“une bonne orthographe” I-A-0010-39:10) as a marker of proficiency. However, we have found nothing specifically on language learning in the data collected from PN A.

## 7.7 LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES: DISCUSSION

In this chapter, we have aimed to uncover how and which language ideologies come forward in the parents’ accounts. In line with the research literature on language ideologies, our expectations regarding the multi-layeredness and often

contradictory nature of language beliefs (cf. Kroskrity, 2007) are indeed confirmed by the observations described in the previous paragraphs. Moreover, such contradictions are not revealed to be problematic to our informants, and perhaps they even remain unnoticed.<sup>36</sup> In this respect, Béatrice’s account springs to mind. We know from earlier chapters that she is very vocal when it comes to celebrating her own and her children’s ‘hybridity’ and ‘in-betweenness’, but we have shown here that she does anticipate possible existential drawbacks to such a disposition of ‘being between two’ (“entre deux” excerpt 7.11). For instance, she worries her children’s self-confidence will be impaired because their thoughts will inevitably be conveyed in two languages and be less profound as a result (“tu sais jamais aller au bout de l’idée” *‘you’ll never be able to get to the bottom of the idea’* excerpt 7.10). Another aspect which is shared by our informants is that they all mention various registers and genres (within and across ‘languages’) in order to describe and make sense of language practices. Since all our informants have accumulated experience in multilingual practices and can therefore be considered multilingual to some extent, we may have expected them to be receptive to perspectives on language that cut across language boundaries. At the same time, however, traditional ‘monolithic’ views continue to be powerful, for we know that for many people language ‘labels’ still mean something (see also Chapter 1.1). Indeed, in our data we see that the informants still turn to the traditional labels when language is linked to identity and presented as iconic (Irvine & Gal, 2000) for culture and vice versa. This observation is most salient in Aydemir’s (PN D) and Béatrice’s (PN A) account (“la langue est le véhicule de la culture” *‘language is a vehicle for culture’* excerpt 7.9). Whereas people thus appear to be aware of the variation within their language practices (what we could call ‘a sociolinguistic knowledge’), they also continue to apply language labels that distinguish between discrete ‘languages’, and these distinctions moreover seem to be of some importance to them. Aydemir, for example, deplures mixed language practices: “Le turc des Turcs néerlandophones est de meilleure qualité parce qu’ils ne le mélangent pas.” (*the Turkish of the Dutch-speaking Turks is qualitatively better because they don’t mix’* I-D-0013-21:10), and also An (PN B) displays explicit views on mixed language practices as languages ‘contaminating’ each other.

Nonetheless, our informants also attach varying degrees of importance to the different varieties they discern within each language; take for instance Béatrice’s

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<sup>36</sup> The only exception to this is Alain (PN A), whose language beliefs were only briefly mentioned in this chapter, but who, as already described in Chapter 4, is clearly grappling with conflicting notions of Francophone-ness, an issue on which we will elaborate in the next chapter.

(PN A) appraisal of the ‘French of the French’ versus ‘Belgian French’, or Aydemir’s (PN D) mentioning of the Turkish spoken in Turkey and his and his family’s ‘immigrant Turkish’. To conclude that our data point to a straightforward monolingual ideology would therefore be simplistic. In fact, we could say that such an ideology of monolingualism is only one of the mechanisms (or ideologies) that can be discerned. Another such mechanism would be the idea of ‘richness’ of language, in which particular language practices are estimated to be more important than others. The notion of a single discrete language as an extended referential framework that enables profound thinking and reasoning (and thus the implication that such advanced reasoning would be impossible across languages) is one example. Another example is the emphasis on literacy skills as fundamental to ‘knowing’ a language, particularly upheld by An (PN B) and also mentioned by Béatrice (PN A) and Aydemir (PN D). As a corollary, such a view on ‘language’ leads to very exacting interpretations of bilingualism, which were most explicitly visible in An’s and Béatrice’s accounts. By contrast, Lieslot and Wim’s (PN E) and Aisha’s (PN C) views regarding this matter are characterized by an emphasis on practices, not literacy skills, as fundamental to learn a language. We can thus observe a considerable overlap between the conceptualizations of ‘language’ professed by An and Ricardo (PN B), Béatrice (PN A), and Aydemir (PN D) on the one hand, and between those proposed by Aisha (PN C) and Lieslot and Wim (PN E) on the other.

A way of finding out which of these sometimes conflicting ideologies are more pervasive – or, in Vološinov’s (1986) terms, whether they can be considered as pertaining to the lower vs. upper ideological strata – would be to see what their influence on actual language behavior is. We cannot deduce this from the data analyzed in this chapter – but we will attempt to do so in Part III – although we can derive from Wim and Lieslot’s (PN E) description of how particular experiences have affected their thinking on when to start with language learning that their beliefs in this matter are not very ‘fixed’ or ‘profound’, considering they were easily adjusted. Other ideologies seem to be more resilient; Béatrice’s (PN A) misgivings about the impossibility of a good outcome of bilingual education despite the fact that her daughter continues to thrive at school and beyond are a case in point.

Of course, the role of institutionalized (‘established’) ideological frameworks in the maintenance of such ‘resilient’ ideologies should not be underestimated, but since they are not explicitly mentioned in our informants’ accounts, their role is hard to identify. Looking at these different layers of ideology from the point of view of a discourse system (Scollon et al., 2012) rather than a complex of

ideologies, as we suggested above, may prove to be more clarifying in this respect. Such a view may also contribute to a better understanding of how certain ideological differences come to be considered more pertinent than others. If we observe ideological similarities and differences between all informants, regardless of their backgrounds, the question may arise as to why parents from a Belgian and immigrant background are routinely listed as two separate categories, at least from the schools' and policy makers' point of view?<sup>37</sup>

We suggest that this could partly be explained by positing a discourse system that is shared by certain middle-class highly educated parents and the schools, which allows for different and sometimes conflicting beliefs but privileges certain discourses. So, for instance, the issue which seems to preoccupy both Aisha (PN C) and Aydemir (PN D), i.e. how to combine home and host language(s) and culture(s), could be considered to fall out of such a discourse system, seen to favor a so-called 'elite' or 'prestige' bilingualism (Hélot, 2004; Jaspers, 2009; Blommaert, 2011; Moore, 2011). In this sense, we could suggest that the perceived distance between Dutch-medium education and parents from a migrant background that is sometimes mentioned – albeit indirectly, cf. our remarks in Chapter 1.3.3, fn. 15 on the difficult communication between the schools and the 'non-Dutch-speaking parents' – should not be viewed in terms of conflicting language ideologies as such, for we can in fact observe ideologies in the recordings with PN C and PN D that are undoubtedly shared by the school staff and policy makers (for instance the negative evaluation of mixed language practices). Rather, the difference may lie in which discourses are considered to belong to such a discourse system, and in the extent to which people align with the discourses that are forwarded as most important within the proposed discourse system. In order to investigate this hypothesis, however, much more data than available would be required, data which in our opinion could only be gathered through a long-term ethnographic study involving parents, teachers, children and school staff alike. Nevertheless, even if a full analysis in this respect is unfeasible within the scope of our study, we hope to provide some additional information regarding this matter by looking into the parents' language practices in Part III.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> See our discussion of the use of the term 'otherlingual' in Chapter 1, and also Blommaert and Van Avermaet (2008).

<sup>38</sup> Our inquiry into this issue is obviously also constrained by the fact that the 'second-generation immigrant' parents in our sample (PN C and D) did not wish to participate in the second phase of the data collection (cf. Chapter 2). It is therefore this aspect of our investigation in which the absence of these data is perhaps felt most keenly.

# CHAPTER 8

## STANCES GIVEN, STANCES TAKEN

In this chapter, our aim is to illustrate how an analysis that is informed by a ‘sociolinguistics of stance’ can contribute to a better understanding of some of the data we observed and analyzed so far, notably those data that reflect ambivalence and contradiction. Within the scope of the present study, it is not our aim to analyze all of the collected material in terms of the approach proposed here, a task that would prove to be an arduous and time-consuming endeavor to say the least. We will, however, single out one specific event as a case study, namely part of the conversation we had with Alain (PN A) in the first data collection, in which he forwards doubts regarding his identity as a “francophone” (see Chapter 4.1.1). More specifically, we will offer a detailed analysis of a spontaneous narrative in which Alain (PN A) reports on a discussion he had with Wim (PN E). But before this, we need to briefly consider Jaffe’s (2009b) sociolinguistic perspective on stance.

### 8.1 A SOCIOLOGICAL OF STANCE

Although the notion of stance has quite a history in various research traditions (for an overview, see Table 1.1 in Jaffe, 2009b, p. 6), Jaffe’s volume is the first to focus specifically on how research on stance can contribute to sociolinguistics and vice versa. She takes Du Bois’s definition of stance as a point of departure:

a public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through overt communicative means (language, gesture, and other symbolic forms), through which social actors simultaneously evaluate objects, position subjects (themselves and others), and align with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of the sociocultural field (Du Bois, 2007, p. 163)

Stancetaking is thus primarily concerned with *positionality*:

how speakers and writers are necessarily engaged in positioning themselves vis-à-vis their words and texts (which are embedded in histories of linguistic

and textual production), their interlocutors and audiences (both actual and virtual/projected/imagined), and with respect to a context that they simultaneously respond to and construct linguistically (Jaffe, 2009b, p. 4)

The definition given here builds on a straightforward interpretation of stance, i.e. taking up a position with respect to the form or content of one's utterance, but it also foregrounds the social and cultural embeddedness of stance acts, notably by highlighting the historicity as well as the necessity of stancetaking practices. Within such a framework, both affective stancetaking (with respect to one's emotions) and epistemic stancetaking (expressing a degree of certainty) are considered socially grounded and consequential (i.e. to have consequences). In this sense they are said to constitute a link between larger social and cultural narratives (discourses) and the local performances of stance acts. From a sociolinguistic perspective, for instance, the question could be asked how certain stances become habitually associated with particular social or sociolinguistic (gender, racial, ethnic, national, ...) subject positions.

Following these assumptions, an analysis in terms of stance can be applied as a heuristic approach to gain insights into the continuous interplay between the realization and creation of 'larger narratives' in social acts, and the (re-)enactment of these narratives in day-to-day social practice. As a corollary, according to Jaffe (2009b, p. 4), stance is to be considered an emergent property of interaction, and in this sense it is not transparent in either the linguistic or the sociolinguistic, but must be inferred from the empirical study of interactions in social and historical context. The display of stance, however, may come in many guises, and the study of stancetaking thus "[...] brings together several types and scales of analysis, from the grammatical through the interactional and on to the cultural and sociological" (Irvine, 2009, p. 54).

Jaffe furthermore notes that the stance objects mentioned in the definition by Du Bois are not just material. To her, 'salient dimensions of the sociocultural field' can include language and stancetaking itself (Jaffe, 2009b, pp. 4-5), a point which is particularly relevant for our study if we wish to look into sociolinguistic self-categorizations as expressed in interviews. The notion of *metasociolinguistic stance* is forwarded to refer to the "display of an attitude or disposition with respect to language hierarchies and ideologies" (Jaffe, 2009b, p. 17). In other words, people can take up stances toward the assumed connections between language and identity, from the individual to the collective level. Finally, since stance is defined in terms of a dialogical achievement, it is also worth looking at the uptake and attribution of stances, since "a stance can be given or accorded, rather than taken" (Irvine, 2009, p. 70).

After this brief theoretical foray, let us now turn to the data at hand and Alain's (PN A) story in particular.

## 8.2 “ET LÀ, JE ME SUIS SENTI FRANCOPHONE”

In Chapter 4.1.1, we showed how Alain (PN A), as much as he would like to resist categorization into any particular ‘language camp’, is confronted with incomprehension and even (perceived) hostility from friends and family. As a result, Alain feels caught in a double bind. The fact that he is being tagged as a Francophone nationalist (an “FDF”) by his friend Wim (PN E) appears to have upset him, and triggered a reflection on his ‘Francophone-ness’, eventually leading him to assert that:

### Excerpt 8.1

Alain	et là je me suis senti francophone en fait	<i>and at that moment I felt francophone actually</i>
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(I-A-0008-4:05)

We concluded that the acknowledgement of such an apparent sense of belonging is uncomfortable for Alain, since it stands in contrast to the politically ‘neutral’ position (or metasociolinguistic stance) he wishes - and claims - to endorse. In the following paragraphs, our aim is to analyze and illustrate how Alain deals with the ambiguity and apparent contradiction in his (speech) behavior during the conversation with the researcher, through an analysis in terms of stance.

The recording we will use for the present analysis (I-A-0008) is slightly under ten minutes long, and the participants directly engaged in the conversation are Alain and the researcher. There is an occasional interruption by the waiter at the bar where the conversation took place, and at some point a couple comes to sit at the table next to the interlocutors, which may have had an influence; for instance, Alain may have lowered his voice in order to avoid upsetting potential eavesdroppers when commenting upon sensitive issues.

The conversation can roughly be divided into two parts. The first part (0:00-3:42) consists of a quasi-monologue by Alain – the researcher confining himself to occasional phatic encouragements – who reports on an argument<sup>39</sup> he had with

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<sup>39</sup> The argument revolved around whether the so-called ‘facilities’ for French speakers in a number of municipalities neighboring the Brussels Capital Region but geographically and institutionally situated in the Region of Flanders should be temporary (Wim’s position) or permanent (Alain’s position).

Wim (PN E), his friend, at the end of the vacation they were spending together with their respective families. Alain's account displays rather typical 'storytelling' aspects (cf. Chafe, 1994, pp. 128-132), such as a clear division between an 'orientation' – in which Alain sets the scene of the event and introduces the pretext for the argument/discussion, a main part – in which a 'complication' (his friend accusing him of being a Francophone radical) leads to a 'climax' (Alain 'feeling Francophone'), and a 'denouement' – describing the immediate aftermath of the discussion. The second part (3:42-9:43) consists of an elaboration of Alain's reactions, reflections and feelings resulting from the event, and is partly triggered by the researcher, who has a more active role in this part of the recording. This part can be considered an elaborate 'coda' (Chafe, 1994) to the narrative.

In terms of stance, numerous things are happening simultaneously within this particular recording. Alain is positioning himself toward the researcher/interviewer, as well as reporting upon how he felt when being positioned by others, i.e. by Wim. In addition, 'local' discourse is recurrently set against the larger backdrop of more widely circulating ideological discourses that pertain to Belgian politics in general. In this sense, the stance objects that may emerge in this conversation include both Wim's and Alain's words in the argument (reported), Alain's words in the present account, any (presumed) stances that may have been attributed in the argument, any (presumed) stances that are taken up regarding the link between language and identity in both the related event as well as the present account, and so on.

For our analysis, we will focus on two aspects: (1) how Alain presents a 'privileged I' to the researcher within the conversation, and (2) how he switches back and forth between a 'narrating self' and a 'narrated self', mainly by providing meta-comments.

### *Alain's 'privileged I'*

In the first part of the recording especially, but in the second part as well, we can observe how Alain, in order to counter the accusation leveled at him of being a radical, presents himself to the researcher as moderate, reasonable, and politically well-informed. As such, he could be said to present a so-called 'privileged I', i.e. a version of the self that is prioritized as "more representative of the kind of personhood [he wishes] to inhabit" (McIntosh, 2009, p. 74). Such a 'privileged I' is constructed within the conversation through the use of a variety of stancetaking techniques, and in co-construction with the interlocutor. Therefore, this 'I' is not necessarily a psychological reality; rather, it is a performance (or a set of performances) that is under scrutiny here. In the following paragraphs, we will

illustrate Alain's 'privileged I' as presented in this particular account.

We already mentioned that Alain – at least initially, or in principle – takes distance from an assigned identity as a Francophone. Perhaps more accurately, we could say that he takes a distance from the label 'Francophone' that has been attributed to him and qualifies his position vis-à-vis the label. This can be observed in the following excerpts, in which Alain presents himself (to the researcher) as a moderate individual, in contrast to more radical stances accorded to (other) Francophones.

### Excerpt 8.2

Alain	donc moi je suis le premier à dire que les francophones ont été euhm, o- ont été ridicule dans la manière de gérer les choses	<i>so I am first to say that the francophones, the francophones, they have been euhm, ha- have been ridiculous in the way they dealt with things</i>
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(I-A-0008-0:53)

### Excerpt 8.3

Alain	tout ça et d'ailleurs je me suis engueulé avec assez de francophones sur le sujet	<i>all that and by the way I have argued with a lot of Francophones on the subject</i>
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(I-A-0008-1:22)

### Excerpt 8.4

Alain	je me suis souvent disputé avec des francophones, qui disaient euhm .. les flamands sont tous euhm . sont tous fachos. c'est la loi du plus fort machin xx et je dis ben non il y a, et j'essaie d'expliquer le point de vue	<i>I have often argued with Francophones, who said euhm .. all Flemish are euhm . are all fascists. it's the law of the strongest ((survival of the fittest)), stuff like that xx, and I say, well no, there's, and I try to explain the point of view</i>
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(I-A-0008-4:24)

The 'I' that is forwarded here is clearly an 'I' that takes up a moderate stance in the political spectrum, an 'I' that argues and discusses with others (Francophones) who are presented as radicals (who say that "all Flemings are fascists"). It is an 'I' that is open to the point of view of 'hostile opinions', and engages in attempts to explain these opinions to others.

Additionally, in the course of the conversation Alain repeatedly and extensively (I-A-008-0:38 to 1:20, 1:50 to 2:16, 7:57 to 8:42) refers to the political issue that was at the basis of his discussion with Wim during the conversation, and he peppers his discourse with many references to the Belgian political conflict in general. His elaboration is at times very detailed, as he mentions the names and parties of such and such politician who is in some way involved in the issue, as well as minor

events in the political saga. This way, Alain takes the stance of a speaker who is well-informed and involved in the matter he is discussing. He presents himself to the researcher as someone who knows what he is talking about.

Finally, Alain presents himself as a reasonable individual, particularly by contrasting his own moderate stance with the one allegedly taken up by the ‘other’ in his account; i.e. Wim, who is attributed an unreasonable, extreme stance, and depicted as overly emotional, a ‘madman’ even:

#### Excerpt 8.5

Alain	et il commence à chauffer comme un, comme un fou	<i>and he starts heating up like, like a madman</i>
INT	ah bon?	<i>oh yeah?</i>
Alain	et puis, ouais ouais, vraiment!	<i>and then, yeah yeah, really!</i>

(I-A-0008-1:40)

Another ‘technique’ to establish a similar effect is through framing the words of the other as radical by providing a meta-comment, thus explicitly taking a stance with respect to the opinion uttered by Wim.

