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First language use, maintenance and transfer: the case of the Flemish community of southwestern Ontario[1]

1. Introduction

Belgian and specifically Flemish[2] immigration to Ontario began at the start of the 20th century and was instigated primarily by the sugar beet and tobacco industries. Most Flemish immigrants arrived during the period of heaviest immigration, from 1902 to 1961 (Magee 1987). They settled in two main areas in southwestern Ontario: the Leamington-Chatham-Wallaceburg corridor and the London-Kitchener-Dunnville area, containing the towns of Tillsonburg, Delhi and Simcoe (Magee 1987). They quickly established economic, social and cultural ties with a somewhat older Flemish community, which had established itself from the 1840's onward on the east side of Detroit (Michigan). Particularly noteworthy is that both communities relied on the same ethnic newspaper for news from the 'old country': the *Gazette van Detroit*. This newspaper, founded in 1914, continues to be published and read by both communities up until this day.[3]

Very few sociolinguistic studies exist of these expatriate Flemish communities. More than 20 years ago, Van den Bergh (1982) studied the language use and language attitudes of a group of 40 elderly Flemish immigrants residing in the Father Tailleu Senior Citizens' Home in Detroit. The study found very high rates of intragenerational and intergenerational language loss with the language shift to English often being completed within the first generation. However, the study was never replicated. As for the Flemish community of southwestern Ontario, its patterns of minority language shift have yet to be investigated.

This study attempts to fill that void. It aims to chart for the first time the patterns of minority language shift of a group of first-generation Belgian immigrants, all native speakers of Flemish (the varieties of Dutch spoken in the northern provinces of Belgium), who settled in and around the towns and villages of southwestern Ontario either shortly before or after the Second World War. The data pertaining to the use, maintenance and transfer of Flemish were obtained by means of a sociolinguistic questionnaire that was distributed with the assistance of the Windsor Belgian Club to its members and their Flemish acquaintances in the spring of 2008. The study relies furthermore on background information about Flemish immigration to Ontario, and on the sociolinguistic profile of the Flemish migrants who settled there to contextualise and interpret the data.

2. Historic overview of Belgian immigration to Canada, specifically of Flemish immigration to southwestern Ontario

During the past century (i.e. the 20th century), there were three subsequent waves of Belgian, and specifically Flemish, immigration to Canada. A number of triggers can be identified: Belgium's place on Canada's list of *preferred nations*; a shortage of agricultural land; and the devastation and disillusion caused by the First and then the Second World War.

- 1900 – 1914

The first wave began at the turn of the 20th century and ended about 14 years later at the onset of the First World War. It can be attributed, among other things, to an active policy of immigrant recruitment undertaken by the Canadian government following its 1869 decision to put Belgium on the list of *preferred nations*. A shortage of agricultural lands, specifically in the overpopulated Flemish north, convinced many Belgians to accept the Canadian invitation to resettle overseas. The immigrants, mostly from the northern provinces of East and West Flanders, settled in the Canadian provinces of Quebec and Manitoba. A minority, however, went to southwestern Ontario, attracted by the newly launched sugar beet and tobacco industries, in which they had already gained considerable expertise in Belgium. These migrants settled around the towns of Wallaceburg and Chatham (sugar beet industry) and Leamington (tobacco farming).

Jaumain (1999: 39) estimates that nearly 68% of the Belgian migrants who resettled in Canada during this period were of Flemish origin. From the Canadian perspective, these migrants who arrived in the thousands – at least 7,000 Belgians sailed for Canada between 1901 and 1911 – were a mere trickle, accounting for less than 1% of the country's overall immigration numbers for that decade (Jaumain 1999: 41).

- 1920 – 1930

The end of the First World War marked the start of a second wave of immigration. At least 13,500 Belgians – about 1.1% of Canada's overall immigration numbers for that period – left Belgium for Canada between the end of the Great War and the start of the Great Depression. Jaumain (1999: 42) estimates that about 70% of these migrants were of Flemish extraction; most of them from the provinces of East and West Flanders where large areas of already sparse farmland had been destroyed by trench warfare. A majority of these Flemish migrants settled in southwestern Ontario around the towns of Delhi, Simcoe, Aylmer and Tillsonburg, where they were to play a crucial role in the development of the tobacco industry.

- 1950 – 1960

A third and last wave of immigration took place during the 1950s. Between 1951 and 1960, as many as 16,200 war-weary and impoverished Belgians started a new life in Canada (Jaumain 1999: 45). Many of these migrants were Flemish (either from East or West Flanders or from other provinces, such as Antwerp) and settled like their predecessors for the most part in southwestern Ontario. A majority, however, was from Belgium's French-speaking south, badly damaged by the war and in the throes of a major economic crisis caused by a collapse of its coal and metal industries. They settled, for obvious linguistic reasons, in the French-speaking Canadian province of Quebec.