#### Excerpt 8.6

Alain	et il commence à me dire que je raisonnais comme un FDF ((someone from the Front des Francophones)) etcetera, enfin, un truc assez hard <laugh>	<i>and he starts telling me I am reasoning like an FDF ((someone from the Front des Francophones)) etcetera, anyway, quite heavy stuff &lt;laugh&gt;</i>
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(I-A-0008-2:20)

In sum, we can observe how in Alain’s narrative (that is part of the conversation with the researcher), a number of elements appear that more or less explicitly display Alain’s stance toward the event he is narrating as well as his own role in the occurred event, and the role of others. He accomplishes this by making reference to the larger political context, introducing quite a few details about it, and thus drawing on a wider contextual field in order to make his point. Not only does he thereby also take a stance within a wider ideological field (a metasociolinguistic stance), but he also uses it to claim authority for his own statements and position. In other words, the privileged ‘I’ that Alain is forwarding during the conversation, is not only a reasonable, moderate, and well-informed ‘I’, but at the same time an ‘I’ that wishes to take a particular political stance, displayed by importing (and aligning himself to) large-scale references into his account. Such an observation echoes the discussion of scale and scaling by Collins

and Slembrouck (2007). Referring to research by Swyngedouw (1996), these scholars contend that “[...] individuals struggle to impose scalar judgments, to import scale and categories of scale, that is to say, articulations of ‘context’, into the activities in which they are involved.” (Collins & Slembrouck, 2007, p. 18). We could argue that this is precisely what Alain is doing when he – in his narration to the present interlocutor, i.e. the researcher – frames the argument he had with his friend within a wider political context, thus introducing a wider scale which he feels may help to legitimize his position in the argument.

### *Meta-commenting*

As we know from the discussion in Chapter 4.1.1, Alain’s privileged ‘I’ has been challenged by a stance given to him, in this case by his friend Wim, who called him a Francophone radical. It is thus an ‘I’ under pressure, and Alain goes to great pains to re-establish it in his conversation with the researcher. At the same time, however, he concedes that the challenge has triggered a reflection on his sense of belonging. He experienced Wim’s statement as an attack on his person (“je me suis senti agressé”), causing him to fold back on a category which he would not champion in principle, i.e. belonging to a group because of a shared language (Francophones). It seems that, to his own surprise, Alain accepts the stance given by Wim, asserting that “et là je me suis senti francophone”.

From this point on (what we have called the second part or ‘coda’, from 3:42 onward), Alain’s account turns from a relatively structured narrative, a more-or-less straightforward recollection of what had happened, to a more emotionally-charged series of comments on the narrated event. Some of these comments can be read as arguments in defense of his experience of ‘Francophone-ness’, but others display mainly an affective stance toward what happened and Alain’s consternation at his own response, notably through the use of meta-comments such as the one we have discussed before. In this light, the following excerpt may be of interest too:

### **Excerpt 8.7**

Alain	je me suis senti, euh . ouais je je me, [je me suis senti] agressé	<i>I felt, euh . yeah I I, [I felt like I was under attack</i>
INT	[pas parce que xxx]	<i>[not because xxx]</i>
Alain	parce qu'il disait	<i>because he said</i>
INT	toi-même?	<i>you?</i>

Alain	alors que	<i>although</i>
INT	d'accord	<i>okay</i>
Alain	que, tu, tu vois? c'est assez curieux euh	<i>that, you, you see? it's quite strange euh</i>
INT	ouais . et tu t'es senti, euhm, disons euhm, catégorisé comme francophone? contre ton gré, non? justement tu dis oui oui, je suis euh	<i>yeah . and you felt, euhm, let's say euhm, categorized as a French speaker? against your will, no? you say yes yes, I am euh</i>
Alain	mais c'est à dire, que je me suis, j'ai, j .. j'ai, j'ai donc s s . j'ai, je me suis souvent disputé avec des francophones, qui disaient euhm .. les flamands sont tous euhm . sont tous fachos. c'est la loi du plus fort, machin, et cetera. et je dis ben non il y a, et j'essaie d'expliquer le point de vue. et je me suis rendu compte que là, quand on-, qu'on avait le même genre de caricature, parce que c'est quand-même le même genre de caricature par rapport aux francophones ..	<i>but that is to say, that I, I have, I .. I have, so I have s s . I have, I have often argued with Francophones, who said euhm .. all Flemish are euhm . are all fascists. it's the law of the strongest ((survival of the fittest)), stuff like that, and so on. and I say, well no, there's, and I try to explain the point of view. and I realized that at that moment, when you-, that you had the same type of caricature, because it's the same type of caricature toward the Francophones ..</i>
INT	ouais .	<i>yeah .</i>
Alain	ça me .	<i>it .</i>
INT	ça t'a pris quoi	<i>it got to you</i>
Alain	ça m'a pris quand-même euh	<i>it dit get to me euh</i>
INT	tu t'es pris(?) senti euh francophone euh	<i>you (?) felt euh Francophone euh</i>
Alain	[j'ai l'impression, ouais]	<i>[I've got that impression, yeah]</i>
INT	[indéfense] ((cf. Spanish 'indefenso')) quoi, voilà .. ouais	<i>[defenseless], that's it .. yeah</i>
Alain	ce que j'aime pas, enfin, c'est assez curieux quand-même .. et euhm ...	<i>which I don't like, anyway, it's quite strange .. and euhm ...</i>
INT	ça peut forcer à prendre-	<i>it can force you to take-</i>
Alain	oui j'ai justem- ouais ..	<i>yes I've precisel- yeah ..</i>
INT	ouais ..	<i>yeah ..</i>

Alain	je sais . f (=enfin?) oui, je sais pas, je, je, c'est difficile à expliquer . mais . j'étais vraiment, hm, autant avec mes copains francophones quand on . quand on a des euhm, ou ma famille, quand je défends la position flamande je m'énerve, autant là ((he refers to being tagged a Francophone radical)) j'étais triste, enfin, je me suis dit, j'avais un peu euhm ... peut paraître-, s- ça peut paraître débile hè, mais le	<i>I know . f (=enfin?) yes, I don't know, I, I, it's hard to explain . but . I was really, hm, while with my Francophone friends when we . when we have euhm, or my family, when I defend the Flemish position I get worked up, well then ((he refers to being tagged a Francophone radical)) I was sad, anyway, I said to myself, I was a bit euhm ... might see-, i- it might seem stupid right , but the</i>
INT	non	<i>no</i>
Alain	je disais avec Béatrice le lendemain .. là on essaie tellement de pas rentrer dans ces, dans ces, euhm	<i>I said to Béatrice the day after .. we try so hard not to get into these, into these, euhm</i>
INT	ouais	<i>yeah</i>
Alain	cette bagarre, ces disputes et tout	<i>this brawl, these quarrels and all</i>
INT	ouais	<i>yeah</i>
Alain	et on est avec des supercopains, et euhm, . et .. et . enfin c- c'est un peu un peu bête de dire ça mais mon, mon sentiment c'était peut-être: même eux, quoi. pff enfin	<i>and we are with great friends, and euhm, . and .. and . anyway i- it's a bit stupid to say this but my, my feeling was maybe: even them. pff anyway</i>

(I-A-0008-4:08)

This rather long excerpt contains the core of the data we are using in our analysis, some of the elements having already been mentioned in Chapter 4.1.1 and earlier in this chapter. To all the instances where we identify the ‘explicit expression of emotions’ (i.e. Alain’s reaction to a given stance), a metacomment is added, an epistemic comment in a sense, and a comment which makes explicit a switch to the stance object as shared by the two interlocutors, i.e. the conversation they are having. It appears as if Alain is continuously switching back and forth between the past event (his feelings as a result of what Wim has said) and the present conversation/event (as if defending himself pre-emptively from a judgment that might be imposed on him by the researcher), a switch between the ‘narrated self’ and the ‘narrating self’ (see, among others, Koven, 2002; McIntosh, 2009). Table 8.1 provides an overview of these comments.

<i>Expression of emotional reaction</i>	<i>Followed/preceded* by a comment</i>
je me suis senti agressé <i>I felt like I was under attack</i>	tu, tu vois? c'est assez curieux <i>you, you see? it's quite strange</i>
(INT – senti francophone?) j'ai l'impression, ouais, ce que j'aime pas <i>(INT – feel francophone?) I've got that impression, yeah, which I don't like</i>	enfin c'est assez curieux quand-même <i>anyway it is quite strange</i>
autant là j'étais triste <i>at that moment I was sad</i>	ça peut paraître débile <i>it may seem stupid</i>
mon sentiment, c'était, peut-être, même eux <i>my feeling, was, maybe, even them</i>	*c'est un peu bête de dire ça mais <i>* it's a bit silly to say that but</i>

Table 8.1 Alain's metacomments (I-A-0008)

These comments can be regarded as hedges, used to mitigate the impact of the preceding or following utterances. The insertion of the word “maybe” in the last line of excerpt 8.7 clearly has the same function. Through these means, we can see that Alain is taking a certain distance, or, put in other words, is taking a stance with respect to the contents of his utterances and the image of himself that these would suggest. Other means include an explicit request for stance alignment from his interlocutor (the researcher) through the insertion of “tu vois?” (“you see?”), and a claim as to the difficulty Alain experiences in grasping what exactly it is that bothers him (“je, je sais pas, c'est difficile à expliquer” *I, I don't know, it's hard to explain*). From another point of view, taken together these observations corroborate what we have said before on Alain's privileged ‘I’, as the expression of doubt and hesitation is not incompatible with a reasonable and moderate stance. Similar observations can be drawn from this second excerpt:

### Excerpt 8.8

Alain	et tu rentres dans cette logique là quoi de, tu [vois]?	<i>and you get into this type of logic you know of . you [see]?</i>
INT	[uhum]	<i>[uhum]</i>
Alain	à un moment je pense qu'il y a peu un côté . euhm ... et ç- et ça m'a énervé de de m'identifier à ça mais ..	<i>at a certain point I think it becomes sort of . erm ... and i- and it upset me to- to identify with that but ..</i>
INT	oui	yes

Alain	<p>mais il y a un côté, à un moment t'as pas envie quand t t enfin, c'est un peu humiliant quoi . ouais (lowers volume) enfin nous en a . mais c'est la menace tout le temps et on dit: ok</p>	<p><i>but there's a, at a certain point you don't like it when y- y- well it's a bit humiliating . yeah (lowers volume) . anyway we a- . but it's a threat all the time and you/we say: ok ..</i></p>
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(I-A-0008-8:22)

In this excerpt Alain attempts to explain to the researcher how a feeling of humiliation (and of being under threat) may have played a role in the fact that he apparently assumed the 'Francophone' identity imposed by others. The fragment contains quite a number of truncated phrases accompanied by relatively long pauses. As in the fragment discussed above (excerpt 8.7), the phrases are interrupted by a request for alignment ("tu vois?" *you see?*), as well as by an insertion of a comment ("et ç- et ça m'a énervé de de m'identifier à ça" *it upset me to identify with that*) expressing an affective stance toward the contents of his argument, in this case just before the argument is uttered.

### 8.3 STANCES GIVEN, STANCES TAKEN: DISCUSSION

In sum, the instances in the last two excerpts (8.7 and 8.8) show how Alain reveals his confusion about his sense of belonging, his 'Francophone-ness', not only in the content of his narrative, but also – and perhaps even more strongly – in the stances he adopts. The formal disarray of his discourse thus appears to be even more telling than the contradictions in his account, an observation which not just confirms what we have said earlier (in Chapter 4.1), but actually moves beyond it, for it reveals how profoundly the ideological conflict (between not adhering to a language community versus feeling Francophone) is felt by Alain.

In conclusion, the event which Alain reports on in the fragment under scrutiny (I-A-0008) – the argument with his friend Wim – has instigated a reflection on the part of Alain concerning the soundness of his ideological positioning. We can add that when Alain commented upon this issue in retrospect during the feedback interview, he reconfirmed how the instance made him aware of his adherence to a Francophone-ness. "ça m'a fait mal, et oui, ça m'a fait mal, en tant que francophone" (*it hurt me, and yes, it hurt me, as/being a francophone*' III-A-D011-29:35). The argument has caused an imbalance that needs to be resolved, as Alain is deeply conflicted about the issue, challenging as it does his attested denial of social group membership based on language. As we have seen, the lack of equilibrium – and Alain's struggle with it – is revealed in the text in various ways: (a) through the foregrounding of a privileged 'I' – moderate, well-informed,

reasonable – in opposition to Alain’s other ‘I’ that ‘felt Francophone’, a disposition which Alain has associated in his discourse with narrow-mindedness (cf. Francophones who state that ‘all Flemings are fascists’); (b) through the repeated request for stance alignment by the researcher; (c) through a number of affective stances which are immediately framed by metacomments. The latter elements, and the distinction based on them in terms of a narrated vs. a narrating self, is perhaps the most illustrative feature of Alain’s conflicted state of mind. An analysis in terms of stancetaking such as the one we have done here clearly adds to our understanding and interpretation of the phenomena at hand, as it illustrates how an interlocutor reveals certain aspects through the construction of his text, in addition to the contents of what he actually says.

PART III  
LANGUAGE IN PRACTICE



So far, we have discussed data that were gathered by means of interviews or conversations between the researcher and the informants. We looked into the informants' self-categorization in terms of language-related identity, at the way they construct or imagine a future for themselves and their children along the same lines, and what type of language (and language learning) ideologies we see reflected in their stories. Obviously, these stories are bound to be delimited by certain conventions related to 'story-telling', or 'conducting a research interview' (see also Chapter 2). We therefore also looked briefly at the possibilities of applying a stance perspective to one of the parents' narratives in order to unveil how a particular message or content is constructed within the conversation with the researcher. Another weakness of the 'interview' methodology is that it only reveals reported language practices and attitudes. As part of the initial set-up of this study, we therefore included a second data collection in which our informants were asked to tape spontaneous spoken language interactions in an ecological setting, i.e. without the researcher being present.

In this part we discuss this second body of data (Phase II). Our informants were asked to tape moments of transition from one environment to another, for instance between the school and the home environment, or between home and places for extracurricular activities like the music school. Such an approach was inspired by the work of Patricia Lamarre in Montreal ('Montreal on the move', see Lamarre & Lamarre, 2009), who studied the language practices of young multilinguals as they move through the city from one 'language space' to another. The point of departure for the analysis are individuals, who set out on their daily activities, and activate certain parts of their language repertoire depending on the activity they engage in, the people they are with, and the roles they enact.

In line with the theoretical shift in thinking on language(s) elaborated in Chapter 1.1, our aim is not to analyze the data from a code alternation point of view in the strict sense (i.e., from the perspective of the language<sup>40</sup>). Rather, in line with our take on multilingualism from a social rather than a linguistic viewpoint, we are interested in exploring how our informants deploy and activate their various repertoires in day-to-day interactions. Furthermore, as mentioned in Chapter 7.7, we hope that by looking at these practices from a translanguaging point of view, we will be able to unveil some of the ideological aspects of our participants'

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<sup>40</sup> See, for instance, Gardner-Chloros (2009) for an overview (and the critical review of this volume by Heller (2011)). A small part of our data were analyzed in this way in a bachelor paper by Vandevondele (2011).

language practices, and compare the discursive language ideologies with these actual practices.

The analyses for this part are largely based on the data collected by the parents themselves (Phase II), but possible informant reactions on the researcher's observations and interpretations (Phase III) will be added when relevant. The analyses will be presented in three chapters, one for each of the families that accepted to participate in this part of the data collection (see also Chapter 2.2):

- (1) In Chapter 9 *'Monolingualism' in practice* we present our analysis of the recordings made by Béatrice and Alain (PN A);
- (2) Chapter 10 *'One parent – one language' in practice* discusses the recordings by An and Ricardo (PN B);
- (3) Chapter 11 *'Home language = school language' in practice* comprises our analysis of the recordings by Lieselot and Wim (PN E).

# CHAPTER 9

## ‘MONOLINGUALISM’ IN PRACTICE

From the reported language use discussed while introducing Béatrice and Alain (PN A) in Chapter 3.2.1, we would expect these parents and their children to engage in predominantly ‘monolingual French’ language practices. As we have seen, Béatrice and Alain state that French is the language commonly spoken at home, as well as with relatives and most of their friends, and the children reportedly speak mostly French with each other as well. In the larger part of the data recorded by Alain<sup>41</sup>, which comprises a total of seven recordings (see Appendix A), this general picture seems to be confirmed at first hearing, as he and his children speak French with each other throughout. From one of the longer recordings (II-A-A008, total duration: 28 minutes), however, a different and more intricate picture emerges. In this chapter, we will focus on this particular recording, made shortly before, during, and after a twenty-minute car ride from an afternoon music lesson in another part of town to Béatrice and Alain’s home. The participants are Alain, his son (Léo, age 4.5), his daughter (Sarah, age 7), a friend of hers (Emma, age 7), the music teacher, Emma’s father Wim (PN E), and the car’s navigating system (see Table 9.1).

What seems to trigger a departure from the family’s overall monolingual French linguistic regime is the presence in the car of one of Alain’s daughter’s friends (Emma, the predominantly Dutch-speaking daughter of Lieselot and Wim (PN E)). As a result, both French and Dutch are heard throughout most of the excerpt. Its main actors are Alain and his daughter Sarah, who is clearly amused at her father’s lack of dexterity in Dutch, a skill at which she is undoubtedly the most proficient. Both other passengers in the car stick broadly to a fixed language pattern, i.e. Léo to French and Emma to Dutch.

Our discussion of this excerpt is divided into three parts. In the first part “*Comment tu dis téléphoner, en fait?*” (‘how do you say to call someone?’), we will

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<sup>41</sup> Unfortunately we have no recordings made by Béatrice.

briefly discuss some examples of Alain’s Dutch-French ‘parlers bilingues’, which illustrate how having children in a Dutch-medium school has an impact on both Alain’s and the family’s shared language repertoires. In the second part *On the move*, we will illustrate in what way moving from place to place (car, music school, on the street, car, home) has an influence on the language registers Alain deploys. The third part “*After the beep, say a command*” focuses on an episode in which the participants engage in an interaction with the car’s navigation system.

## 9.1 “COMMENT TU DIS TÉLÉPHONER, EN FAIT?”

We start our analysis with an illustration of how having a child in Dutch-medium education in Brussels has an influence on the day-to-day language practices of parents, as new situations may occur that offer linguistic possibilities and impose linguistic constraints which parents have to cope with in one way or another. In our case, the fact that Alain’s daughter Sarah has Dutch-speaking school friends has an impact on Alain’s language use. On the one hand, it provides him with possibilities to speak (and practice) Dutch in informal contexts. On the other hand, Alain’s relatively limited knowledge of Dutch may be a challenge as well. The following three excerpts, in which Alain asks his daughter Sarah for the ‘right’ word in Dutch, are illustrative in this respect:

### Excerpt 9.1

Alain	maar ja die, dit ding, dis comment t'appelles ça, Sarah?	<i>((in Dutch:)) but yeah that, this thing, ((in French:)) say what do you call this, Sarah?</i>
Sarah	pardon?	<i>sorry?</i>
Alain	comment t'appelles le truc pour mettre la ceinture? euh ..	<i>what do you call this thing to put your belt in? ehm ..</i>

(II-A-A008-5:08)

### Excerpt 9.2

Alain	mag je nog eens de .. het licht? de licht? het licht?	<i>((in Dutch:)) may ((sic)) you put out the ((m/f)) .. the ((neutr.)) light? the ((m/f)) light? the ((neutr.)) light?</i>
Sarah	het	<i>the ((neutr.))</i>
Alain	het het licht .. uitdoen	<i>put out the ((neutr.)) the ((neutr.)) light?</i>

(II-A-A008-6:06)

### Excerpt 9.3

Alain	dus we moeten vragen, we moeten aan den auto vragen om aan iemand te... te... comment tu dis téléphoner, en fait?	<i>((in Dutch:)) so we have to ask, we have to ask the car to .. to .. ((in French:)) how do you say to call someone?</i>
Sarah	bellen	<i>((in Dutch:)) to ring</i>
Alain	te bellen, ja	<i>to ring, yes</i>

(II-A-A008-12:41)

At these three points in the recording, Alain asks his daughter for clarification on Dutch vocabulary. As he finds himself struggling with Dutch phrases and vocabulary, he thus places himself temporarily in the position of a novice or a learner in the eyes of his children. This is not unusual as such (De Houwer, 2009), but perhaps more documented in environments where children from immigrants act as language brokers for their parents (see e.g. Canagarajah, 2008) or in transnational (adoptive) families (Fogle, 2012). In Brussels, Gafaranga (2010) showed how in Rwandan immigrant families a language shift from Kinyarwanda to French is ‘talked into being’ through code negotiations between the children and their parents, suggesting that the status of the majority language is what makes the parents accede to their children’s request to speak French. In our case however, the situation is slightly more complex in terms of the nature of the status of the languages involved, in that both French and Dutch can be considered as ‘prestige’ languages in Brussels (see also Chapter 1.2). For demographic, political and historical reasons French is obviously a status language in Brussels, but both Alain and Béatrice grant a lot of prestige to Dutch as well, tangible proof of this being their choice for a Dutch-medium school. Given this context, we could say that in the examples above (excerpt 9.1-3) Alain is confronted with his own lack of mastery in a skill he values. However, he or the children do not appear to be bothered by this in any way.

Additionally, we can also observe how Alain makes quite a few mistakes in Dutch. Examples include congruence issues related to male/female gender vs. neuter gender (for instance, see excerpt 9.2) or singular vs. plural, morphological errors, and vocabulary errors.<sup>42</sup> Again, these mistakes remain uncommented upon by the

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<sup>42</sup> Some examples, all from II-A-A008, are: singular vs. plural: “woorden dat ze niet kan vertalen” ‘words ((pl.)) that ((sing., should be “die”)) she can’t translate’; morphological: “ik heb niet gezocht” ‘I didn’t search’ ((should be “gezocht”)); vocabulary: “we zullen een lijst van die woorden doen” ‘we will do ((should be ‘make’)) a list of those words’.

children. So even if we could interpret Alain invoking his daughter’s help to make himself clear to Dutch-speaking Emma as an act of empowerment, for the resources she has to offer are considered valuable within this particular context, Alain’s position as a father (or the fact that they habitually speak French with each other) is not challenged.<sup>43</sup>

## 9.2 ON THE MOVE

The various spaces through which Alain moves during the 28 minutes of the recording, as well as the actors that participate in each space, can be listed as follows:

<i>Spaces</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Duration (total: 28 mins.)</i>
(1) In the car (1)	Alain, Léo	1:30
(2) At the music school	Alain, Sarah, music teacher, other children (incl. Emma)	1:30
(3) On the street	Alain, Sarah, Emma	1:00
(4) In the car (2)	Alain, Léo, Sarah, Emma, (GPS)	20:00
(5) Getting out of the car	Alain, Léo, Sarah, Emma	1:23
(6) At Wim’s	Alain, Léo, Sarah, Emma, Wim	2:37

*Table 9.1 On the move: overview of spaces, participants, and duration (II-A-A008)*

As Alain moves from one space to another, the setting and the participants change, entailing noticeable changes to his language practices, as we will show. The recording illustrates how even in a short period of less than 30 minutes, language practices can vary considerably according to different circumstances, and this despite limited linguistic resources such as in the case of Alain’s Dutch. We will divide our discussion of this recording into six episodes, which correspond with the six spaces as outlined in Table 9.1.

<sup>43</sup> When commenting upon this issue in the feedback interview (III-A-D011-1:30), Alain and Béatrice added that Sarah indeed often corrects them, but to them it never comes across as the exertion of power on her part; rather, she appears to be proud – and in this sense it is certainly validating for her – but sometimes also embarrassed for her parents, particularly when they are talking with other parents (see also De Houwer, 2009, for similar examples).

*In the car (1)*

The recording starts with a brief interaction between Alain and his son Léo who have just arrived in front of the music school. Léo wants to accompany his father to collect the other children, but he is not allowed to do so. The interaction happens in French only, and Alain clearly takes up his role as a father, speaking “parent talk”, which is evidenced in a number of prosodic and interactional features, and exemplified by the following exchange:

**Excerpt 9.4**

Alain	tu restes dans la voiture pendant que je vais vite chercher Sarah et Emma?	<i>you stay in the car while I go get Sarah and Emma?</i>
Léo	non!	<i>no!</i>
Alain	si si si, c’est juste en face, t’inquiète pas de	<i>yes yes yes, it’s just in front, don’t worry</i>
Léo	mais je veux aller avec toi	<i>but I want to go with you</i>
Alain	mais non non, regarde, c’est juste là en face, c’est pas la peine de sortir	<i>but no no, look, it’s just there in front, there’s no point getting out</i>

(II-A-A008-1:06)

*At the music school*

The next interaction takes place at the music school, and consists of two parts. The first part consists of a greeting between father and daughter Sarah (see excerpt 9.5). The second part is a conversation between Alain and the music teacher, and happens solely in French. The music school is largely a French-speaking space. All internal and external interior and exterior communication is handled in French and most teachers are monolingual French-speakers. Some of the children are from other language backgrounds, but all classes are in French. Disfluent communication that may arise between the teachers and the children is dealt with in a practical manner, for instance by asking parent to translate a vocabulary list provided by the teacher (cf. the conversation in the second part, see the last lines by Alain in excerpt 9.5).

**Excerpt 9.5**

Alain	soir!	<i>((French:)) evening!</i>
Teacher	bonsoir	<i>good evening</i>
Sarah	dag papa!	<i>((in Dutch:)) bi daddy!</i>

Alain	dag Sarah! tu prends ta veste?	<i>hello sarah! ((in French:)) can you take your jacket?</i>
Sarah	pa, he .. heb je Chaise Musicale ((a music CD)) ... mag ik van voor?	<i>((in Dutch:)) dad, ha .. do you have Chaise Musicale ((a music CD)) ... can I go in the front?</i>
Alain	mag ik van wat?	<i>can I go what?</i>
Sarah	voor	<i>in the front</i>
Alain	voor wat? <laugh>	<i>in front of what? &lt;laugh&gt;</i>
Sarah	maar voor, in de auto	<i>but in front, in the car</i>
Alain	oh, in de auto? euh, ik denk het niet, nee	<i>oh, in the car? euh, I don't think so, no</i>
Sarah	jawel!	<i>yes!</i>
Alain	tu me parles en néerlandais, toi, maintenant?	<i>((French:)) you talk to me in Dutch now?</i>
Emma	maar allez alstublieft. allez please!	<i>((Dutch:)) but alleṡ ((interj.)) please. alleṡ ((interj.)) ((English:)) please!</i>
Alain	((@Emma:)) hoe was het Emma? ja? ((@ teacher:)) ça a été?	<i>((@ Emma in Dutch:)) how was it Emma? yes? ((@teacher in French:)) did it go ok?</i>
Music teacher	((in French))	<i>((in French))</i>
Alain	ouais ouais et . elle traduit pas euh	<i>yeah yeah and . she doesn't translate euh</i>

(II-A-A008-1:38)

As we can observe, neither the language regime at the school nor Sarah's habitual way of speaking to her father prevent her from starting an interaction with her father in Dutch, something which does not remain unnoticed, as Alain explicitly asks her (in French) why she does so. The presence of her Dutch-speaking school friend Emma causes Sarah to continue (twice) in Dutch, perhaps to show off, or because the topic of the talk is about riding shotgun, a privilege which is highly valued among 7-year-olds.

#### *On the street*

Next, Alain leaves the music school with Sarah and Emma and they cross the street to get to the car. Again, the language use pattern is quite mixed but here we find the first occurrences of Alain speaking in Dutch – thus addressing both girls

– but turning to French when things have to go faster or he has to be sure everything is understood:

### Excerpt 9.6

Alain	wacht, we moeten niet lopen, den auto is daar	<i>((Dutch:)) wait, we don't have to run, the car is over there</i>
Sarah	moeten we lopen?	<i>do we have to run?</i>
Alain	nee . nee nee wacht, den auto is daar	<i>no . no no wait, the car is over there</i>
Sarah	maar moe- moeten we lopen?	<i>but do- do we have to run?</i>
Alain	NEE! ik ben Léo, ik ben Léo eerst gaan halen, hop! kom, attend, va sur le trottoir!, ga maar daar	<i>NO! I went to get Léo, I went to get Léo first, hop! come, ((French:)) wait, go on the sidewalk!, ((Dutch:)) go there</i>

(II-A-A008-3:17)

With respect to Alain's use of Dutch as observed in this excerpt, we should first mention the use of the article "den" instead of standard "de" ("den auto" 'the car'), as well as the modal particle "maar" in "ga maar daar" ('go there'), occurrences which index Alain's access to and experience with informal spoken Dutch. Most probably, this experience derives from his previous working environment (cf. Chapter 3.2.1) and perhaps also from contacts with his children's school friends and their parents. Nonetheless, we can also observe the limits of Alain's Dutch repertoire in this episode, which are clearly a matter of fluency, and are compounded by the constraints imposed by the situation at hand, i.e. crossing (the event) a busy street (the location).

#### *In the car (2)*

The episode that follows involves the main bulk of the recording. It comprises the GPS-episode in which all participants engage in a bout of language play with the car's navigating system, its stylized English pronunciation apparently being the cause of great hilarity. We will discuss this episode in a more detailed manner in the next section ("After the beep, say a command"), but for the present discussion let it suffice to say that it includes a great deal of code alternation on the part of both Alain and his daughter Sarah, mostly silence from Sarah's friend Emma, and a continued use of French between Alain and Léo.

#### *Getting out of the car*

A brief intermezzo ensues when Alain and the children get out of the car in front of Emma's house. Rather than a joint conversation taking place, Alain engages in

exchanges with each of the children separately. The language use pattern established in the previous part seems to persist, though, with Alain talking Dutch to Emma and French with an occasional Dutch word inserted to his own children. Sarah (and this is slightly different from the observations until now) and Léo use French in direct conversation with their father, but Dutch when the topic is somehow related to Emma. Sarah's request in Dutch to stay for a while at Emma's place is echoed by Léo's "*and me!*" ("en ikke ook" II-A-A008-24:15), which suggests a strategic use of Dutch in order to align himself with his older sister's request and not to be excluded from her privileges. We will not get into a detailed study of the children's code alternation practices here, but these instances certainly show that Dutch has become an integral part of this particular family's language repertoire.

#### *At Wim's*

The last episode of this recording takes place in the hallway at Wim and Lieselot's house (PN E). The participants are the same as in the previous part, plus Wim, and Emma's brother and sister. The five children's voices frequently intermingle, which makes it somewhat harder to distinguish who says what to whom, but the main discussion recorded is the one between Alain and Wim. The two men converse in French, and it is Wim himself who initiates this pattern, starting off with a French 'How's it been?' ("ça a été?"), as can be observed in the following excerpt:

#### **Excerpt 9.7**

Alain	Léo, avant de traverser c'est mieux de .. de .. d'attendre que je t'aie dit que tu pouvais traverser, ok?	<i>((French:)) Léo, before you cross the road it's better to .. to .. to wait until I have told you you may cross, ok?</i>
Sarah	mais j'ai déjà sonné, mais ça marche pas	<i>but I already rang ((the doorbell)), but it doesn't work</i>
Alain	ah, wacht voilà .. hop	<i>((Dutch:)) ah, wait ((Dutch/French:)) here you go .. hop</i>
Léo	hop	<i>hop</i>
Wim	ça a été?	<i>((French:)) how's it been?</i>
Alain	ouais, pas de problème, pas de problème	<i>yeah, no problem, no problem</i>
Léo	pas de problème, pas de problème	<i>no problem, no problem</i>
Alain	elle ((the music school teacher)) a dit	<i>she ((the music school teacher)) said eh,</i>

euh, il y a juste un truc. attends, je rentre pour pas que tu ouvres ((the door)) trop grand. il y a juste un truc, c'est qu'il y a des mots qu'elle connaît pas en néerlandais

*there's just one thing. wait, I'll come in so you don't open ((the door)) too wide. there's just one thing, that there's words that she doesn't know in dutch*

(II-A-A008-25:19)

At the beginning of the excerpt Alain still speaks both Dutch and French with the children, but once Wim opens the door and greets Alain (and during the conversation that follows this excerpt), the situation changes. Both Alain and Wim adhere to a strict monolingual pattern, as no Dutch insertions are found in the talk of either, an observation which is in stark contrast with what we have found in the previous episodes when Alain talks to the children.

Perhaps we could say that two different spaces are involved in this episode, each with its own specific social and language rules. In the first space, Wim and Alain are discussing in French (in the foreground of the recording), and in the second space the children are discussing in Dutch (in the background of the recording). The children are temporarily offered a 'free' space that is only partly monitored by adults, and deviations from this pattern occur only when there is interaction across both spaces. Again, the physical location of the action, i.e. the place where the interlocutors find themselves (the hallway, a transitional place by definition), as well as the event in which they are engaged (very much transitional as well: dropping off someone), determine the rules and constraints on possible language behavior. This is reflected in the participants' language use, which is far more based on a monolingual format than in the previous episodes where there were no separate spaces.

#### *Alain 'On the move'*

To conclude this section, we can say that while moving from one space to another, Alain deploys a range of registers to a varying extent, be it in French (parent-to-child, parent-to-teacher, friend-to-friend) or in Dutch (parent-to-child). Whereas the presence or absence of a non-French speaker (Emma) as a participant in the conversation seems to be the trigger, the particular 'place-cum-event' or space in which it takes place clearly co-determines which language practices become available. This recalls Blommaert et al. (2005, p. 213) who suggest that multilingualism is "not what individuals have or lack, but what the environment, as structured determination and interactional emergence, enables and disables them to employ." In any case, from what we observed here, clearly a classification in terms of 'French speaker' (or perhaps 'bilingual Dutch-French speaker') does not adequately capture what Alain is doing here. The excerpts

discussed in the following section will confirm this interpretation and add another layer through the presence of English.

### 9.3 “AFTER THE BEEP, SAY A COMMAND”

In this section we present a detailed discussion of the fourth episode in the recording under scrutiny (see Table 9.1, In the car (2), duration: 20 mins.). More specifically, we focus on that part of the recording in which Alain and the children engage in language play with the car’s navigating system, which ‘speaks’ English (with a British accent). The fragment is slightly over 11 minutes long and is preceded and briefly interrupted by talk about issues related to the music school, from which Alain and the children are driving home. The game is explicitly initiated (II-A-A008-10:04 “tu peux demander à la voiture où tu dois aller. tu veux ça? regarde, on va faire ça” *‘you can ask the car where to go. do you want that? look, we’ll do that’*) and concluded (II-A-A008-21:20 “on va finir par faire un accident, maintenant on appuie plus sur rien” *‘we’ll end up having an accident, now we don’t touch anything anymore’*) by the father, Alain, who enacts the role of the ‘game leader’ throughout the whole episode. At different moments, he is the one who runs the game, for instance by deciding who of the children is next to play, or which action is undertaken, which game is played (such as searching for a destination, or phoning someone), and he is of course literally in command of the buttons. Consider the following excerpt, which starts with the first occurrence of the car ‘talking’:

#### Excerpt 9.8

GPS	after the beep, say a command	<i>((English:)) after the beep, say a command</i>
Alain	<i>((English:)) destination</i>	<i>destination</i>
GPS	destination	<i>destination</i>
Alain	voilà, maintenant tu dis home. home	<i>((French:)) voilà ((interj.)), now you say ((English:)) home. home</i>
Sarah	HOME!	<i>HOME!</i>
GPS	cancelled. your destination mode has been cancelled	<i>cancelled. your destination mode has been cancelled</i>
Alain	<i>((English:)) WHAT!?</i> alors attends, on va le refaire. alors d'abord, tu vas dire, alors regarde	<i>((English:)) WHAT!?</i> <i>((French:)) wait, let's do it again. so first, you say, so look</i>

Sarah	mais ah oui, c'était "telephone" ((English pronunciation)), c'était téléphone, je pense, qu'il faut faire		<i>but ah yeah, it was ((English:)) "telephone", ((French:)) it was telephone, I think, we should do</i>
Alain	ah c'était téléphone qu'il fallait faire? ah oui, mais alors je dois brancher mon truc là. attends, mais d'abord tu vas dire tu vas dire 'destination' ((British English pronunciation)) comme ça, avec un accent, un accent très "destination" ((very posh British English pronunciation)) d'accord? tu es prête? attention, hein		<i>ah it was telephone that we had to do? ah yes, but then I have to connect my thing. wait, but first you say you say ((English:)) destination ((British English pronunciation)) ((French:)) like that, with an accent, an accent very much ((English:)) "destination" ((very posh British English pronunciation)) ((French:)) okay? are you ready? attention, right</i>
Sarah	destination ((English pronunciation)), ok	((English	<i>((English:)) destination, ok</i>
GPS	after the beep, say a command		<i>after the beep, say a command</i>
Sarah	destination ((English pronunciation))	((English	<i>((English:)) destination</i>
Alain	destination ((English, very posh British English pronunciation))		<i>((English, very posh British English pronunciation:)) destination</i>
GPS	second destination map xx. no second destination		<i>second destination map xx. no second destination</i>
Alain	yeah? no? ok. on va faire téléphone alors? attends		<i>yeah? no? ((French:)) ok. shall we do telephone? wait</i>

(II-A-A008-10:42)

In this excerpt, Alain begins by successfully ordering the board computer to look for a destination, and then he gives the floor to his daughter Sarah, telling her what to say, repeating the word, 'home'. She shouts the word, upon which the GPS cancels the 'destination'-procedure. Alain then expresses his surprise by exclaiming 'what?!' in English, and immediately continues in French to instruct Sarah what to do. She interrupts him and suggests they should try the 'telephone' command rather than the 'destination' command, referring to a car talk session they apparently had had on a previous occasion. Alain considers her suggestion, but is reluctant to do it right away since he has to connect his cell phone to the system, and decides to continue with 'destination'. At this point, he explicitly points out to his daughter the importance of the 'right' way of saying 'destination' in order for the GPS to understand her. He uses the metalinguistic term 'accent' but no reference to British English is made. Particularly the second time, "avec un accent très *destination*", his pronunciation of the word 'destination' sounds like an exaggerated imitation of the computer's accent. Sarah responds to his instructions

by repeating the word with the suggested accent, rehearsing it. Then the GPS is activated again and this time Sarah gives the first command, although she is immediately followed by her father repeating the same word, again doing so in a very exaggerated manner. For some reason, the GPS has understood the destination command but is unable to respond to their request. Alain apparently understands there is a problem, requests for a virtual uptake (“yeah? no?”) in English, and then turns to French and suggests trying the ‘telephone’ command. A number of observations can be derived from this interaction. First of all, in this excerpt we can clearly observe a teaching-learning sequence. Alain first shows Sarah how to ‘say a command’, then he lets her try but not without explicitly telling her what to say. When Sarah’s attempt turns out unsuccessful, he explains the ‘rules’ in even greater detail, and rehearses the command with her. Sarah can be seen to accept the role of the learner, as she repeats the command ‘destination’, trying to echo her father’s pronunciation as much as possible. In this sense, the sequence is thus jointly established by Alain and Sarah. Next, the fact that Alain first exclaims “what!?” and the second time “yeah? no?” in response to the negative reaction of the board computer, i.e. he responds in English and not in French, is another interesting feature. It seems as if his reaction is literally directed toward the device, rather than toward the other people present in the car, i.e. the children in general, and more in particular Sarah – who is clearly the co-participant in the event. On the other hand, since he is obviously aware that the children are present, perhaps his utterances should be seen as a way of ‘showing off’ his skills in English, and ‘provide evidence’ for his expertise. In this sense, we could say that in this fragment, rather than speaking English, Alain is ‘doing speaking English’.