Today, the Belgians constitute one of the smaller communities in Canada's multicultural mosaic. Indeed, according to the latest census data collected by Statistics Canada in 2006, about 180,000 Canadians claim to be Belgian or to have Belgian ancestry[4]. This Belgian-origin population is spread unevenly across Canada's provinces. About 60,000, i.e. roughly 33% reside in the province of Ontario[5], with large concentrations in this province's southwestern counties, while the provinces of Manitoba and Quebec also have considerable shares of the total Belgian-origin population. In addition, Flemings outnumber Walloons four to one, according to Jaenen (1998: 71-72), and live for the most part in southwestern Ontario and in Manitoba, the Walloons having gravitated mostly to Quebec.

3. Sociolinguistic studies of Flemish immigrant communities in Canada

There have been very few sociolinguistic studies of Flemish immigrant communities in Canada. In fact, to our knowledge, and with the exception of Breugelmans' 1968 paper which examines the linguistic and cultural integration of both the Flemish and the Dutch in Canada, no such studies exist. Jaumain and Sanfilippo (1999: 4-5) attribute the general lack of sociolinguistic and other scholarly studies of the Flemish and also the Walloon immigrant communities to the smallness of the Belgian-origin population[6] in Canada and to their status as an easily adaptable *invisible minority*. Wilson and Wijndels (1976: ix), for their part, argue that the *invisibility* of the Belgian-origin population in Canada has been compounded by their intrinsic ethnolinguistic divisions. Being either Flemish or Walloon, and speaking therefore either the Dutch-related Flemish or French, Belgian immigrants and their descendants have tended to be seen as either *Dutch* or *French* by the outside world.

Incidentally, in his study, Breugelmans (1968) uses religion to distinguish Catholic Dutch and Flemish immigrants[7] from their Mennonite and Christian Reformed counterparts and does not treat the Catholic Dutch and Flemish communities as two different ethnolinguistic groups with their own idiosyncratic tendencies. This approach would seem counterintuitive to most Flemings who see themselves as ethnically different from the Dutch, in spite of their shared language and at times shared religion. Indeed, as Deprez (1998: 107) puts it: "The Dutch do not identify with the Flemings and neither do the vast majority of the Flemings identify with the Dutch." Breugelmans (1968) may have opted for this approach, however, based on the existence, especially from the 1950s onward, of mixed Dutch and Flemish clubs and associations, particularly in southwestern Ontario where the Flemish had ceased to be the dominant Netherlandic community after the post-war influx of Dutch migrants.

There are, however, a number of historical accounts of Flemish immigration to Canada, and specifically to southwestern Ontario. Some of these studies, such as those carried out by De Ridder (2008), and Magee (1987), briefly touch upon the integration of this immigrant community into the Canadian linguistic landscape. Their observations on this issue, which largely coincide, suggest that the Flemish migrants attempted, like other immigrant ethnic groups in southwestern Ontario, to maintain their heritage language and traditions and to transfer these to their Canadian-born children. De Ridder (2008), for instance, in her study of the Flemish migrants in Canada's tobacco belt (Tillsonburg, Simcoe, Delhi, etc.), hints at a purely instrumental motivation for acquiring English and maintains that the first generation of migrants remained loyal, throughout the years, to the language of the 'old country'. She adds that the second generation, i.e. the Canadian-born children of these migrants, prefer to speak English to each other but tend to use their Flemish dialect – that they call *Belgs*, i.e. Belgian – with their Belgian-born parents.

> De eerste generatie Vlaamse immigranten in Zuid-Ontario blijft zeer trouw aan hun dialect en aan de gewoonten en gebruiken die ze van thuis hadden meegekregen, terwijl ze ondertussen ook hun best doen om de Engelse taal te leren en voldoende mee te draaien in de Canadese multiculturele samenleving. De wil en de drijfveer om te integreren zijn er, maar tegelijk is er ook een sterke behoefte om de eigen cultuur en taal te behouden [...]. Hun kinderen leren van hen de eigen taal en tradities [...]. Meestal spreken broers en zussen al Engels onder elkaar terwijl ze met hun ouders nog hun Vlaamse dialect (Belgs, Belgian) praten. (De Ridder 2008: 245-246)

Magee (1987) identifies similar heritage-language attitudes for the Flemish community in Essex County, i.e. Windsor and its environs. Indeed, at least 85% of the 100 Belgian-born respondents she surveyed as part of her historical study still spoke Flemish very well at the end of the 1980s, and at least 47% spoke Flemish to their children.