Such an interpretation reminds us of the notion of ‘crossing’ (Rampton, 1995), in the sense that Alain ‘borrows’ someone else’s language and uses it in a momentary, ritualized performance.<sup>44</sup> In Alain’s case, we can see how he copies the voice of the English-speaking board computer in a way that does not just serve to make himself understood (and, as a corollary, teach the children how to do so), but also - through enacting a very posh British English accent – to mark a particular identity with which it is acceptable to laugh. He thus creates an in-group identity while at the same time implicitly acknowledging that learning and

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<sup>44</sup> Although different from Rampton’s work (and many others inspired by him, including in Belgium: Jaspers (2006) in Antwerp and Declercq (2008) in Brussels) as our example does not deal with interethnicity, the example still appears to be the expression on the speakers’ part of a desire to align momentarily with someone else’s identity, evoking a particular social identity by speaking the other’s language.

knowing how to speak English is useful. These are sociolinguistic and language ideological rather than linguistic ‘lessons’ Alain is teaching the children, and he does so by creatively employing certain ways of speaking ‘English’.<sup>45</sup>

*Trying to include Emma*

Regarding the overall language pattern in the excerpt, we can observe a move from French to Dutch that is initiated by Alain, who directly addresses Emma in order to invite her to participate in the game. In the the next excerpt, Alain draws Emma into the interaction, inviting her (in Dutch) to try giving a command to the car’s computer:

**Excerpt 9.9**

Alain	ok Emma	<i>((Dutch:)) ok Emma</i>
Sarah	Emma xxx	<i>Emma xxx</i>
Alain	Emma zal proberen ok? ben je klaar Emma?	<i>Emma will try it ok? are you ready Emma?</i>
Emma	uhm wat moet ik weer zeggen?	<i>uhm what do I have to say again?</i>
Alain	euh telef- telefoon maar met een rare ((sic)) accent	<i>euh ‘teleph- telephone’ but with a strange (m./f.) accent (n.)</i>
Sarah	ja zo	<i>yeah like this</i>
Alain	met een rare uitspraak	<i>with a weird pronunciation</i>
Sarah	zo, kijk, zo	<i>this way, look, this way</i>
Alain	telephone ((overly posh British English))	<i>((overly posh British English:)) telephone</i>
Sarah	telephone ((overly posh British English))	<i>((overly posh British English:)) telephone</i>
Alain	ok? [en je moet zeggen]	<i>((Dutch:)) ok? [and you have to say]</i>
Sarah	[je moet het zeggen] in Engels	<i>[you have to say it] in English</i>
Alain	als ik als ik zo doe	<i>when I when I do like this</i>

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<sup>45</sup> Perhaps not so much different from the way young adolescents activate particular repertoires in order to assert their identity, for instance through ‘doing ridiculous’ (Jaspers, 2005).

Sarah            dus je moet ‘telephone’ zeggen            *so you have to say ((English:)) ‘telephone’*

(II-A-A008-14:44)

So far, Emma had been out of the game as all meta-talk has happened in French. The fact that she explicitly asks Alain what it was she is supposed to say, can be considered to be flagging this. Indeed, the first part (excerpt 9.8) involves only Sarah and her father (and the GPS) as principal actors, and as a corollary only French is used. Alain’s initiative can thus in a sense be seen as an inclusionary act, an act of politeness, which is established by initiating (Dutch) language practices that are shared by all participants. At this juncture, and as we saw in the first excerpt, Alain engages in explicit (language) teaching, when he first explains that she has to say the word telephone “with a strange accent”, and then showing what such a performance would sound like. Sarah immediately takes up her father’s move to include Emma, and is keen to co-explain to her friend what she should do, as she continuously interrupts Alain. Particularly, the imitation of her father’s exaggerated British English performance of the word “telephone” is noteworthy in this respect. Apparently Sarah is eager to show that she knows at least the rules of the practice/game, even if the practice itself has been unsuccessful so far.

In sum, the presence of the board computer in the car prompts a game, and causes Alain and the children to play (together), also with language. They engage in a playful conversation with the navigating system, and interestingly it is precisely the lack of communication that makes them laugh. The role of the device in this sense is ambivalent: on the one hand, the actual use of its (limited range of) functions is controlled completely by Alain; on the other hand, whether a feature of the device works or not is subject to a number of rules, notably in terms of the volume, quality, and rhythm of the input. When not observing these rules, the desired result is not obtained, leading to frustration but also to a certain amusement among the participants. In any case, this episode illustrates how technical devices such as these have become part of this family’s linguistic environment and how they contribute to language learning. It is an example of what superdiversity (Vertovec, 2007) can mean in the lives of the (even relatively young) family members.

#### 9.4 ‘MONOLINGUALISM’ IN PRACTICE: DISCUSSION

In this chapter, we were able to show how looking at multilingual language practices in terms of translanguaging (García, 2009a) reveals a number of relevant aspects which a purely linguistic analysis of the phenomena at hand (in terms of

code-switching) would have left uncovered. We have observed how Alain, beyond a classification as a Francophone, resorts to various (language) practices, the nature of which cannot just be described as instances of ‘Dutch’ or ‘English’ that are inserted into Alain’s ‘French’ language. In fact, Alain deploys a wide variety of registers across contexts in order to obtain certain goals and perform particular roles. This became particularly clear in the ‘*On the move*’ section, in which Alain switches between parent-to-child, parent-to-teacher, and parent-to-parent talk, and in which for instance the use of Dutch as an inclusionary act toward predominantly Dutch-speaking Emma is temporarily suspended when crossing the street, reminding us also of how circumstances shape possible practices, with different set-ups invoking different (linguistic) practices. This observation chimes with the Montreal “On the Move” findings (Lamarre & Lamarre, 2009) and shows how this approach reveals a type of data that is closer to the actual language experiences of multilingual social actors than those that would be gathered in a single on-site setting.

Our analysis also reveals how linguistic practices cannot be disentangled from their communicative or pragmatic relevance. In the ‘car talk’ episode, Alain is not just teaching English (or learning Dutch), but he is showing the children how a navigation system works, how to ‘manage’ a game with multiple players (insisting on equal participation and explicitly formulating the order of participation), and so on. He can be considered a teacher presenting a new practice-cum-repertoire to the children, i.e. how to communicate with a GPS in English.<sup>46</sup>

Finally, our approach allows us to show the ideological aspects related to the language practices we have observed here, and in this sense it adds to our discussion in Chapter 7.7. For instance, the ‘car talk’ episode can be seen as the expression of a positive stance toward knowing (and learning) English, a recognition of its importance within the language ideological framework of (elite) multilingualism that is favored by Alain and Béatrice and transmitted here to the children through practices, rather than through metalinguistic or metapragmatic discourse. In a similar vein, the fact that Alain only addresses Sarah’s friend Emma in Dutch, and not her father Wim (PN E), can be seen as a way of transmitting language ideologies through practices. In the latter case, the stakes are arguably higher for Alain regarding a potential loss of face caused by ‘making mistakes’ or ‘having to look for words’. One might expect that this type of

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<sup>46</sup> Or, in more general terms, we could say that Alain is teaching the children how to ‘inhabit the intelligent car’ (Urry, 2006, p. 26).

language behavior, i.e. sticking to one language when talking to adults, will leave its traces and serve as a reference point for the children.

To conclude this chapter, we should mention that having children in Dutch-medium education indeed has a direct impact on Alain and his family's language practices. As we have observed, the presence of a Dutch-speaking school friend turns the expected and habitual language regime between Alain and his daughter Sarah (i.e. French) upside down. This leads to instances in which Sarah is momentarily assigned the teacher role, when Alain asks her to help out with vocabulary, for example. The excerpts show that Alain puts a lot of effort into speaking Dutch to his daughter's friend. However, the observations we make here are undoubtedly facilitated by the presence of a number of factors: Alain and Béatrice are in a position to send their children to a Dutch-speaking school; Alain has had the opportunity to learn Dutch both at school and at work; Béatrice and Alain's social position is strong enough to maintain this 'anomaly' vis-à-vis their francophone friends and family; their economic (and cultural) position enables them to partake in leisure activities on an equal footing with the mostly well-to-do Dutch-speaking parents in the school; and so on. So, for instance, the 'teaching' in the 'car talk' episode described above is made possible through the possession of various kinds of capital that may not be available to others. Not only do these parents have economic access to a car with an inbuilt navigation system, they also possess the cultural capital required to be able to perform as teachers in the first place, notably English language skills as well as 'digital' skills.

# CHAPTER 10

## ‘ONE PARENT ONE LANGUAGE’ IN PRACTICE

The excerpts recorded by Ricardo and An (PN B) can be divided into two stages. The first collection of recordings, discussed in “*Quiere koffee?*” (*would you like coffee?*), was done at home, and they provide us with family talk around the breakfast or dinner table, or when putting the children to bed. The second set of recordings, discussed in “*Bravo Belleke!*” (*Well done, Isabel!*), consists of ‘transitional’ home-to-school events. We refer to Appendix A for more details. Generally speaking, the overall family language regime as reported on by An and Ricardo in Phase I (see Chapter 3.2.2) is indeed confirmed by these recordings. An speaks (vernacular) Dutch with her children and Spanish with her husband. Ricardo addresses his daughters in Spanish, and they mostly reply in (idiosyncratic) Spanish, although at times a Dutch word may be inserted. The children speak Dutch when interacting with each other. However, when we take a closer look at the recorded interactions, a more complex picture emerges.

### 10.1 “QUIERE KOFFIE?”

A first observation we can derive from the recordings is that An sometimes inserts certain features that are typical for Flemish spoken varieties in her Spanish utterances when she speaks to Ricardo. These are interjections like ‘allez’ or ‘(ja) hè?’, and they appear to occur at moments of greater emotional involvement within the interaction, such as when An expresses surprise or requires explicit uptake. Consider the following excerpt:

#### Excerpt 10.1

Ricardo	pues no sabía ((Ricardo’s mother)) nada, ni que comían los padres ni que se iban	((Spanish:)) well she ((Ricardo’s mother)) didn’t know anything about it, not that the parents were eating nor that they were going
An	allez	allez ((interj.))

Ricardo	mm? allez qué?	<i>mm? allez ((interj.)) what?</i>
An	tu madre ahora, si piden a tu madre ya no iría, no?	<i>your mother now, if they'd ask your mother she wouldn't go, right?</i>

(II-B-0023-6:38)

This excerpt was taken from a longer conversation between An and Ricardo in Spanish about an event that happened to Ricardo's parents. An expresses her surprise and perhaps her indignation at the contents of Ricardo's utterance through the use of the interjection 'allez', which has a wide range of different uses, including surprise (Kloots, 2007). Ricardo responds by asking for the precise reason for An's reaction. To our understanding, Ricardo's reaction 'allez what?' indicates an uptake on his behalf of the fact that the particle 'allez' constitutes a (pragmatically) meaningful element, while the precise reason for using it within this particular context remains unclear to him. However, the occurrence of the interjection in itself, though odd in a Spanish conversation, is not questioned. The fact that An then continues in Spanish to clarify her reaction confirms the relatively unmarked nature of the occurrence of 'allez' within their conversation. A similar observation can be made in the following two excerpts:

### Excerpt 10.2

Ricardo	oooOOOh! <clapping hands>	<i>oooOOOh! &lt;clapping hands&gt;</i>
An	allez Ricardo	<i>allez Ricardo</i>
Ricardo	son las ocho y veinticinco ya!	<i>((Spanish:)) it's eight twenty-five already!</i>

(II-B-0030-15:54)

### Excerpt 10.3

Ricardo	iba solo xx caminando por Lambermont ((a boulevard nearby, Spanish pronunciation))	<i>((Spanish:)) he was alone xx walking on Lambermont ((a boulevard nearby, Spanish pronunciation))</i>
An	y 'Zwarte Piet'?	<i>and 'Zwarte Piet'?</i>
Ricardo	no, iba solo	<i>no, he walked alone</i>
An	ja, hè?	<i>((Dutch:)) yeab, right?</i>
Ricardo	era gracioso pero	<i>((Spanish:)) it/ he was funny though</i>

(II-B-0023-1:56)

In the first excerpt, An uses ‘allez’ to express her mild disapproval of (the intensity of) Ricardo’s shouting and clapping as a means to encourage the children to hurry up. In the second excerpt, An expresses surprise by the Dutch ‘ja hè?’ even though Ricardo is relating a story in Spanish. Like in the previous example (excerpt 10.1), the occurrence of these interjections is not questioned. Of course, An’s turning to Dutch (“ja hè”) may have been triggered by the Dutch words ‘Zwarte Piet’ (Black Pete) used in the previous turn. ‘Zwarte Piet’ refers to a character in folklore that usually (in Flanders and in the Netherlands, cf. also ‘le Père Fouettard’ in French-speaking Belgium) accompanies ‘Sinterklaas’ (Saint-Nicholas, cf. Santa Claus), the patron saint of children who brings presents on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December. The tradition, which is upheld in Flemish homes and schools and which undoubtedly plays a significant part in many children’s imagination, is not known in Spain, however. This explains why An and Ricardo use ‘Zwarte Piet’ to refer to the character.

On a few occasions, Ricardo also adds some other Dutch words to the conversation. Sometimes this happens because there is no word available in Spanish (cf. ‘Zwarte Piet’ above), but other reasons appear to trigger such contributions as well. For instance, at one point Ricardo is reprimanding his oldest daughter for not eating but talking instead, adding the Dutch word “babbelkop” (chatterbox) in order to reinforce his message (II-B-0023-1:45). Obviously, he must have heard the word before in the family context, most probably from his wife. A little later in the same conversation, Ricardo attempts to refer to his daughter’s beginners’ reading book by its (Dutch) title:

#### Excerpt 10.4

Ricardo	Daniela, vamos a hacer . después un poco de ‘klik klak brouillé(?)’. o como es? euh boek-etje ((sic))	<i>Daniela, we’re going to do . later a bit of ‘klik klak brouillé(?)’. or what is it? euh ((Dutch:)) booklet ((wrong diminutive suffix))</i>
Daniela	boek!	<i>book!</i>
An	uw hui- uw huiswerk eh, Daniela?	<i>your ho- your homework ((n.)) eh, Daniela?</i>
Daniela	ha, die was ik al vergeten	<i>ha, I’d forgotten that ((m./f.)) already</i>
Ricardo	me ha dicho la maestra que tienes que aprender a leer un poquito más	<i>((Spanish:)) the teacher told me that you have to learn how to read a bit more</i>

(II-B-0023-2:51)

Upon Ricardo’s somewhat uncertain reference to her school book, the daughter corrects his pronunciation, stressing the word ‘book’ quite strongly as if

reprimanding her father for not knowing or remembering the correct word. Additionally, the excerpt above is an illustration of the ‘one parent-one language’ approach as generally applied by An and Ricardo, an approach that appears to occur in a very natural and inconspicuous way, both for parents and children alike. In fact, An’s reference to doing homework (in Dutch, and directed toward her daughter) is a continuation of the utterance initiated in Spanish by Ricardo. The instances of Ricardo using Dutch words (more examples are given in the next section) can be considered an expression (or an outcome) of part of Ricardo’s trajectory: he has been in a relationship with a Dutch-speaking Belgian woman for over ten years and they have children with whom she speaks Dutch and who go to a Dutch-medium school. Yet another feature that can be considered a trace of a particular linguistic trajectory is the way An pronounces certain words in Spanish. Some examples include “los ahijados” (‘the godchildren’ II-B-0023-4:33), “a lo mejor se canceló” (‘maybe it was cancelled’ II-B-0023-4:50); “se ha ido con una velocidad” (‘it rapidly disappeared’ II-B-0026-0:11). What, from a linguistic point of view, could be judged as an incorrect or foreign accent in Spanish – a transfer of pronunciation features from one language to another –, can also be seen as an expression of An’s trajectory, in the sense that it displays and indexes both her contact with a Spanish-speaking environment (be it in the past in Spain, or currently in Belgium with her husband), as well as the fact that her primary linguistic socialization happened in Flanders, Belgium. Her repertoire can thus be considered an ‘indexical biography’ (for this term, see Blommaert & Backus, 2011, p. 2).

#### *Evaluation of the children’s language practices*

The examples given above suggest that among the parents, abstract notions of ‘correctness’ do not necessarily inform (or intervene with) certain characteristics of linguistic practices, or perhaps put more adequately, they show that the family language policy (King, Fogle, & Logan-Terry, 2008) is such that this type of idiosyncrasies remains unmarked (and perhaps unnoticed). The children’s language practices are treated somewhat differently, however, as can be observed in the following excerpt:

#### **Excerpt 10.5**

Daniela	((± singing:)) quieres más kof-fie, quieres más kof-fie	((Spanish:)) ((± singing:)) do you want more ((Dutch:)) kof-fie, ((Spanish:)) do you want more ((Dutch:)) kof-fie
Ricardo	pero como hablas tu?	but what do you talk like?

An	uh <chuckle> [como] los argentinos	<i>uh &lt;chuckle&gt; [like] the Argentinians</i>
Daniela	[oh!]	<i>[oh!]</i>
Ricardo	sí . [no quieres más kof-fie?]	<i>yes . [would you like some more ((Dutch:)) kof-fie?]</i>
Daniela	[no/yo sé hablar MUY BIEN-n], quiere kof-fie?	<i>((Spanish:)) [no/I know how to speak VERY WELL-ll], do you want kof-fie?</i>
Ricardo	sí, es aquí	<i>yes, it's here</i>
An	es 'café' . Daniela .	<i>it's 'café' . Daniela .</i>
Daniela	quiere kof-fie?	<i>do you want kof-fie?</i>
An	<laugh>	<i>&lt;laugh&gt;</i>
Ricardo	lo que tu quieras	<i>whatever you want</i>
Daniela	lalala quiere kof-fie?	<i>lalala do you want kof-fie?</i>
An	nee dank u .. ah ja . een beetje .. dankuwel	<i>((Dutch:)) no thank you .. ah yes . a little .. thank you</i>
Ricardo	a mí	<i>((Spanish:)) to me</i>
Daniela	más kof-fie?	<i>more kof-fie?</i>
Ricardo	sí señora, ahora vas (a) hacer uno ... <noise child>	<i>yes madam, now you'll prepare one ... &lt;noise child&gt;</i>
Daniela	quiere kof-fie? quiere kof-fie? [quiere kof-fie?]	<i>want kof-fie? want kof-fie? [want kof-fie?]</i>
An	[qué te ha parecido el postre?]	<i>[what did you think of the dessert?]</i>
Daniela	[quiere kof-fie?]	<i>[want kof-fie?]</i>
Ricardo	[deli-] delicioso	<i>[deli-] delicious</i>

(II-B-0026-00:24)

In this excerpt, recorded at the breakfast table, An and Ricardo's oldest daughter is pretending to be a waitress who comes around asking the customers whether they would like some more coffee. Her question is formulated in Spanish ("quieres más") but instead of the word 'café', she uses the Dutch word 'koffie', although pronounced in an unusual staccato way, which we indicated with a hyphen in the transcript. Both syllables are equally stressed and assigned a different melodic tone (the first syllable a lower pitch and the second syllable a

higher pitch), giving the whole a sing-song quality. The utterance is immediately followed by metalinguistic commentary by her parents. First, Ricardo flags the oddness of his daughter's formulation in rather general terms, *'but what do you talk like?'*, which is picked up and elaborated on by An as she suggests her daughter speaks like the Argentinians do – who are claimed to 'sing' when speaking. In reply, the daughter contends – again in Spanish – that she knows 'how to speak very well', an uptake of her parents' suggestions on the quality of her wording. At the same time, after having responded affirmatively to An's words, Ricardo suggests to his daughter a different, more polite formula for asking the question, but interestingly, he repeats the Dutch word for coffee rather than 'correcting' it into Spanish 'café'. It is his wife who indicates – in Spanish – at the 'correct' Spanish word for coffee in the next turn. From what we can observe in this excerpt, Ricardo appears to be more concerned with some sort of general politeness, whereas An corrects her daughter's Spanish more in terms of pureness of language, condemning 'mixed' formulae (in line with her assertions discussed in Chapter 7.2) as well as a pronunciation that indexes peripheralness. The daughter then wilfully continues her repeated phrasing of "quiere ko-fie", upon which the parents decide to let go of the issue and collaborate in her play, a point at which An turns to Dutch, her habitual language with the children. After the discussion is concluded, the parents broach a new topic while their daughter continues to repeat joyfully the 'quiere ko-fie' formula, even some minutes after the excerpt discussed.

## 10.2 "BRAVO BELLEKE!"

So far, we have discussed a number of recordings that were made by An and Ricardo in their home setting. In addition, we also asked them to record transitional moments. Two recordings were made by Ricardo when bringing the children to school in the morning (for details, see Appendix A). The overall structure of both recordings is very similar, see Table 10.1.

<i>Space</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Recording D015</i>	<i>Recording D016</i>
Home	Ricardo, An, children (Daniela, Isabel)	0:25	2:10
Street (home-school)	Ricardo, children (Daniela, Isabel)	4:30	3:50
School	Ricardo, children (Daniela, Isabel), other parents	7:08	5:41
Total duration		12:03	10:41

*Table 10.1 Phase II PN B D015-D016: overview of spaces, participants, and duration (mins:seconds)*

Both recordings concern mostly interactions between Ricardo and his three daughters, which happen mostly in Spanish. At the beginning of the recordings, Ricardo and the children are about to leave the house and An is helping them with the preparations. Although things are happening in a rush, the exchanges seem to chime with the observations from the recordings discussed above, as An and Ricardo broadly stick to the one parent-one language approach. However, exceptions to this occur, and the first example is when Ricardo engages in a ‘saying goodbye’-ritual in Dutch:

**Excerpt 10.6**

An	((@ all)) ciao veel plezier!	((Dutch:)) ((@ all)) <i>ciao have fun!</i>
Ricardo	dag mama	<i>bye mummy</i>
An	veel plezier papa	<i>have fun daddy</i>

(II-B-D015-0:15)

In this excerpt, we observe how An initiates the interaction by saying goodbye to Ricardo and the children in Dutch. Ricardo then responds in Dutch, calling An ‘mummy’, as if speaking from the children’s point of view. An extends his interactional move by wishing ‘daddy’ much fun. A plausible explanation for the fact that Ricardo responds to his wife in Dutch seems to be that the parents are showing (and teaching) their youngest daughter ‘how to say goodbye’, enacting the ritual from her perspective, hence the use of Dutch. A similar occurrence can be observed in the second recording:



and the children; the use of the diminutive Dutch form of the daughter's name ("Belleke" for Isabel) is illuminative in this respect. Admittedly, the fact that in this example the event is happening in a setting (the playground of a Dutch-medium school) that is favorable to the use of Dutch in parent-child interaction may have incited Ricardo to repeat his encouragement in Dutch as well. Such an interpretation, which we cannot verify on the basis of the present material, does, however, not contradict our claim that Ricardo draws on his wife's repertoire to carry out particular acts.

What we have seen so far in terms of the presence of Dutch in Ricardo's language practices may suggest that Dutch is used in a relatively 'framed' way, i.e. Dutch occurrences appear to happen 'between brackets', in the context of a teaching-learning event, and are limited to the formulaic. Rather than speaking Dutch, Ricardo appears to be 'doing speaking Dutch' (cf. also a similar remark made above on Alain's 'speaking English' in Chapter 9), and in a sense re-enacts his wife's practices with the children. Nevertheless, we also found instances where Ricardo resorts to words that can be linked to his wife's language repertoire rather than his own but which appear to have become internalized in his own speech patterns. This can be seen in the following excerpts:

#### Excerpt 10.9

Ricardo	Daniela cuidado en los cruces eh! . stop en el cruce! STOP!	((Spanish:)) Daniela watch out at the crossings eh! . ((English/Dutch:)) stop ((Spanish:)) at the crossing! ((English/Dutch:)) STOP!
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(II-B-D016-2:30)

#### Excerpt 10.10

Ricardo	((5 seconds silence)) <sighs> .. allez ((3 seconds silence))	((5 seconds silence)) <sighs> .. allez ((interj.)) ((3 seconds silence))
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(II-B-D016-4:53)

In the first example, Ricardo uses the word "stop" to make his daughter Daniela stand still at the zebra crossing, instead of Spanish "para" or "espera". The use of "stop" seems a habitualized practice since the utterance is pronounced relatively rapidly, most likely in response to the urgency of the situation. Obviously, using the multilingual 'stop' to make children stand still on the streets of Brussels may be effective to alert possible bystanders. Furthermore, assuming it is Ricardo's aim to make his daughters react in kind, his use of the word 'stop' suggests they have probably heard the word more frequently than the Spanish equivalent "para". We

know, however, from the other recording that Ricardo does use Spanish “para” with the children (II-B-D015-0:35), though in less urgent circumstances. In a similar fashion, the relatively isolated (i.e. it is bookended by five seconds of silence before it and three seconds of silence after it) occurrence of the interjection “allez” preceded by a sigh in excerpt 10.10 emerges as a habitualized expression as well, in this case of frustration, probably due to the difficulties Ricardo’s daughter is having with lifting her bicycle up over the school’s doorstep. We already mentioned the interjection ‘allez’ in our discussion above (excerpt 10.1) and argued that it was part of An and Ricardo’s shared repertoire, an observation which the present example does not contradict. What we can observe here, however, is that Ricardo not only understands the meaning of “allez” but also uses it himself even when there are no obvious listeners around. So, on the basis of these last observations, we must qualify our previous claim about Ricardo speaking Dutch as ‘drawing on An’s repertoire with the children’ for it is too simplistic, because as observed here these Dutch elements have become part of his language repertoire as well. A more useful conceptualization that encapsulates all observed occurrences would be the notion of a ‘family’ repertoire, shared by Ricardo, An, and the children, which consists of a number of Dutch formulae that are functionally linked to particular practices.<sup>47</sup>

#### *Language practices at school*

Incidentally, the recordings discussed in this part also revealed that the school space, or more correctly that part of the school in which parents are allowed to enter, is a space where different languages are spoken. At the end of the recording, we can hear voices talking in Dutch, French, English, Spanish, and Italian (in D015); and in Dutch and French (in D016). As mentioned before (see Chapter 3.1), the school asks the parents at the beginning of the school year to sign a school policy document that includes stipulations on language use by parents on the school premises. However, it would seem that the school does not strictly enforce its language policy within its own space. On the recordings, Ricardo addresses (or is addressed by) other parents in mostly very brief stretches of Dutch, Italian, Spanish, or French. Some exceptions aside (see the discussion with Wim (PNE), Chapter 11.1), these interactions do not exceed one or two

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<sup>47</sup> In this sense, our findings resonate with Fogle (2012) who shows how shared language practices in the family can be harnessed to foster family membership and ties.

turns and are limited to typical greeting formulae (ça va?, alles goed?, come estai?, buen día).

### 10.3 ‘ONE PARENT, ONE LANGUAGE’ IN PRACTICE: DISCUSSION

As we have observed from this round of data collection, the one parent-one language approach as professed by An and Ricardo (see Chapter 3.2.2) can broadly be confirmed, albeit with certain qualifications. Both parents use Dutch words when talking Spanish, an observation which may be considered ironic in light of An’s assertions on languages ‘contaminating each other’, or Ricardo calling himself a ‘monolingual’ (Chapter 7, excerpts 7.2 and 7.3). Moreover, these occurrences seem to take place unnoticed, at least among the parents. The children’s practices, by contrast, are corrected when deviating from the monolingual norm, such as when An characterizes her daughter Daniela’s “quiere koffie” (*do you want some coffee*) as Argentinian speak and tells her it should be “café” in Spanish.

Furthermore, on the basis of the observations of Ricardo’s use of Dutch presented above, we could argue that these instances can always in some way be linked to a ‘home’ or a family language repertoire, i.e. a repertoire that Ricardo shares with his wife An and indirectly with the children. The couple (and, by extension, the family) can be considered as a community of practice whose participants share certain practices to which particular linguistic forms are associated. For instance, the example given of Ricardo encouraging his daughter with “bravo Belleke” (*well done Belleke*) illustrates how Ricardo is literally adopting his wife’s voice. Sometimes the shared repertoire is used in an emergency (as in the example of ‘stop’), and sometimes it appears to have become such a habitualized practice that it is used even when there are no obvious listeners around (the example of ‘allez’), indicating that Dutch has become a part of Ricardo’s repertoire and is functionally used.

Such an interpretation of the observed language practices differs substantially from the one we could have made if we had adopted a monoglossic point of view. Indeed, taken from a monoglossic point of view, one could argue that the instances of Ricardo speaking Dutch do not reflect an elaborate linguistic competence in Dutch, as they include some words directly related to the children’s everyday lives (which includes the school), such as ‘Zwarte Piet’ or Ricardo’s attempt to say “boekje” (*booklet*), a few interjections, and the conversations with other adults which were restricted to small talk and seem limited to the formulaic.

However, we prefer to look at these instances as elements that, as a product of Ricardo's ongoing (and so continuously changing) trajectory, have become part of his multilingual repertoire. As mentioned, it is useful to consider Ricardo's (but also An's) repertoires as 'indexical biographies' (Blommaert & Backus, 2011), as they are a reflection of these parents' trajectories. Finally, because one of the parents in this parental node is a Dutch speaker herself, we cannot as such isolate the influence of having children in Dutch-medium education on this family's language practices. However, it is likely that Dutch being the school language dynamically informs and supports the family's home language repertoire.

# CHAPTER 11

## ‘HOME LANGUAGE = SCHOOL LANGUAGE’, IN PRACTICE

From the outset, one might expect to find slightly different phenomena in the recordings made by Wim and Lieselot (PN E) from the ones we have observed among their counterparts, since they have one dominant home language (Dutch) which coincides with the school language. However, the transitional space between the home and the school, i.e. the street in-between and the entrance hall of the school where parents drop off their children, is not necessarily Dutch-speaking, and apparently invites linguistic practices other than Dutch. Moreover, Wim and especially Lieselot invoke the neighborhood as a site of multilingual language use and thus of language learning, particularly of French (cf. Chapter 3.2.5). Four out of six recordings, discussed in “*Happy New Year!*”, were made by Wim while bringing the children to school in the morning. The other two recordings were made by Lieselot when picking up the children in the afternoon, and are discussed in “*Les poissons étaient bien*” (*The fish were ok*). We refer to Appendix A for more details on these recordings.

### 11.1 “HAPPY NEW YEAR! ALLES GOED?”

Table 11.1 presents the overall structure of the recordings made by Wim. As in similar recordings made by the other parents, and due to the specific circumstances of the school run, these episodes contain what could be called ‘morning rush’-talk, with the parent, in this case Wim, continuously telling the children to hurry up (cf. utterances such as “*allez vooruit, hup hup*” ‘*let’s move, chop, chop*’ in II-E-0060-0:03, or “*kom, schattekes*” ‘*come on, darlings*’ in II-E-0062-0:45 and 1:05). Overall, we can hear Wim speaking Dutch most of the time, with the children, with occasional passers-by on the street (a neighbor? another parent?), and with most of the parents at the school. The majority of exchanges are very brief, and are limited to greetings or the exchange of New Year’s wishes, as two of the recordings were made just after the Christmas vacation. In two recordings (II-E-0062 and II-E-0064), however, we can observe longer

conversations, which both evolve around Wim’s account of his and his family’s skiing trip. These conversations are equally held in (varieties of) Dutch, and involve a group of at least four fathers in II-E-0062.

<i>Space</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Recording 0059</i>	<i>Recording 0060</i>	<i>Recording 0062</i>	<i>Recording 0064</i>
Home	Wim, children	0:40	0:22	0:24	0:38
Street (home-school)	Wim, children, other parents	1:58	1:26	1:49	1:58
School	Wim, children, other parents	2:46	1:57	7:50	5:27
Total duration		5:24	3:45	10:03	8:03

*Table 11.1 Wim (PN E) Phase II: overview of spaces, participants, and duration (mins:seconds)*

Other languages do appear in these recordings, although significantly less so than in the episodes recorded by the other parents. In the background of II-E-0062, we can hear at least three different adults speaking Spanish on the school premises. However, most of the other conversations in the background are held in Dutch, which is an observation that differs somewhat from those gleaned from the recordings made by the other parents (discussed in the two previous chapters).

### *A lingua franca*

In the recordings with Wim that we have, he interacts only twice (in II-E-0062 and II-E-0064) with another parent in another language than Dutch, and on both occasions with the same parent, i.e. Ricardo (PN B), who is also a neighbor (see Chapter 3.2), which explains why they meet on the street in the morning. Consider the following excerpt:

#### **Excerpt 11.1**

Wim	hi Ricardo	<i>((English:)) hi Ricardo</i>
Ricardo	happy new year hè!	<i>happy new year, ay!</i>
Wim	yeah, happy new year!	<i>yeah, happy new year!</i>
Ricardo	happy new year, alles goed?	<i>happy new year, ((Dutch:)) all well?</i>
Wim	ja (yeah?), absoluut	<i>yes (yeah?), absolutely</i>
Ricardo	goeie vakantie gehad?	<i>did you have a nice vacation?</i>

Wim	weekje gaan skiën	<i>went skiing for a week</i>
Ricardo	ja, wij wij xx	<i>yes, we we xx</i>
Wim	ja wij ook, wij ook . too much too much snow	<i>yes we too, we too. ((English:)) too much too much snow</i>
Ricardo	for us it was eh	<i>for us it was eh</i>
Wim	in Spain?	<i>in Spain?</i>
Ricardo	eh no no, in Austria	<i>eh no no, in Austria</i>
Wim	ah, in Austria?	<i>ah, in Austria?</i>
Ricardo	it was eh it was very very very eh	<i>it was eh it was very very very eh</i>
Wim	was it last week?	<i>was it last week?</i>
Ricardo	yes, we came back on Saturday . <chuckle> ((@ other parent:)) gelukkig nieuwjaar hè	<i>yes, we came back on Saturday . &lt;chuckle&gt; ((@ other parent, in Dutch:)) happy new year ay</i>
other parent	beste wensen hè!	<i>best wishes ay!</i>
Ricardo	ja, ja, beste wensen ((@ Wim:)) it was eh, it was incredible	<i>yes, yes, best wishes ((@ Wim, in English:)) it was eh, it was incredible</i>
Wim	<laugh> we were in France it has been snowing for three days ((sic)) but we managed to get out	<i>&lt;laugh&gt; we were in France it has been snowing for three days ((sic)) but we managed to get out</i>
Ricardo	we managed to get out but for the girls it was very difficult to ski	<i>we managed to get out but for the girls it was very difficult to ski</i>
Wim	ah yeah, ... it was the first time? or .	<i>ah yeah, ... it was the first time? or .</i>
Ricardo	the second time	<i>the second time</i>

(II-E-0062-1:06)

As we can observe in this excerpt, the larger part of the interaction happens in English, and Wim starts the conversation by greeting Ricardo in English. Ricardo replies in English, but then embarks on a new topic – asking Wim about his vacation – in Dutch. After two turns, however, Wim reverts to English and from then onwards their conversation continues in English. Perhaps Wim does so because he senses that Ricardo is having difficulties formulating what he means to say (“ja, wij wij xx”), perhaps Wim enjoys speaking English, or perhaps he wants the conversation to move along more rapidly; or it is a combination of all these factors. The pattern in the rest of the interaction seems to corroborate the idea

that Wim wants the conversation to move along swiftly, as we can observe Wim repeatedly asking Ricardo new, short questions, frequently interrupting him and not leaving Ricardo the required time to formulate his answer. It is only after a brief intermezzo (the exchange of seasonal greetings with another parent) that Ricardo is able to give a proper reply, stating “it was incredible”. In any case, English seems to be used as a kind of lingua franca by Wim and Ricardo.<sup>48</sup> The fact that they use English as a lingua franca does not preclude misunderstandings, as we can observe that the expression “managed to get out” in the last lines of the excerpt is understood somewhat differently by Ricardo.