These findings, which point towards a significant level of heritage language maintenance and transfer, are quite different from those included in another historical account, that of Wilson and Wijndels (1976) of the Belgian community – mostly Flemish but also Walloon – in Manitoba. They state (p. 63 and 96) that the Belgians in this province "made little concerted attempt to maintain the Flemish language" and that because "the old [failed] to pass on their language" the Flemish language has been "virtually destroyed" among the younger generation.

Interestingly, these opposite findings are in line with data collected by sociolinguistic studies either of Flemish communities in the United States, specifically in Detroit, MI, (Van den Bergh 1982) or of Dutch immigrant communities (with whom the Flemish share variants of their heritage language) in Canada (see, for instance, Genee & Nemeth 2005, de Vries & de Vries 1997) and elsewhere in the English-speaking world (see, for instance, de Bot & Clyne 1994). Indeed, contrary to De Ridder's and Magee's findings, these studies invariably show very high rates of intragenerational language shift and of intergenerational language loss, with the Flemish or Dutch language often being lost as a medium of daily communication within the first generation.

Van den Bergh (1982: 138-139) reports that first-generation migrants in Detroit – a community with social, economic and cultural ties to the one in southwestern Ontario – are at present predominantly English-speaking to such an extent that they tend to use English even with immediate family members such as spouses, children and grandchildren.

> [...] [men] kan voor deze hele eerste generatie vaststellen, dat zij in haar huidige taalgebruik compleet verengelst is. Tussen beide talen is als het ware een soort funktionele verdeling ontstaan, waarbij het Vlaams verschoven werd naar zeer specifieke taalsituaties. Al deze ondervraagden spreken bijna uitsluitend Engels, zowel in hun onmiddelijke leefomgeving, als met hun kinderen en kleinkinderen. (138-139)

In addition, outside of the home, these Belgian-born migrants strictly limit their use of the heritage language to a small number of situations where this seems acceptable within American society.

> Deze eerste generatie immigranten spreken dan ook alleen nog Vlaams in een aantal beperkte situaties, waar het volgens hen nog wel enigszins geoorloofd is om de oude moedertaal eens te spreken. Zo praten sommigen bijvoorbeeld nog Vlaams met de oudere mensen in de Belgische clubs, met andere Vlaamssprekende Belgen tijdens typisch Belgische ontspanning (bv. tijdens kaartavonden [....]), [...] en tenslotte in contacten met familieleden, vrienden en/of kennissen in België. Daarbuiten echter, vinden deze ondervraagden het onbeleefd en ongehoord om Vlaams te spreken en schakelen zij meteen over op Engels. (139-140)

Based on these observations, Van den Bergh (1982: 140) concludes that the shift towards English was concluded within the first generation, since transfer of the heritage language to the second generation failed. Indeed, for members of this generation, English has always been the dominant language. Therefore, the concept of *language shift* does not apply in their case, at least according to Van den Bergh (1982: 140).

> Terwijl de eerste generatie immigranten in hun taalgebruik een echte evolutie ondergaan, is het Engels voor de immigranten van de tweede generatie altijd de dominante taal geweest. [...] Men kan dus besluiten dat het taalvervangingsproces zich helemaal binnen de eerste generatie voltrekt. (140)

Genee and Nemeth (2005: 47) come to a similar conclusion for the Dutch language in Southern Alberta, where "speakers are predominantly first [generation] immigrants, and very little of the language is transmitted to the next generation." Here as well, "first generation immigrants live their lives largely in English, including much of their contact with people from their own ethnic background." De Vries and de Vries (1997: 133) likewise observe that Dutch immigrants are very unlikely to transfer their ethnic language to their Canadian-born children. Their numbers indicate that among Canadian-born persons of Dutch descent only approximately 3% acquire Dutch as a mother tongue, while the corresponding figures for other ethnic groups are significantly higher, for instance 45% and 26% respectively for Canadian-born persons of Greek or of Italian descent.

Finally, de Bot and Clyne's (1994: 18) findings for the Dutch in Australia echo to a large extent those of de Vries and de Vries (1997). In that country as well, "the Dutch have undergone the greatest shift to English as the sole home language", placing this community well ahead of other major ethnic groups, be they German, Greek or Italian.

When interpreting these divergent findings – very different, indeed, from those for the Flemish community in southwestern Ontario – one has to keep in mind, however, that the Flemish in Detroit, MI may have been subjected to different societal pressures to integrate than their peers in nearby southwestern Ontario. Furthermore, with respect to the Dutch data, it needs to be emphasized that Flemish and Dutch migrants possess sociolinguistic profiles that are not identical. Indeed, it has often been claimed that the Dutch (Breugelmans 1968, Hulsen 1996, Genee & Nemeth 2005, etc.) do not perceive their language as an important part of their identity, thus that language does not constitute for them a *core value*[8] (Smolicz 1981). Genee and Nemeth (2005: 51), for instance, report that "almost half of [their] informants indicated that the Dutch language is *not important at all* to be accepted in the Dutch community." Hulsen (1996), who focuses on the Dutch in New Zealand, argues that under such circumstances a group is less likely to maintain its distinctive language features, especially when the subordinate group feels that the boundaries separating them from the dominant group are quite porous[9]. Breugelmans (1968) extends this hypothesis to the Flemish community in Canada[10]. However, for the Flemish migrant, speaker of a language treated like a minority language in his or her native Belgium, language may very well constitute a *core value*. Indeed, according to Vos (1998: 92), the language question in Flanders has led to language becoming the "main symbol" of Flemish identity. The language-first nature of Flemish cultural identity is also confirmed by Deprez (1998: 107) who argues that language assumes a very different position in the Dutch and Flemish national identities.

> In the Netherlands the state came first and the nation as well as the language developed on the basis of the already existing state. Dutch is self-evident in The Netherlands and therefore language does not play a major role in Dutch self-definition. In Flanders, on the contrary, the nation came first: a nation which is based on language. For many Flemings, language is the whole nation: no Flemish, no Flemings. (107)

4. Sociolinguistic profile of the Flemish migrant

Most Flemish migrants grew up at a time when the language question in Belgium, and in Flanders in particular, was such that monolingual speakers of Flemish were members of the lower classes of society and speakers of a much disparaged idiom.

Geerts, Hellemans and Jaspaert (1987: 131) cite the fall of Antwerp in 1585 and the subsequent split of the Netherlands into broadly the Northern and the Southern Provinces as the "beginning of the linguistic problems of what, later on, would become Belgium." Indeed, while a standard variety of the Dutch language was developed in the Northern Provinces during the decades following independence, no such evolution took place in the Southern Provinces, which fell into decay and would remain under foreign government until the first half of the 19th century. Instead, in all situations which called for a standard language, the Southern Provinces came to rely more and more on French, the language favoured by the European courts, such as Austria and France, which were to govern the region. By the end of the 18th century, French had made such inroads in Flemish society that intellectuals started to ring the alarm bell. Verlooy, a Brussels lawyer, was one of the first to decry the neglect of the Flemish language in his *Verhandeling op d'onacht der Moederlijke Tael in de Nederlanden* published in 1788:

> In the Low Countries, especially in the Austrian Low Countries [...] Everyone is thoroughly convinced that it is impossible for a Netherlander to surpass the French in any art. This conviction is so well entrenched that nothing seems beautiful or great if it does not come from France. [...] The Flemish language is especially maltreated at Brussels. In this city it is not only neglected but also despised. Only a dialect is spoken and it is rare that one finds an intellectual who speaks Netherlandish well. The vulgar cast it off and despise it [...] There are those who refuse to speak Flemish in society or in the street, others who purposely speak Flemish badly in order to give the appearance of having been educated in France. (translated excerpt quoted in Clough 1968: 17)

The independence of Belgium in 1830 did nothing to stop the ever-growing Frenchification. On the contrary, the young Belgian state chose French as its official language and thereby excluded Flemish from such key areas as public administration, higher education (i.e., universities but also secondary schools), the courts and the army, even though some form of it was spoken by at least 55% of its total population (Meylaerts 2009) and by as much as 95% of the people residing in Flanders (Cook 2002). The young state's social stratification remained such that speakers of French, particularly in Flanders, belonged either to the aristocratic upper classes or to the educated *bourgeoisie*, i.e. to the political, economic and cultural elite, whereas speakers of Flemish *only* constituted the uneducated lower classes, both in the cities and in the countryside. This social stratification reduced Flemish to the stigmatized tongue of a second-class culture and its speakers to second-class citizens, and exacerbated within the Belgian consciousness the conviction that Flemish was but an inferior collection of dialects and thus a medium unsuitable for high culture and education. The results for Flanders were disastrous (Cook 2002): its provinces remained poor and undeveloped; illiteracy skyrocketed because of the lack of education in Flemish and upward social mobility became extremely difficult and rare.

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Despite ever-increasing Flemish demands for linguistic emancipation from the 1850s onward, this situation of linguistic and social inequality persisted for more than a century; in fact well into the 1960s. The Flemish Movement gained momentum, however, during and immediately after the First World War when the inhumane treatment of Flemish soldiers by their French-speaking officers was brought to light by members of the *Front Beweging*, a group of discontented soldiers, stretcher-bearers and clerics who had served on the IJzer Front and who after the armistice founded the *Front Partij*.