Another comment regarding this excerpt concerns Ricardo’s performing of Dutch, which confirms some of the observations we have made before (see Chapter 10.2). The form “goeie” of the word ‘good’ in “een goeie vakantie gehad?” is a colloquial form typical of spoken language (in written language it would be “goede”), indicating again that Ricardo’s range of expressions in Dutch can be related to informal spoken circles, most probably taking his wife’s utterances as examples. From what we can observe in this excerpt, however, it appears that Ricardo does also use them in a functional way outside the family context. He addresses Dutch-speaking parents (in this case Wim as well as the other parent) in Dutch, with the ‘expected’ formulae (“gelukkig nieuwjaar”, “beste wensen”). This can be regarded as an act of politeness, or one of accommodation toward the fact that his daughters are in a Dutch-speaking school, but in any case, this observation adds to our discussion in the previous chapter and confirms ‘Dutch’ has become part of Ricardo’s repertoire.

It should also be mentioned that while this conversation is taking place, the children of both fathers are nearby. It can be assumed that the parents’ language practices inform the children’s beliefs and ideas on language, for instance that it is ‘normal’ for parents/people to use different languages in particular ways in particular settings as is the case here, or that English can be used as a lingua franca between a Dutch-speaker and a Spanish-speaker. In this sense, the conversation is a fitting example of a ‘behavioral’ language ideology (Vološinov, 1986; see Chapter 7.1).

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<sup>48</sup> The pattern observed here (i.e. greetings in one or both of the interactants’ languages; then the conversation itself in another language, a shared lingua franca) resembles one that occurs in an interaction between Ricardo and an Italian-speaking father on one of Ricardo’s recordings (II-B-D016) which we cannot present here, however, since we do not have the permission from the other parent. Their conversation starts off in Italian and Spanish, with both interactants using politeness formulae from the other’s language, before turning to French.

## 11.2 “LES POISSONS ÉTAIENT BIEN!”

A general observation we can draw from the two recordings made by Lieselot (PN E) when she picks up the children in the afternoon (for details, see Appendix A) is that we hear mostly women talking, in varieties of Dutch. This is particularly so when more than two parents join in the conversation, and/or when the conversation moves beyond the habitual ‘greetings’ sequences. Such an observation mirrors what we have discussed above with respect to the recordings made by Wim, where we found mostly Dutch-speaking men getting together in group conversations. At first hearing, these observations suggest that background, partly related to language, would be an important variable for describing these parents’ language practices, as a social boundary appears to exist between ‘Dutch-speaking Flemings’ and others.<sup>49</sup> However, such an interpretation is untenable in light of a number of counterexamples, which we will describe below. More usefully, we can classify Lieselot’s interactions in terms of the (often mutual) emotional alignment with her interlocutors and her involvement with the subject, as observed in the excerpts.

### *Lieselot talking to ‘Flemish’ women*

As mentioned before, many of the recorded interactions are limited to very brief exchanges (principally comprising politeness formulae), which would generally confirm our first impression of mainly ‘Flemish’ women talking. Two conversations that go beyond the formulaic, though both with ‘Flemish’ women, are quite different in terms of Lieselot’s responsiveness and involvement. The first one, in the beginning of II-E-0063 (1:20-3:30), occurs when Lieselot is standing outside the school gates together with other women (most of them Flemish), waiting for the doors to open. They start talking about the hand-made objects one

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<sup>49</sup> On the basis of our observations of Wim participating in group conversations with other fathers and Lieselot in conversations with other mothers, one might wonder in what way gender informs the nature and content of group conversations on the school premises. When we commented on this issue in our feedback interview (III-E-D018-14:42), Lieselot suggested that it is mostly fathers who bring the children to school in the morning and mostly mothers who go and pick them up in the afternoon. This is a plausible explanation for these observations, but there may be more to the issue. For instance, both in II-E-0062 (Wim talking with other fathers) and in II-E-0063 (Lieselot talking with other mothers), the topic of the conversation concerns their respective skiing trips, but in the first recording the discussion evolves around the difficulties of driving on snowy mountain roads (including semi-technical comments on the engine, about putting on snow chains, and so on), whereas the second conversation focuses primarily on the experiences and well-being of the children. The scope of this dissertation, however, unfortunately does not allow us to delve into this issue any further.

of the Flemish women has made, but Lieselot seems only partially interested. The conversation remains polite but does not contain any clear markers of emotional alignment or expressions of solidarity. Lieselot, for instance, does ask a number of practical questions, but her prosodic pattern remains rather flat, and she seems ‘easily satisfied’ with the answers, her involvement in the matter seeming relatively low. In the second conversation, Lieselot (II-E-0061-00:46) asks another mother immediately, even without saying hello, in a concerned, empathetic voice about a medical procedure. After a brief reply, both mothers are occupied with their children, and then cross each other again a few minutes later (II-E-0061-04:08), upon which they exchange two more turns on the same topic. Despite the ‘staccato’ pace of the conversation, there appears to be a high degree of emotional involvement on the part of Lieselot, as the conversation goes beyond the usual small talk, even skipping it altogether.

### *Lieselot and Béatrice*

Yet another episode that qualifies the initial impression of there being a social boundary between Dutch-speaking Flemings and others is when Lieselot meets Béatrice (PN A) on the playground (II-E-0063-8:08). The conversation takes place just after the Christmas vacation, and Lieselot is thanking Béatrice for taking care of the fish during the family’s absence:

#### **Excerpt 11.2**

Lieselot	HEY! hé, merci beaucoup pour les poissons, hè !	<i>HEY! hé, thanks a lot for the fish, right!</i>
Béatrice	ah oui, de rien !  ((...))	<i>ah yes, you’re welcome!</i>  ((...))
Lieselot	parce que, allez ja, c’est, on est on est on est a- ren- entré, et euh, c’était vraiment euh, l’eau ((in the fish tank)) était rafraîchi, tout était	<i>((French:)) because ((Dutch:)) allez ((interj.)) yes ((French:)) it’s, we we came, came home and euh, it was really euh, the water ((in the fish tank)) had been changed, everything was</i>
Béatrice	oui oui	<i>yes yes</i>
Lieselot	wow, c’était vraiment eh	<i>wow, it was really eh</i>
Béatrice	<laugh>	<i>&lt;laugh&gt;</i>
Lieselot	et les poissons étaient bien !	<i>and the fish were ok!</i>
Béatrice	oui, c’est ça ! <laugh>	<i>yes, that’s right! &lt;laugh&gt;</i>

Lieselot	mais (@children:) we gaan door we gaan door	<i>but ((@children in Dutch:)) we're leaving we're leaving</i>
Béatrice	heureusement heureusement	<i>((French:)) luckily luckily</i>
Lieselot	allez on est prêtes pour euh nouveau, hein	<i>allez ((interj.)) we're ready for euh new- for new, aren't we</i>
Béatrice	xx et il paraît que c'était bien? vous avez eu de la neige?	<i>xx and apparently it was good? you had snow?</i>

(II-E-0063-8:08)

As we can observe, Lieselot addresses Béatrice very enthusiastically, and immediately in French, despite them being on school premises. Even if Lieselot is struggling a bit with French, as she has to look for words and has to leave some utterances unfinished, the overall pattern suggests that French appears to be these women's lingua franca (just like their husbands', see Chapter 9.2). This pattern is interrupted once by a momentary switch to Dutch, when Lieselot addresses her children, and also by the insertion of "allez ja", which echoes An's (PN B) behavior of inserting "allez" when speaking Spanish (see our discussion in the previous chapter). The cordiality expressed in this conversation (cf. Lieselot's enthusiasm and also Béatrice's laughter and her positive encouragements: "oui oui" "heureusement heureusement") suggests a high degree of mutual alignment on the part of both interactants.

#### *Involvement and shared practices*

In the previous examples, we have shown how the varying degree of Lieselot's involvement in the conversation, not unsurprising as such, cannot just be traced along the lines of 'Flemish Dutch speakers' and 'others'. We would like to suggest that what does play a role in this is the degree to which these women share practices (Scollon & Scollon, 2007). With respect to the last example (excerpt 11.2), for instance, we know that Lieselot and Béatrice meet each other regularly outside the school environment. Both families have been on vacation together a number of times (cf. the setting of Wim and Alain's argument discussed in Chapter 8), their children sometimes attend the same leisure activities (and the parents alternate driving them to these activities, cf. the 'car talk' recording discussed in Chapter 9.3). We can thus assume that Béatrice and Lieselot share a history of practices, even a nexus of practice (Scollon & Scollon, 2007). By contrast, Lieselot's lack of engagement with the topic of arts and crafts (II-E-0063-1:20) can be interpreted to reflect a limited degree of shared practices.

### 11.3 ‘HOME LANGUAGE = SCHOOL LANGUAGE’, IN PRACTICE: DISCUSSION

As we have seen in Chapter 7.3, Wim and Lieselot (PN E) formulate ‘learning’ in terms of practicing or ‘doing’ (“al doende leren”) and as such, they are quite eager to speak other languages. What they do ‘on the street’, in their everyday lives, in *casu* speaking French, was dissociated from any potential political interpretations of them doing so. For instance, despite his ‘Flemish reflex’, Wim stated he does not make a point of speaking Dutch (Chapter 4.5.1). In excerpt 11.1, Wim is the one who breaks off Ricardo’s (PN B) attempts to initiate a conversation in Dutch and switches back to English, and in excerpt 11.2 we can observe how Lieselot starts speaking in French with Béatrice (PN A). In both cases, this came across as an unmarked habitualized practice shared by both interlocutors and in this sense we described it as a *lingua franca*.

We also suggested that these parental conversations on the school premises can be a conduit for the transmission of certain behavioral language ideologies to the children. Indeed, when we look at these instances from a language ideological point of view, we could interpret them as evidence for an adherence to a certain type of multilingualism. Specifically, we could conceive of them too as an expression (and a performance) of ‘elite’ or ‘prestige bilingualism’ (Hélot, 2004; Jaspers, 2009; Blommaert, 2011; Moore, 2011), in which individuals with a considerable amount of social, cultural and economic capital prove to be ‘European citizens’ who know how to negotiate their way around various (prestigious) languages without any obvious effort. This chimes with our interpretation of the ‘car talk’ episode in the discussion of Chapter 9.3, in which we argued that the performance of such a fluent multilingual identity is facilitated by the possession of the different types of capital mentioned above.

The occurrence of Lieselot talking French on the playground is also noteworthy in light of the official school policy that it is an exclusively Dutch-speaking (“Nederlandstalig”) environment. Although this may be less the case on the recordings made by Wim and Lieselot, we generally hear a variety of languages spoken in the background of the recordings, as well as in the conversations that our informants have with other parents, both outside the school gates and on the school premises. Therefore, there appears to be a glaring contradiction between the school policy on the one hand and the parents’ language practices on the other. When we commented upon this issue in the feedback interview, Lieselot referred to a shift in the way the school deals with the implementation of the school policy. In contrast to earlier times when a piece of paper was stuck to the

school gates proclaiming “vanaf hier spreekt men Nederlands” (*from this point on Dutch is spoken*) III-E-D018-16:46), Dutch classes are now being offered to the parents. Lieselot appreciates this as a much more positive approach. She found the previous notice rather aggressive, and even if she concurred with its content on principle, she says she did not let it guide her actions. This may again illustrate how ‘normal’ multilingualism is perceived to be, at least when it pertains to prestige languages.

Lastly, we have aimed to illustrate how shared practices inform emotional alignment and involvement as displayed in Lieselot’s conversations with other women, countering our first, impressionistic observations of segregation along linguistic/ethnic lines. In this sense, we offered a modest attempt to show how the notion of a nexus of practice (Scollon & Scollon, 2007) discussed in Chapter 1.1.3 can be usefully applied to these kind of data.



## GENERAL CONCLUSIONS



Before we wrap up our research findings, we will briefly recall our main research focus and objectives. The present research focused on parents in the particular context of Dutch-medium education in Brussels. Officially a bilingual city, Brussels is thoroughly multilingual in effect. Education in Brussels, however, is mainly set up as two parallel but separate institutions – one funded and controlled by the Flemish Community, its counterpart funded and controlled by the French Community. In the past decades, parents of different linguistic backgrounds have increasingly enrolled their children in Dutch-medium schools, although Dutch could be considered a minority language in Brussels, even if in numerical terms only. Opting for Dutch-medium education is therefore a potentially meaningful, even marked choice for many of these parents, and we expected this choice to inform both their self-representations and their language practices.

In this respect, one of the prime motivations to undertake the present study was a worry about the lack of depth obtained through our own previous quantitative research on parents in Dutch-medium education in Brussels (Van Mensel, 2007). In our introductory chapters, a review of the relevant literature and an overview of the political and institutional context of Dutch-medium education in Brussels led us to phrase a number of observations which aligned with the shortcomings of our own previous study. In addition to noting that the two-tier organization of education in Brussels contrasts strongly with the multilingual reality of the city, we also concluded that despite the trend in contemporary sociolinguistics to move away from looking at language, identity and community as bounded entities, research and policy on and in Brussels typically deploys top-down categories, or ‘labels’. Finally, and more specifically with regard to Dutch-medium education in Brussels, we discussed how it expanded not only numerically, but also in terms of linguistic and cultural heterogeneity, and we noted that previous research (including our own) had been mainly quantitative in nature.

The present study then aimed at filling this gap through applying a qualitative approach to a specific group of people we had previously studied in our survey study, i.e. parents with children enrolled in Dutch-medium education in Brussels. To this end, we collected data (consisting of semi-directed interviews and in situ recordings) from the parents of five families from a mixed neighborhood school. Our aims were to investigate how these parents themselves related to the labels commonly used as well as to look into their actual – rather than just reported – language practices.

By applying a qualitative approach, we believe we have presented ‘telling stories’ that offer in-depth, emic perspectives on a number of issues which, in our opinion, have not been sufficiently brought to light by quantitative approaches,

but which merit our attention nonetheless. In this respect, our data can be seen to complement and qualify previous quantitative research (including our own) on parents with children in Dutch-medium education in Brussels. What's more, we believe that on the basis of the materials collected and the analyses made, we can problematize these very approaches, notably by revealing some of the assumptions they take for granted. Before we delve into these issues further, however, let us first summarize the stories we gathered and take stock of how they shed light on our particular research focus, namely having children in Dutch-medium education in Brussels.

## The stories told

### *PN A*

Having children in Dutch-medium education has had a clear impact on the lives of Béatrice and Alain. It brought them closer to Dutch-speaking social networks and, as we have seen, has changed the way they think about themselves. But it has also put the contradictions and tensions that occur between various identity options into relief, more specifically as pressure from 'the outside' raises questions on their 'Francophone-ness'. In the case of Alain, these contradictions give rise to an emotional account of conflicting affiliations, which we discussed in detail in Chapter 8. The idea that 'being a French speaker' and 'sending the children to Dutch-medium education' are identity options that are by definition conflicting (as suggested by PN A's friends and family) seems to preoccupy Béatrice and Alain, and many of their assertions regarding their linguistic identity can be read 'in defense of' their choice, as if they have to counter some (imaginary) critic. In this context, we deem it useful to reiterate Heller's statement already quoted in the first chapter (1.1.1), because it encapsulates to a considerable degree the salient features of Béatrice and Alain's account:

The celebration of "fusion" and "hybridity" may simply be a way of legitimating what are actually multiple monolingualisms, and the privileged position of those with the right kind of multilingual repertoires. It may also signal a struggle between two elites, one with an investment in monolingualism, the other with an investment in multilingualism. (Heller, 2000, p. 23)

We have observed how notions that index a mixedness such as *zinnneke*, *Brusseleir*, or *belgitude* are posited explicitly (and celebrated) within Béatrice and Alain's

narratives. We have also shown, however, that despite this discourse of mixedness, these parents in fact profess a perspective on language and identity that is rooted in a poly-monolingualism and poly-monoculturalism. We argued that the image of a *zinneke* not only helps to scaffold a notion of identity that embraces options of selfhood that could be considered contradictory, but the image is also dynamically constructed by the ongoing project of having children in Dutch-medium education, as it is called upon ‘in defense of’ the educational choice these parents have made. As such, the construction of a hybrid identity can resolve the inherent contradiction of having children in Dutch-medium education despite being perceived as ‘Francophones’.

In terms of how their parenting choice has affected their language practices, we can observe that their everyday lives are not conducted exclusively in French. By virtue of their daughter having Dutch-speaking friends, for instance, they necessarily have to invest in speaking the language, which can be effortful. This is manifested in various ways, from an uncommented upon (though not necessarily unnoticed) slight stammering, to a questioning of their daughter for the right word or article in Dutch, to their being corrected by their daughter. In sum, we cannot categorize Alain as purely ‘monolingual’.

#### *PNB*

Permeating throughout An and Ricardo’s accounts is an allegiance to a transnational or cosmopolitan identity. The image of Brussels as a cosmopolitan city is said to allow for many ways of ‘being in Brussels’, including their own and their children’s (excerpts 5.6-8, 6.16). However, for An, their present circumstances in Brussels are perceived as a challenge to maintaining such a ‘transnational’ position, as the institutional division that pervades Brussels is perceived to deny the possibility of plurilingual and pluricultural identities, particularly since having children. In this sense, it is quite striking in light of the ‘success story’ of Dutch-medium education in Brussels that she mentions the possibility of it closing rather than opening doors. By contrast, these parents’ viewpoints on language are far from ‘trans-’; instead, they can also be characterized as monoglossic, as languages are said to have the capacity to contaminate each other, and great emphasis is placed on writing skills and the importance of one main language, leading to very exacting views of bilingualism. With respect to their language practices, we have shown how these parents’ combined trajectory has given rise to a ‘home’ language repertoire, as exemplified by Ricardo’s seemingly automatic use of “allez” in his Spanish utterances.

### *PN C*

Aisha's story can be summarized in terms of how to combine being 'Belgian' with other identity options that are related to her background, notably her Muslim identity. Her concerns regarding this issue are echoed in her idea of learning languages as a means of getting closer to others ("d'avoir un échange avec autrui" 'to have an exchange with others' I-C-0017-31:32). Dutch-medium education is an integral part of imagining a future for her children, and is discursively grounded in her own experiences as a 'quasi-Belgian', as she herself puts it. However, language is revealed to be 'not enough' (excerpt 6.6) as she is confronted with other societal 'boundaries', notably linked to the expression of a religious identity. Her solution to combine these identity options (also linguistically) seems to involve a dual approach: on the one hand she adheres to the identity-related notion of handing down traditions from one generation to the next (e.g. learning Arabic through and for reading the Quran); on the other hand she takes a much more pragmatic stand when it comes to learning Dutch. Her preference for Dutch-medium institutions can be seen in this pragmatic light, as can her practical rather than idealized notion of multilingual and multicultural Brussels.

### *PN D*

Both with respect to their own identity and to the one imagined for their children, what emerges from Hadise and Aydemir's account is an interest in combining their Belgian citizenship (to which they explicitly adhere: 'Belgium is my fatherland' excerpt 4.23) with a strong sense of belonging to Turkey. The latter is presented as something ineffable, and transmitting the Turkish traditions and language is therefore a self-evident imperative for them. At the same time, however, they imagine their children as fully integrated Belgian citizens, and Dutch-medium education seems to be a vehicle for accomplishing this, at least partly, as it offers linguistic, social and cultural skills that are highly esteemed on the local language market. With respect to their 'being Turkish', however, Hadise and Aydemir distinguish themselves from 'Turkish Turks', by referring to language criteria also. The Turkish language in Turkey is said to be 'pure' and is associated with a written, literary standard, unlike the variety spoken by 'Belgian Turks'. Moreover, mixed language practices such as common among 'Belgian Turks' are deplored, particularly by Aydemir. His beliefs on 'language' thus resemble to a considerable extent those expressed by An (PN B) and Béatrice (PN A).

*PNE*

For Wim and Lieselot (PN E), Dutch-medium education is an extension – socially, culturally and linguistically – of the life they lead at home. The support Dutch-medium education offers enables them to conceive of themselves and their children as ‘Vlaamse Brusselaars’ (Flemish Brusselers) without trepidation. Living in Brussels, which they champion in terms of the richness of the experience in contrast to the ‘dullness’ of their own childhood environment, clearly informs their language practices, seeing they speak many languages on a day-to-day basis. We argued that in order to smooth over paradoxical ideological positions in the Belgian context, namely Wim’s political stance (a ‘Flemish reflex’, excerpt 4.28) and his actual language behavior (‘I don’t have a problem with with euh, with speaking French’, excerpt 4.26), Wim explicitly distinguishes between practices vs. beliefs. By framing practices and beliefs as being ‘different’, he is able to resolve the perceived incompatibility between these positions. Wim’s notion of ‘practices’ vs. ‘beliefs’ is confirmed by Wim and Lieselot’s actual language practices, as well as by the way they envisage their offspring’s linguistic future, which focuses on the practical aspects of language learning. Of course, their position as an ‘elite’ facilitates their ability to uphold this very distinction between practices and beliefs.

### Parents in Dutch-medium education in Brussels: qualifying previous research

After highlighting the salient features in our parents’ accounts, let us now look at how and in what ways our research findings confirm, add to, or qualify to previous research on parents in Dutch-medium education in Brussels.

#### *‘Instrumental’ motivations*

One of the main conclusions of previous research (Deprez et al., 1982; Gielen & Louckx, 1984; Van Mensel, 2007) was that parental motivations for choosing Dutch-medium education for their offspring were primarily instrumental or pragmatic in nature, and not the expression of an attempt to get closer to the ‘other’, i.e. so-called integrative motivations. In other words, the importance of Dutch for finding a job, as well as the good reputation of Dutch-medium schools, were seen to be paramount factors in these parents’ decisions.

On the basis of our analyses, however, we have to qualify these assertions. In fact, the role that Dutch-medium education plays in our parents’ aspirations for their children is not to be seen as an abstract, decontextualized consideration of the

‘importance of Dutch in Brussels’. Rather, as we have seen in Chapter 6, these aspirations are inspired by (and discursively constructed through) our informants’ own individual trajectories, and sometimes even more specifically by certain events that are forwarded as meaningful within their narratives. Aydemir’s (PN D) experience at the job fair is a telling example. Whereas knowledge of Dutch is indeed earmarked as important in order to enhance future professional opportunities for his children, Aydemir presents this ‘instrumental’ motivation by recounting an experience which apparently left a great impression on him. It is thus a motivation that is framed within a larger story, and as such part of his trajectory. There is, in other words, an emotional investment on the part of these parents in their children going to a Dutch-medium school. Their motivation goes beyond mere ‘instrumental’ motivation, as going to school in Dutch is considered a means of offering their children linguistic – and social and cultural – possibilities and skills, enabling their children to integrate into a ‘group’, in this case a group consisting of ‘those with a job’ (or preferably even, ‘those with a good job’).

In similar fashion, Aisha’s (PN C) assertion “je me suis dit: mes enfants ne vivront jamais ça. c’est exclus” (*so I said to myself: my children will never have this problem, it’s out of the question*’ excerpt 6.3) to motivate her choice for Dutch-medium education, is intimately connected to her own personal experiences. Just like Aydemir she explains her motivation by telling an anecdote, which reveals her frustration about not being able to communicate with people, thus grounding her choice in – and discursively producing it as – personal experience. The telling of anecdotes as a way of positing beliefs or viewpoints can in fact be observed throughout our data. Take, for instance, An’s (PN B) repeated referrals to her past life in Madrid, or Wim’s (PN E) mentioning of the enriching experience of growing up in Brussels compared to the dullness of the environment of his own childhood.

Obviously, the nature of (part of) our collected data, i.e. open-ended interviews, is meant to trigger this type of ‘narrative data’. But this does not contradict our claim that these parents forward what they believe to be important in terms of pivotal experiences related to their trajectory rather than social categories. After all, take both Aisha’s (PN C) and Béatrice’s (PN A) mentioning of a lack of opportunities and the frustration this entails (Chapter 6). From an emic perspective, individual trajectories thus appear to be a better explanatory factor for between-subject variability than traditional descriptive social categories.

Our findings thus suggest that interpreting some of these motivations as merely instrumental, such as common in previous research on non-Dutch-speaking parents who have children enrolled in Dutch-medium education, is fundamentally reductive as regards the complexity of thoughts and feelings actually at play. All of

these parents are likely to share a considerable degree of (emotional) investment in their children's school trajectory beyond a practical one.

### *The Belgian issue*

In previous research on parents in Dutch-medium education, the Belgian political issue frequently emerged as an issue of concern, as did the relationship between Dutch and French speakers. In line with the dichotomy marking Belgian politics and media, these issues seem to be informed by the underlying assumption that speaking French at home and sending children to Dutch-medium education can potentially be read as a political act.

Such issues were explicitly referenced in our previous quantitative study (Van Mensel, 2007), for instance, which showed that French-speaking families with a Belgian background were frequently preoccupied about how their children's and their own presence in the schools was being perceived by Dutch speakers. Similarly, French speakers expected their children to benefit from going to a Dutch-medium school in terms of 'feeling comfortable' among Dutch speakers more than parents from immigrant backgrounds. And in the study by Deprez et al. (1982), it was observed that 'Belgian' parents described their choice for Dutch-medium education as a difficult one, partly because they met with objections from family and friends.

The two families in our study that would be categorized as pertaining to the two 'opposing groups' in the Belgian political divide, are Béatrice and Alain (PN A) on the one hand, and Lieselot and Wim (PN E) on the other. As we have observed, there is a considerable amount of contact between these two families. On the basis of our elaborate discussion of Alain's struggling with his 'Francophone-ness', however, we may conclude that the advantages of mutual contact, as convincingly proposed by Mettwie (2003, 2004), may not always be as straightforward as figures suggest. Even if contact undoubtedly has a positive impact on attitudes toward the 'other' and the language(s) the other speaks, it can still give rise to the occasional external conflict (as between Wim and Alain), as well as to internal struggles regarding a sense of belonging.

Perhaps more important a question than how the Belgian political divide is reflected in our research findings, however, is the question as to whether the 'Belgian issue' is forwarded by our respondents as an issue at all. In our interviews, we noted a marked difference between how the informants with or without what would be traditionally labeled 'Belgian roots' deal with this issue. The informants from PN A, PN E, and An from PN B all semi-automatically and quite early on in the discussion drifted toward the more political issues when

broadly discussing ‘Dutch-medium education in Brussels’ in general. Moreover, Béatrice (PN A) partly linked her linguistic insecurity in speaking Dutch to the political context, as she worries what the Dutch speakers might think of her (excerpt 7.14). A political interpretation of language and education therefore seems to be for these informants an intrinsic and unavoidable correlate to (having a child in) Dutch-medium education in Brussels. On the contrary, the issue was not spontaneously raised by Ricardo (PN B) nor by Hadise and Aydemir (PN D) or Aisha (PN C) before being prompted by the researcher.

A relatively straightforward explanation for this difference between our informants could be formulated in terms of their trajectories. However, the fact that the potential political implications of sending one’s children to school in Dutch were mentioned only by some of the parents may tell us more about a shared discourse system among highly educated, middle-class ‘Belgians’ than about the truth value of such an assumption. It remains to be seen whether it is useful to posit, as we have done, that in Brussels, the language choice for education is indeed full of politics-related stance potential. From what we have observed here, this is – at least at face value – not the case for half of the informants, and it might be similar for many other parents with children in Dutch-medium education in Brussels. This observation points to the fact that, as researchers, we should be careful about a priori presumptions, even at the point of formulating research objectives. Indeed, our research findings have ultimately led us to question in a more fundamental way some of the assumptions that underlie both policy and research regarding language and identity in Brussels.

### Questioning a priori assumptions

Our review of contemporary social science scholarship on language, identity and community on the one hand, and policy and research in and on Brussels on the other, had already revealed a discrepancy between the two, in that the former has moved away from looking at these constructs as bounded entities, whereas the latter typically deploys top-down categories as bounded entities. Categorizations such as ‘Nederlandstalig’ (Dutch-speaking), ‘Franstalig’ (French-speaking) and ‘anderstalig’ (other-speaking) and combinations of these are frequently used in research and policy in and on Brussels. In other words, we observe a perspective that is very much language-based, and a very monoglossic perspective on language at that. At best, these categorizations are based on reported main home language(s), but in policy documents they are also frequently derived from the

impressionistic evaluations of these home languages by the school staff, such as in the statistics compiled by the VGC (cf. Chapter 1.2.2). The use of these categorizations as ‘given’ independent variables not only takes for granted the existence of such language-based group entities, but also presumes the utility of looking at society in these terms.

On the basis of our data and analyses, however, we believe we ought to question these assumptions. Our questioning pertains to two main aspects, which align to the findings unearthed by our two main research objectives: (1) how our informants themselves relate to a number of sociolinguistic ‘labels’ commonly used in research and policy in and on Brussels, and (2) what the language practices they engage in are.

With respect to the first point, our data suggest that the application of coarse, a priori categories is problematic, not just because they eschew the possibility of expressing a multiplicity of labels (multiple identities) and/or because they mask internal variety. More importantly, the application of coarse categories denies the discursive nature of these labels. Indeed, the way our informants applied these labels in their respective accounts showed that they were not used with a fixed, straightforward meaning. Rather, the labels were revealed to be contingent on and used in relation to other labels, with one label frequently triggering another. In this sense, we can think of these labels as interconnected in a semantic network, enabling the informants to appropriate and re-appropriate the labels as they see fit.

Since research methods to explore these issues can also be seen to set up particular discursive contexts, our observations have implications at the methodological level as well. For instance, prompting answers on identity-related matters as we did is as such not so different from prompting similar questions in survey questionnaires. What we observed in our data, however, is that our informants hesitate, give multiple options, dialogically negotiate the meaning of the labels, and sometimes even appeared to be stumped for an answer. Their views on the matter are thus not definitive. However, like our interviews, asking questions in surveys is also a discursive context in which participants respond pragmatically, but quantitative analyses inevitably ignore this fact and present the possible answers as a given, granting them a self-evident status.

With respect to our second point, we looked into the language practices that our parents-informants actually engage in, not from a linguistic but from a social point of view, in line with our theoretical approach which looks at bi- and multilingualism through a social lens (Heller, 2007). More specifically, we invoked the notions of translanguaging (García, 2009a, 2009b), language repertoires

(Gumperz & Hymes, 1972; Gumperz, 1982; Blommaert & Backus, 2011), and a community (and nexus) of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Scollon, 2001), to contribute to our understanding of these recorded language practices. With respect to the ‘multilingual’ aspect of these practices, we were able to show that our participants not only use multiple languages across various contexts, but that they do so within contexts and within conversations as well. In other words, they can indeed be termed translanguaging individuals, engaging and engaged in multilingual practices “in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds” (García, 2009a, p. 45). The most illustrative example of this is Ricardo (PN B), whose use of ‘Dutch’ is related to a ‘home language’ repertoire that he shares with his wife and children. Alain (PN A) also springs to mind, who, when moving from one space to another, deploys a wide variety of registers in order to obtain certain goals and perform particular roles. To describe these observations as instances of ‘Dutch’ or ‘English’ that are inserted into Alain’s ‘French’ language would clearly not do justice to the complexity of the phenomena at hand.

Whereas such observations may seem somewhat self-evident in view of the body of empirical and theoretical literature on the matter, they have not been made with respect to the Brussels’ context (barring the noteworthy exception of Declercq, 2008). In his longitudinal survey research on language use in Brussels, Janssens (2001, 2007, 2013) did uncover an evolution toward more people using more languages in different domains, and Mettwie and Van Mensel (2009) talk of a ‘multilingualization’ of language use in companies in Brussels, but in our data, the variety and complexity of language practices is substantially higher than even asserted by these researchers.

If our approach thus enabled us to complement and qualify previous research, we believe we can go even further in our discussion and problematize the issue of ‘which language(s) the parents speak’ altogether. For instance, we stated that a classification in terms of ‘French speaker’ does not adequately capture Alain’s (PN A) language practices, but then probably neither would a classification as a ‘bilingual Dutch-French speaker’. We might – provocatively – ask the question whether he can be categorized at all, and if so, how? Likewise, in the case of Ricardo (PN B), we could ask whether the occurrences of ‘Dutch’ in his speech should be regarded as ‘speaking Dutch’ or rather as ‘doing speaking Dutch’. And what about the “allez”s in his utterances?

The point here, however, is that the question as to which ‘language(s)’ one speaks in itself inevitably perpetuates a monoglossic point of view, hence our difficulties in providing satisfying answers to describe the observed language practices. Answers to this question inescapably depend on what we define as ‘speaking a

language’ (entailing covert notions of proficiency), and thus necessarily involve a particular language ideological point of view of ‘language’ as a bounded entity and of bilingualism as a combination of multiple monolingualisms, i.e. so-called poly-monolingualism (Blommaert, 2007a).

Should these reflections come across as intellectual nitpicking, to our mind they become more important when we consider how these parents are categorized in language educational policy statistics such as those presented in Chapter 1.2.2. Particularly, if we consider the political and financial stakes that are involved in these and similar statistics (see also chapters 1.2 and 3.1), we, as researchers, should ask ourselves whether by asking questions from a language-based point of view rather than describing social phenomena, we are actually contributing to the perpetuation of these categories as such. In fact, in the case of research on Brussels, it may be propitious to discard categories such as ‘Nederlandstaligen’ or ‘Franstaligen’ altogether. Of course, discarding categories that are endemic to political and public discourse will be no mean feat, but research could and should at least play a pioneering role in this regard, for instance by revealing the complexity of social life as we have attempted to do.

## Contributions to the field

From the outset of our study, we aimed at a qualitative approach that was primarily data-driven, in line with the ethnographic tenets mentioned in Chapter 2. Nonetheless, a number of theoretical concepts were introduced and discussed both in the beginning of and throughout the manuscript. These concepts should be primarily seen as guidelines that helped us to direct our gaze toward what we attempted to do – and hope to have succeeded in –, namely to look at phenomena related to bilingualism through a social lens. We believe that the conceptual terminology that we adopted as a heuristics for the present study has proven to be useful for our purposes, namely to uncover the complexities that we sensed were underlying the results from our previous quantitative study. So, for example, the notions of translanguaging and language repertoires helped us to adequately capture the multilingual practices our informants engaged in, the notions of community and nexus of practice helped us to keep in mind the constructed nature of group formation, and the concept of iconization proved to be useful when discussing the parents’ language ideologies. One may wonder, however, how notions such as these could be usefully applied in survey-based studies. In our opinion, the solution lies in regarding these different approaches as different

heuristics rather than different ontologies. In this sense, different approaches can yield complementary data, such as the data we collected in this study that have led us to reconsider our previous findings with regard to ‘instrumental’ motivations. Or, to take a specific example from our data, Aisha’s (PN C) take on Arabic and Berber (Chapter 3.2.3; Chapter 7.4) may help to shed some light on Janssens’ (2013) survey results in which Arabic appears as an important reported home language in Brussels whereas Berber does not. Additionally, different methodological approaches can also be useful to critically evaluate the theoretical and epistemological underpinnings underlying each of these approaches, while validating them at the same time.

Besides these general methodological remarks, let us enumerate what we believe our study can contribute to the sociolinguistic field. A first contribution of our study lies in the nature of its participants, namely parents. As already mentioned in the preface, in most research on multilingual practices related to educational institutions, the focus lies on pupils’ or students’ interactions; parents are usually kept aside or treated as secondary actors. And other strands of research that include parents have as its main research unit the family, for example those studies that focus on the transmission of and socialization into bilingual and bicultural practices. By looking at our informants *as* parents, however, we were able to show how these parents are continuously re-constructing their own (linguistic) identity through imagining a (linguistic) future for their children. Or in other words, how having children and the choices that are made with respect to the lives of these children – in brief, how being a parent – informs the parents’ practices and thinking. More specifically with respect to our data, we have shown that the choice for Dutch-medium education in Brussels is only the beginning of the story. Having children in Dutch-medium education in Brussels is an *ongoing* part of the parents’ trajectory, and this fact clearly interacts with the informants’ language use as well as their self-positioning (as shown throughout the manuscript but specifically in Chapter 6).

A second important observation is that these parents also engage in translanguaging practices, as illustrated in Part III. Whereas such observations may not be new as such, for research on code alternation practices go back a long way, they do add to a large body of literature focusing mainly on youngsters’ novel linguistic ways of dealing with language diversity in multilingual settings. Although we do not wish to (and cannot) contradict the finding that young people are creative language users, our observations at least hint that a certain amount of flexibility can be found among adult speakers as well, and so that creative language use may not be the sole prerogative of youngsters.

Thirdly, the reader will have noticed that three out of five PNs (and precisely those who participated in Phase III) in our study represent what could be called a relatively high socioeconomic profile, and as such they can be regarded as ‘elite bilinguals’. One may object that for individuals in such a position, the issues regarding language and education do not imply the same stakes as those that are pertinent for families who can be considered less affluent in both economic or (recognized) cultural capital. This is a complex issue which we cannot deal with on the basis of our data (see also below). However, and in line with the previous remark, our findings do contribute to the literature in that they show how ‘des parlers bilingues’ can be observed across social classes and/or ethnic backgrounds, and such practices can thus not be attributed exclusively to a particular section of society, as is often (implicitly) the case. Of course, these practices may still be assessed by the practitioners from a poly-monolingual point of view, particularly with regard to their children, as illustrated in the “‘Quiere koffie?’”-episode, to name but one example (Chapter 10.1).