> Au front, l'infanterie était composée largement de jeunes gens non formés dont à peu près 70% étaient des Flamands ; la plupart ignoraient le français, tandis que les officiers étaient surtout francophones. [...] beaucoup de soldats flamands tombaient dans la bataille parce qu'ils ne comprenaient pas les ordres français donnés par leurs supérieurs. Ce sacrifice (injuste) était avancé après la guerre comme un des arguments pour une implémentation rapide des exigences langagières des minorités flamandes […]. (Meylaerts 2009 : 12-13)

While the nationalist *Front Partij* demanded self-rule for Flanders, moderate Flemings particularly in the Catholic Party led by Frans van Cauwelaert, pushed for reforms that did not entail the break-up of Belgium but would make Flemish the sole official language in Flanders. To promote national reconciliation, the demands of the moderate Flemish nationalists were step by step voted into law. In 1922, Flemish became an official language on a par with French. Then in the 1930s a series of language laws came into effect which put in place a system of dual monolingualism. In 1932, for the purposes of public administration, Belgium was divided into two monolingual regions: French in the South and Flemish in the North. In addition, instruction in the secondary schools was now to be given in the predominant language, so that Flemish became the language of instruction in both elementary and secondary schools in Flanders. Universities, however, such as the Catholic University of Leuven, continued dispensing their courses exclusively in French, while the University of Ghent was transformed into a Flemish language institution. In 1935, the Flemings gained the right to court proceedings in their language, and in 1938 the army was ordered to restructure into monolingual Flemish and Walloon units. However, since they lacked any mechanism for enforcement, the language laws were often ignored, as Cook (2002: 115) points out. Then, two years later, the outbreak of the Second World War put a temporary end to the process of linguistic restructuring.

After the war, the linguistic strife continued. In 1962, a law determining the language boundary separating Belgium's Flemish-speaking and French-speaking provinces, and the bilingual capital Brussels came into effect. In 1968, all universities on Flemish soil, including the Catholic University of Leuven, were to offer their programs of study in Flemish only. In 1973, *Dutch* became the official name of the language spoken in Flanders. And, seven years later, in 1980, the *Verdrag inzake de Nederlandse Taalunie* was concluded between Belgium and the Netherlands.

The language shift of the Flemish elite in favour of French had now been successfully halted. However, for the Flemings, the standard language became once again an imported product: a variant of their language created in the Netherlands from the 17th century onwards. The Dutch standard and the ensuing linguistic *rapprochement* with the Netherlands were a "matter of self-preservation", argues Deprez (1998: 98), in that the elevation of a Flemish dialect to be a standard language would in all likelihood not have offered solid protection from French. Since the 1950s, language guides, language columns in the newspapers and language tips on the radio and on television remind the Flemings daily of the new norm. But mostly, the propagation of the Dutch standard in Flanders relies on the schools where Flemish children are taught *Algemeen Nederlands (AN)* – formerly called *Algemeen Beschaafd Nederlands (ABN)*. This has led linguists such as Geerts, Hellemans and Jaspaert (1987:

132) to remark that the Flemings "are condemned to never reaching the stage of being real, self-confident mother-tongue speakers," since they have to learn the standard language as one would a second language. As a result, feelings of *linguistic insecurity*, of speaking one's language badly, are now as common as the former feelings of *shame* brought on by the belief that one was a speaker of an inferior and perhaps even backward idiom.

Since most Flemish migrants to southwestern Ontario left Belgium between 1902 and 1961 (Magee 1987), a period during which the Flemish struggle for linguistic emancipation was at its height, they brought with them the memories of their second-class status and of the disparagement of their language. As a result, conflicting feelings of both pride and shame abound. During get-togethers of the Windsor Belgian Club, first-generation migrants have admitted to me on more than one occasion that they will pretend not knowing how to speak Flemish, as if admitting such knowledge could somehow negatively influence the opinion one will have of them. Others have indicated feeling at times uncomfortable speaking the language with their Dutch neighbours, who became the dominant Netherlandic presence in Ontario starting from 1948. Comments like those included in Schryer (1998: 161-2) are common:

> I found that the Hollanders would try to poke fun of the way I spoke. [...] once Brother Peter [a member of a Dutch religious order in Sarnia] made a comment on my speaking Flemish and said it was impossible to understand. But I pointed out to him that I had learned to speak proper Dutch [...].

This older generation may also feel reluctance and unease with Flemish immigrants who arrived after the 1960s and who learned *Algemeen Nederlands*, standard Dutch, in school in Belgium.