#### *Contribution to research on Brussels*

In-depth, qualitative studies on sociolinguistic issues in and related to Brussels are scarce, and even if quantitative research is more likely to align with both policy makers’ and the general public’s conceptions of ‘language’ and ‘community’, we hope to have shown how a study like ours can contribute to a better understanding - and sometimes a necessary qualification - of the general trends uncovered by survey research. The fact that we have captured actual language practices besides collecting reported language practices, and that we gave center stage to an insider perspective, are clear benefits in this respect. What we (hope to) have shown is the complexity underlying both the labels and the practices, with tensions, contradictions or incongruences being the rule rather than the exception.

If we have presented our informants as ‘parents with children enrolled in a Dutch-medium education school in Brussels’, we could also simply regard them as inhabitants of Brussels; multilingual to a greater or lesser extent, with views on a number of language-related issues, and moving around the city, ‘linguaging’ in whatever way they can. We can easily picture thousands of other individuals, all inhabitants of Brussels, each with a different trajectory and engaging in different language practices, but with stories that nevertheless reflect similar layers of complexity that not only run counter to the generalizing discourse on Brussels so often heard, but also challenge the dual monocultural model on which Brussels is built.

## Limitations and future research prospects

Besides concerns about generalizability and the subjective role of the researcher which are typically formulated with respect to qualitative inquiry (Maxwell, 2005; Dörnyei, 2007; Friedman, 2012) and which we hope to have adequately dismissed already (see Chapter 2), a weakness of our study may be the little consideration we have given to economic aspects. Both the theoretical and methodological approach of our study are not only clearly inscribed in a micro-sociolinguistic, critical, and poststructuralist tradition, but, as we build on a number of notions such as translanguaging, poly-monolingual, monoglossic or heteroglossic, we have also taken a very much culture-centered approach, with a focus on flux rather than stability. Such an approach is not as such problematic, and – as we hope we were able to show in the present study – may indeed contribute to an understanding of language-in-society away from essentialisms such as those linked to nationalism and ethnicity. However, Block (2012, p. 59) warns us against “a certain wide-eyed, romantic fascination” with ‘fluidity’ and ‘diversity’ (and here we can hear once more echoes of Heller’s (2000) words on the ‘celebration of hybridity’), particularly because in his view such a romantic fascination may obscure the role of historical and economic aspects of globalization, and even more concretely, of the somewhat forgotten concept of ‘class’. In sum, Block (2012, p. 74) calls for greater attention to “the details of economics in society, past and present, as well as ideologies – economic, cultural and so on – which impact on social practices, including education.”

Admittedly, in our study we have hardly touched upon these issues. We have, however, particularly with respect to the parents’ language practices, suggested that many of the practices observed (as well as our interpretations/analyses of these practices) are in a sense ‘made possible’ by the capital (Bourdieu, 1984) that these parents possess. The example of Alain (PN A) and the children playing with and in ‘English’ is a case in point (Chapter 9.3). We have also been cautious not to take Béatrice’s (PN A) professing of a ‘hybrid’ *zinneke* identity at face value, but rather as an element of inquiry. In fact, we were able to show that her underlying ideologies and beliefs about language and belonging are indeed very much monoglossic (Chapters 4 and 7). Nevertheless, we think (with Block) that in addition to a focus on identity in terms of ‘recognition’ (Fraser, 2003) such as the one applied in this study, more attention to political economic aspects would undoubtedly add to our understanding of the phenomena under investigation.

Finally, due to the richness of the data and the necessarily constrained scope of the present study, we had to discard a number of possible lines of research during the research process. For instance, by applying a stance approach such as we did in Chapter 8 to more of the data than just Alain's (PN A), we could explore the discursive nature of the negotiation of identities further. We could also look at gender-related issues: how gender is performed linguistically (by the informants and the researcher alike) within the interviews and the recorded language practices, and how these gender performances inform what and how things are said and/or analyzed. We could also explore what during the reading and interpretation of the data emerged as an 'I' vs. a 'We'. With the exception of Aisha (PN C), our parental nodes indeed consisted of two parents, two individuals. The dynamics involving these parents' choices, for instance, could be explored further by looking at how the 'I' and the 'We' are reflected in the utterances themselves (e.g. 'I decided this' or 'we decided this') and how a common stance expressed by the 'we' is negotiated in the interaction (e.g. 'we did this' vs. 'no, in fact, we did this'). We are aware that the absence of these research options could be considered a limitation of the study but we would certainly like to think of them as future research options.

## Policy implications

From the outset of our study, the objective was to look at parental perspectives and practices rather than at the children, teachers, or school staff. We know we should therefore be careful when phrasing policy recommendations on educational practices or school practices. Nevertheless, one may expect parental behavior and beliefs to have an influence on their offspring (King et al., 2008; De Houwer, 2009; Fogle, 2012), and in the chapters which discussed our parents' language practices (Part III), for instance, we also observed some of the children's language practices which, like their parents', could be described as translanguaging practices. Given the linguistic and cultural heterogeneity of the pupil population, one could suspect such practices to be a widespread phenomenon in Dutch-medium education (see also Declercq, 2008), and our observed practices are likely to only be the tip of the iceberg. It is for this reason that we feel it is apt to quote García (1996):

The greatest failure of contemporary education has been precisely its inability to help teachers understand the ethnolinguistic complexity of children, classrooms, speech communities, and society, in such a way as to

enable them to make informed decisions about language and culture in the classroom. (García, 1996, p. vii)

This verdict on the state of education in North America formulated 17 years ago, a verdict that was considered applicable to the UK as well (Leung, Harris, & Rampton, 2009), could equally be leveled at Dutch-medium education in Brussels in the present day. The rapid expansion and shift of the pupil population in terms of ethnolinguistic identity discussed in Chapter 1.2.2 (Figure 1.1) obviously has had a number of consequences for classroom practices, for school practices and school policy, and also for the interaction between the teachers/school staff and the parents. However, these changes may not always cater to the ethnolinguistic complexity present in the classroom. For, notwithstanding a multilingual reality, we precisely contend that the way Dutch-medium education is currently conceived of is not conducive to coping with the linguistic and cultural complexities at hand. It is characterized first of all (a) by a pervasive monoglossic educational ideology (García, 2009a), i.e. one which aspires to a poly-monolingual proficiency in both the dominant language (Dutch) and any languages taught through ‘foreign language education’, thereby assuming that only linguistic practices by monolinguals are considered legitimate; and secondly (b) by an emphasis on an ‘elite multilingualism’ (Blommaert, 2011), valuing certain prestigious multilingual practices, while rendering other less prestigious multilingual practices invisible or even sanctioning them.

In contrast to this type of education (and corollary language policy), we can imagine a heteroglossic type of bilingual education (García, 2009b), which acknowledges that individuals’ multilingual language practices can relate to multiple norms, taking the translanguaging individual (children that have access to various language practices) as the point of departure, rather than the (multiple) monolingual individual. This last approach is likely to align much better to the multiplicity of language varieties encountered in the present-day classroom, and therefore much more likely to harness and capitalize on this multiplicity. It recognizes that children may deploy different language varieties for different purposes in different contexts, and adapts its expectations accordingly. It may incorporate more easily language varieties and practices that are not considered valuable commodities on the local linguistic market, often ‘immigrant’ languages, without eschewing the fact that some varieties are indeed (locally) more prestigious than others. And perhaps it may in this sense contribute to a gradual removal of the distinction between elite bilingualism and immigrant bilingualism (Hélot, 2004), through forging a multilingual space that integrates both majority and minority bilingual education (Hélot & de Meija, 2008).

As regards the communication between the schools and the parents, we can build on our previous remark about how instrumental motivations for choosing Dutch-medium education in Brussels are not just abstract considerations of the ‘importance of Dutch in Brussels’, but grounded in personal experience, reflecting hopes and aspirations. It seems to us that this provides an interesting entry point for various actors on the institutional side (teachers, school board, policy makers) to improve the relationship they have (or do not have) with the parents, especially with parents from an immigration background with whom communication is often presented as difficult. Getting to know the personal stories of the parents may be a promising way to understand what made them opt for Dutch-medium education, and perhaps appreciate this choice all the more as a result. This may then, in turn, pave the way for a more satisfactory communication on both sides. In sum, we believe that stories such as the ones narrated by our informants can contribute to what García (1996) calls for in the quotation above, namely to help teachers (and trainee teachers) in understanding the ethnolinguistic complexities of the children in the classroom and beyond.



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## **APPENDICES**

**Appendix A:** Overview of recordings.

**Appendix B:** Example of a raw transcript and the ensuing annotated transcript (excerpt from I-B-0006).

**Appendix C:** Excerpt from the Josaphat school policy document 2010-2011 (pp. 34-35).

## Appendix A

	PN	Date	Duration	File name	Site	Main actors
Phase I	A	3-Sep-2010	00:09:43	WS570008	in a bar	Alain, INT
	A	3-Sep-2010	00:50:17	WS570009	in a bar	Alain, INT
	A	13-Sep-2010	00:57:39	WS570010	home participants	Béatrice, Alain, INT
	B	22-Jul-2010	00:00:21	WS570004	home participants	An, INT
	B	22-Jul-2010	00:18:46	WS570005	home participants	An, INT
	B	22-Jul-2010	00:35:28	WS570006	home participants	An, Ricardo, INT
	C	30-Nov-2010	01:16:04	WS570017	home participants	Aisha, INT
	D	11-Oct-2010	01:56:10	WS570013	home participants	Hadise, Aydemir, INT
Phase II	E	11-Dec-2011	01:16:43	DVT_D009	home participants	Wim, Lieslot, INT
	A	27-Nov-2010	00:36:27	DVT_A006	home to activity	Alain, Wim, children
	A	27-Nov-2010	00:03:08	DVT_A007	outside activity	Alain, child
	A	27-Nov-2010	00:28:05	DVT_A008*	activity to home	Alain, Wim, children, music teacher
	A	29-Nov-2010	00:08:14	DVT_A009	school to home	Alain, children, child care provider at school, other parents
	A	30-Nov-2010	00:04:29	DVT_A010	home to school	Alain, children, neighbours, other parents
	A	1-Dec-2010	00:04:09	DVT_A011	home to school	Alain, children, other parents
	A	2-Dec-2010	00:09:08	DVT_A012	home to school	Alain, children, neighbour/other parent (?), other parents
	B	4-Dec-2010	00:07:15	WS570023	home participants	An, Ricardo, children
	B	4-Dec-2010	00:00:40	WS570024	home participants	An, Ricardo, children
	B	4-Dec-2010	00:00:35	WS570025	home participants	An, children
	B	5-Dec-2010	00:04:10	WS570026	home participants	An, Ricardo, children
	B	5-Dec-2010	00:00:40	WS570027	home participants	An, children
	B	5-Dec-2010	00:00:20	WS570028	home participants	An, children
	B	8-Dec-2010	00:11:15	WS570029	home participants	An, Ricardo, children
	B	9-Dec-2010	00:17:20	WS570030	home participants	An, Ricardo, children
	B	20-Sep-2012	00:12:03	DVT_D015	home to school	An, Ricardo, children
	B	21-Sep-2012	00:10:41	DVT_D016	home to school	An, Ricardo, children, other parents
	E	12-Dec-2011	00:05:24	WS570059	home to school	Wim, children, other parents
	E	14-Dec-2011	00:03:45	WS570060	home to school	Wim, children, other parents
	E	16-Dec-2011	00:14:41	WS570061	school to home	Lieselot, children, other parents, Hadise
	E	9-Jan-2012	00:10:03	WS570062	home to school	Wim, children, other parents
E	11-Jan-2012	00:09:45	WS570063	school to home	Lieselot, other parents	
E	12-Jan-2012	00:08:03	WS570064	home to school	Wim, children, other parents	
Phase III	A	9-Sep-2012	00:51:22	DVT_D011	home participants	Béatrice, Alain, INT
	B	16-Sep-2012	01:00:44	DVT_D012	home participants	Ricardo, An, INT
	E	25-Sep-2013	00:45:16	DVT_D018	home participants	Lieselot, INT
Complementary data	A	3-Dec-2010	00:48:52	DVT_A013*	home participants	Béatrice, Alain, INT
	A	20-Apr-2011	00:10:34	DVT_A016*	at work (Alain)	Alain, INT (a student)
	A	20-Apr-2011	00:21:01	DVT_A017*	home participants	Béatrice, INT (a student)
	B	3-Dec-2010	00:03:00	WS570022	home participants	An, INT
	B	28-Sep-2012	00:41:49	WS570030	home participants	Ricardo, INT
	C	11-Jul-2011	01:00:42	DVT_A081	in a public square	Yasmina, INT
	P	15-Sep-2010	00:52:00	WS570011	Josaphat school	Josaphat school principal, INT
	P	4-Oct-2010	00:07:48	WS570012	telephone conversation	Josaphat school principal, Hadise, INT
P	4-Jul-2011	01:15:51	DVT_A080	Josaphat school	Josaphat school principal, INT	

\* first transcription by Hélène Verhaeghe or Florence Vandevondele

## Appendix B

Example of a raw transcript and the ensuing annotated transcript (excerpt from I-B-0006). The final versions of the transcripts are given in Excerpt 4.12 and Excerpt 5.9.

- 1:
- 2: (oa uitleg over confianza proteccion de datos)
- 1: me pregunta si. como. como me identificaria . como. eh. flamenco brusseloise (pron) {pitch} ? o como.. wahedde gezegd (pros laugh)?
- 2: kweetetnie eh ja (ol1 laugh) tkan vanalles zijn {pitch}
- 1: flamenco-bruseloise? tu no eres flamenca-bruseloise
- 2:
- 1:
- 2: era una sugestion de (ol 1: tu de bruseloise no tienes nada) la (?) gerencia
- 1: nonononono {pitch} (cf. gender?) pero como me siento . como me. me. (ee pron) p(ol 1: pero bruseloise no {pitch})ercibo
- 2:
- 1: pues pero de (ol2) brujas todavia me identific
- 2: pero flamenca si?
- 1: pero bruseloise? {pitch} eeah.
- 2: tu (ol1: me identifico) como te definirias aqui?
- 1:
- 2: tu erej un español? expat?
- 1: yo yo, s'i, (ol1: expat) yo co-co-cómo un español y cada vez menos español {pitch}
- 2:
- 1: (laugh)
- 2: cada vez m'as qué?
- 1: eh ca, cada vez m'as eh.. (pros smile) (ol1: laugh) que cada vez tienes menos, menos patrias y mas fratrias
- 2:
- 1: [i] (ol ok) eh s'i, . que . d-de hecho yo cuando vuelvo a españa cada vez me siento m'as estranje(ol1 pero no t, no te sientes tampoco belga?)ro (xxx) pa'is
- 2:
- 1: [ts] no (ol1: ni br(?), ni. europeo no te sientes europeo). no-o, pe-pero. yo creo que., cuando uno viene del extranjero y tiene su familia ..
- 2:

• 1:

2: (oa uitleg over confianza proteccion de datos) *hemcent aff theme*

AN: 1: me pregunta si. como. como me identificaria . como. eh. flamenco brusseloise (pron) {pitch} ? o como.. wahedde gezegd (pros laugh)? *105*

INT: 2: kweetetnie eh ja (ol1 laugh) tkan vanalles zijn {pitch} *pitch*

• 1: flamenco-bruseloise? tu no eres flamenca-bruseloise *pitch*

2:

• 1:

2: era una sugestion de (ol 1: tu de bruseloise no tienes nada) la (?) gerencia? *una sugerencia*

• 1: nonononono {pitch} (cf. gender?) pero como me siento . como me. me. (ee pron) p(ol 1: pero bruseloise no {pitch})ercibo

2:

• 1: pues pero de (ol2) brujas todavia me identific

2: pero flamenca si?

• 1: pero bruseloise? {pitch} eeah.

2: tu (ol1: me identifico) como te definirias aqui?

1: *RICARDO*

2: tu erej un español? expat?

RP: 1: yo yo, s'i, (ol1: expat) yo co-co-cómo un español y cada vez menos español {pitch}

2:

• 1: (laugh) *ol 1 = overlapping An*

INT: 2: cada vez m'as qué? *gradate variability*

• 1: eh ca, cada vez m'as eh.. (pros smile) (ol1: laugh) que cada vez tienes menos, menos patrias y mas fratrias

2:

RP: 1: [i] (ol ok) eh s'i, . que . d-de hecho yo cuando vuelvo a españa cada vez me siento m'as estranje(ol1 pero no t, no te sientes tampoco belga?)ro (xxx) pa'is

2:

RP: 1: [ts] no (ol1: ni br(?), ni. europeo no te sientes europeo). no-o, pe-pero. yo creo que., cuando uno viene del extranjero y tiene su familia .. *reint aff 'type', dmv. 'uno'*

2:

INT - INF (she's asking out?)

## Appendix C

### Excerpt from the Josaphat school policy document 2010-2011 (pp. 34-35)

#### **3. Taalbeleid**

U koos voor een Nederlandstalige school. Daar zijn we blij om. Deze keuze vraagt van anderstaligen onder u echter een groot engagement en consequente houding tegenover de taalregels:

1. Op school wordt, behalve in de lessen vreemde talen, uitsluitend Nederlands gesproken, ook tijdens de speeltijd en de middagpauze, op schoolfeesten, enz. Op deze manier wil de school de leerlingen alle kansen geven om het Nederlands zo goed mogelijk te leren beheersen.
2. Op schooluitstappen of reizen die door de school worden georganiseerd, is Nederlands de enige voertaal.
3. Alle contacten (mondeling en schriftelijk) tussen ouders, leerkrachten en directie, gebeuren in het Nederlands. Bij gebrekkige kennis van deze taal door de ouders kunnen ze zich door derden laten bijstaan om de communicatie vlot te laten verlopen of zelf een taal cursus Nederlands volgen.
4. Aangezien voor kinderen uit taalgemengde of anderstalige gezinnen Nederlands praten op school vaak niet volstaat, verbinden de ouders er zich toe om, in de mate van het mogelijke, ook in hun vrije tijd hun kinderen:
  - Nederlandstalige boeken of tijdschriften te laten lezen of voor te lezen
  - naar Nederlandstalige TV - programma's te laten kijken
  - eventueel ook in sport-of hobbyclub de taal te laten oefenen.

Leerkrachten en directie willen alle jongeren groeikansen geven en vinden het heel positief dat anderstalige leerlingen zich willen bekwamen in het Nederlands. Daarom stellen zij alles in het werk om dit te kunnen bereiken. Zij rekenen dan ook op de volledige medewerking van de ouders en de leerlingen zelf.