However, feelings of Flemish nationalism, i.e., of pride in one's cultural and linguistic heritage, also permeate this group. During the inter-war period, ardent supporters of the Flemish Movement had regular columns in the *Gazette van Detroit*, particularly Adolf Spillemaeckers and Vossenberg – Father Ladislas of Blenheim, a stretcher-bearer at the Ijzer front and former member of the *Front Beweging.* Together with other *Flamingants*, often former soldiers and sympathizers of that movement, they would organise cultural events (parades, Flemish language plays, musical entertainment by Flemish-language choirs, etc.) in support of the Flemish cause, both in southwestern Ontario and in the city of Detroit. Flemish nationalist organisations, whose specific purpose was to disseminate "information tending to spread the Flemish nationalistic idea," (Sabbe & Buyse 1960: 264), were also active on both sides of the border, e.g., *Vlaanderen's Kerels* headquartered in Chatham, and *Flandria-America* and the *Flemish-American League* in Detroit. After the Second World War, these organisations made way for the socio-cultural aid association *Vlamingen in de Wereld*. From 1966 until the early 1980s, this organisation annually supplied the tobacco farmers in southwestern Ontario with student help from Flanders to assist in the harvest. The students' other duties, however, were aimed specifically at strengthening the cultural and linguistic heritage of the migrants in whose houses they were staying. These included the organisation of Flemish-language cultural events, the production of a Flemish-language radio programme and the publication of a Flemish-language newsletter. Belgian historians, such as Jaumain (1999), argue that these feelings, coupled with the efforts of the *Vlaamsgezinde* columnists of the *Gazette van Detroit* and of the Flemish nationalist association *Vlamingen in de Wereld*, may have contributed to the preservation of the Flemish language and culture, specifically in southwestern Ontario.

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5. The Flemish community of southwestern Ontario

In the spring of 2008, I conducted a sociolinguistic survey to obtain data about the patterns of first-generation language shift and of intergenerational transfer among the Flemings of southwestern Ontario, a community with very specific sociolinguistic characteristics, as shown above. Indeed, it distinguishes itself from the dominant Netherlandic presence, i.e. the Dutch, by possessing a language-first cultural identity which has at its nucleus a language which its speakers take great pride in defending[11] despite their feelings of linguistic inferiority and of linguistic insecurity.

i. Design of the survey

The sociolinguistic questionnaire[12] mailed to members of the community contains 54 numbered questions and one unnumbered comment section. Its questions are designed for several generations, i.e. for first-generation migrants and their second, third and fourth-generation descendants. Questions 1 to 45, which make up the first part of the questionnaire, can be answered by all respondents, regardless of the generation – first, second, third or fourth – they belong to. Questions 46 to 54, however, which constitute the second part of the questionnaire, are for the descendants of the first generation only. The comment section invites all respondents to add relevant remarks.

The questions included in the first part of the questionnaire concern:

- Respondent's generation, age and birthplace;
- Number and length of stay of trips to Belgium, and particularly to Flanders;
- Respondent's level of education;
- Language(s) transferred by the respondent's parents;
- Respondent's fluency in Flemish and in English;
- Ethnicity and mother tongue of the respondent's spouse;
- Respondent's language use inside the home, i.e. with family members (parents, siblings, spouse, children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren);
- Respondent's language use outside of the home, i.e. at work, in school, at church, in the various Belgian clubs, with friends, etc.
- Respondent's attitudes towards first-language use and transfer;
- Respondent's personal efforts to lessen first-language attrition, i.e. enrolment in heritage-language classes, reading habits, etc.

The questions included in the second part concern the respondent's language use with previous generations (i.e. parents, grandparents and great-grandparents) as well as with siblings.

ii. Respondents

80 Flemish migrants and their descendants participated in the survey: 44 of these were first-generation immigrants, 28 were second-generation Canadians, 4 were third-generation and 4 were fourth-generation Canadians of Flemish descent. In the remainder of this article, I will focus on the data provided by the first-generation respondents in an effort to establish their levels of first-language maintenance, use and transfer.

All but 3 of the 44 first-generation respondents came to southwestern Ontario between 1950 and 1972, i.e. during the third wave of Belgian immigration to Canada. The remaining 3 settled in the area in 1926, 1939 and 1994 respectively. The first two both fall into the traditional category of Flemish migrants who left their country mostly for economic or war-related reasons. Indeed, their departure from Belgium coincides either with the tail-end of the second wave of immigration which followed the First World War or with the tumultuous months preceding the outbreak of the Second World War. The third and last migrant is an example of more recent sporadic emigration to Canada. These new migrants, considered 'fortunate immigrants' in the literature (Lindenfeld & Varro 2008), tend to be highly educated and are generally motivated by other factors than their predecessors: adventure, graduate studies, marriage to a Canadian citizen, professional relocation, etc. Obviously, these reasons may also have motivated to a certain extent the previous generations, but economic and political turmoil were the dominant factors for these older migrants who were in search of a better life for themselves and for their children.

More than one half of the first-generation respondents came to southwestern Ontario as young adults. Indeed, as table 1 shows, 26 respondents, i.e. 59%, were between the ages of 20 and 39 at their arrival in Canada. 13, i.e. 29%, were in their early to late teens. Only 5, i.e. 11%, were children: 2, i.e. 4%, less than 10, and 3, i.e. 6%, less than 5 years old.

Age	Number of migrants
0-5	3
6-9	2
10-15	6
16-19	7
20-29	23
30-39	3

Table 1 Age at arrival in Canada

These numbers indicate that all of these migrants, with the exception of the youngest three, had a well established knowledge of their Flemish dialect. Their responses to question 18 of the questionnaire, pertaining to the respondent's fluency in Flemish prior to his or her departure for Canada, confirm this assumption.

Fluency in Flemish before emigration to Canada	
Excellent	23 (52%)
Very good	13 (29%)
Good	4 (9%)
Somewhat poor	
Poor	1 (2%)
Very poor	1 (2%)
No reply	2 (4%)

Table 2 Fluency in Flemish at the time of emigration

Indeed, as table 2 shows, an overwhelming majority, i.e. 40 of the 44 first-generation respondents or 90%, claimed having an *excellent* to *good* knowledge of Flemish at the time of emigration. To the converse question pertaining to the respondent's fluency in English, however, most, i.e. 34 or 77%, ranked their knowledge from *inexistent* to *somewhat poor*. Only 8, i.e. 18%, indicated having a good to excellent understanding of the language prior to their departure. Consequently, a majority of the migrants learned English while in Canada and at an age when acquiring a second language may be more challenging even if one is immersed in the language[13].

Fluency in English before emigration to Canada	
Excellent	1 (2%)
Very good	
Good	7 (16%)
Somewhat poor	3 (6%)
Poor	4 (9%)
Very poor	5 (11%)
Inexistent	22 (50%)
No reply	2 (4%)

Table 3 Fluency in English at the time of emigration

The picture that emerges, then, is that of an adult or near-adult migrant with little or no knowledge of English at the time of emigration but who is a competent speaker of Flemish. This linguistic competence, however, may not prevent the speaker from suffering from feelings of linguistic inferiority and insecurity due to the language's second-rate status in Belgium.

Today, all but six of the respondents are between the ages of 60 and 99 and all but one have spent the largest part of their life, four to eight decades, in Canada. Based on Yoshizawa Meaders' (1997) model of the psychological adjustments required by the process of immigration, one can therefore assume that these formerly adult or near-adult first-generation immigrants should have exited the first two phases of adjustment, *survival of [the original] identity* and emergence of a *bicultural identity*, and should have reached the third phase of the *transcultural self* where the second-language identity has been integrated into the self and biculturality is no longer experienced as conflictual.

iii. Statistics related to first language use, maintenance and transfer

a. First-language use inside the home

To examine the extent to which first-generation migrants in southwestern Ontario have maintained Flemish as the *home language*, i.e. the main language used inside the home with one's spouse and/or children, one first has to examine the nature of the migrants' marriages, i.e. whether these are endogamous (both spouses are speakers of Flemish) or exogamous (only one of the spouses is a speaker of Flemish). In the latter case, maintenance of the heritage language is less common and an immediate shift to English highly likely, as has been observed as well for the Dutch nuclear family (Pauwels 1985).

Table 4 shows that despite the prevalence of endogamous marriages, the number of mixed marriages within this group of first-generation migrants is relatively high. Indeed, 26 of the 43 married respondents (the remaining respondent is a Roman-Catholic priest), i.e. 60%, indicate that their spouses are either speakers of Flemish (56%) or speakers of Dutch, its North-Netherlandic variant spoken in Holland (4%). However, as many as 16 respondents, i.e. 36%, indicate that their spouses are either speakers of English (25%) or native speakers of another language (11%). This rather high percentage of inter-ethnic marriages can be explained among other things by the smallness of the Belgian-born community which led first-generation migrants early on to look outside of the group for suitable partners.

Mother tongue of spouse	
Flemish	24 (56%)
Dutch (if from Holland)	2 (4%)
English	11 (25%)
Other	5 (11%)
No reply	1 (2%)

Table 4 Mother tongue of spouse
First-language use with spouse

At first glance, these numbers indicate a clear preference for English as the means for daily communication with one's spouse for more than 51% of all the respondents. However, to interpret these numbers accurately, one needs to calculate a number of correlations. Firstly, with respect to Flemish, and based on the premise that this language can only dominate in an endogamous context, one needs to compare the numbers in table 5 with the number of endogamous unions in table 4. One then obtains the following correlation: in 13 of the 24 endogamous marriages (54%) Flemish continues to be the dominant daily means of communication.

Table 5 identifies the language (or languages) the respondents use most often with their spouse.

Language used most often with spouse	
Flemish Flemish and English	13 (30%) 4 (9%)
English English and French English and Dutch	22 (51%) 1 (2%) 1 (2%)
Other (French)	1 (2%)
No reply	1 (2%)

Table 5 Language used most often with spouse

Furthermore, in 4 of these 24 marriages (16%), Flemish and English are used side by side. Consequently, in as many as 17 of the 24 endogamous homes (70%), Flemish is being spoken daily by both spouses. This means, conversely, that in only about one third (29%) of these homes has there been a complete shift to English, resulting in the abandonment of Flemish. Secondly, for Dutch, and based on the premise that this variant can only dominate in marriages in which one spouse is Flemish and the other Dutch, one obtains the following correlation: in 1 of the 2 'mixed-variant' marriages (50%) of table 4 Dutch has been maintained but is used alternately with English.

Language use between Flemish and 'mixed –variant' spouses	
Flemish spouses (24) Flemish Flemish and English English	 13 (54%) 4 (16%) 7 (29%)
'Mixed-variant' spouses (2) Dutch English and Dutch English	 0 (0%) 1 (50%) 1 (50%)

Table 6 Language use between Flemish and 'mixed-variant' spouses

It follows then that the inroads that the English language has made in Flemish married life in southwestern Ontario are significant but not as widespread as they first appear to be. In 18 of the 26 first-generation homes (69%) in which Flemish or its North-Netherlandic variant, i.e. Dutch, could be maintained, the language is being used daily in conversations between the spouses, while in all of the exogamous homes, with the exception of one, i.e. 15 out of 16, English is predominant (94%). In the remaining home, the spouses converse in French (6%). It is obvious from these numbers that the Flemish spouse's choice of language is determined by the other spouse's profile: Flemish with a Flemish spouse, the standard variety with a Dutch spouse, English (or French) in all other cases. As a consequence, exogamy drastically reduces Flemish language use inside the home between spouses, while endogamy has the opposite effect. The relatively high number of mixed marriages, then, about 36%, is a main contributor to the observed level of language shift, but other dynamics are also at play.

- *First-language use with children*

Another aspect of the status of Flemish as home language is the extent to which first-generation parents use this language with their children. 42 of the 44 first-generation respondents indicated having children and described their language use with their offspring as follows:

Language use with second generation	
Flemish	6 (14%)
Flemish and English	4 (9%)
English	31 (73%)
English and French	1 (2%)

Table 7 Use of Flemish with second generation[14]

These numbers show that an overwhelming majority of first-generation parents favour English over Flemish as the means of daily communication with their Canadian-born children. Indeed, only 10 of the 42 first-generation parents, i.e. 23%, speak Flemish to their children, and use it either as the sole means of communication (14%) or alternately with English (9%). However, most of the remaining respondents, 31 out of 42, have made a complete shift to English (73%) in their dealings with their children. Only 1 respondent indicated using a mixture of both of Canada's official languages, i.e. English and French (2%).

These results, which point to a significant level of language shift in the parent-child setting, are in line with van den Bergh (1982) but in a sharp contrast with Magee (1987), who found that at least 47% of her southwestern-Ontarian respondents preferred speaking Flemish to their children. One possible explanation is that during the two decades following Magee's study the integration process has intensified within this population, resulting in an accrued level of shift for this particular setting.

The reluctance of the first generation to use their heritage language is compounded by the fact that their children almost invariably express themselves in English inside the home. Indeed, 39 of the 42 first-generation parents (i.e. 93%) indicated that their children talk to them in English *only*. These numbers do not corroborate De Ridder (2008) who claimed the opposite, namely that Canadian-born children tend to speak Flemish with their

Belgian-born parents. Based on the numbers in table 7, however, which are consistent with a modest to low level of transfer, his scenario seems unlikely.

Children's language use with first generation	
Flemish	1 (2%)
Flemish and English	1 (2%)
English	39 (93%)
English and French	1 (2%)

Table 8 Children's language use with first generation

In addition, 33 of the 34 parents having more than one child, i.e. 97%, indicated that their children use English *only* with their siblings. The children of the remaining parent use both official languages, i.e. English and French, to each other. This, obviously, means that none of these second-generation siblings, i.e. 0%, speak Flemish to each other.

Language use among second generation siblings	
Flemish	0 (0%)
English	33 (97%)
English and French	1 (3%)

Table 9 Language use among second generation siblings\

Comments provided by second-generation respondents, whose parents were both Belgian-born, identify at least two factors that may have led to their strong preference for English both inside and outside of the home: their experiences at school and with friends, which resulted early on in an awareness of the Flemish language's minority status within Canadian society. Indeed, as Horn (1997: 81) points out, for immigrant children, "school is [often] more important as a socializing than as an educational agency." It is the place where the second-generation respondents made (non-Flemish) friends, became fluent in the majority language and learned the cues of the majority culture.

> My parents came from Belgium in 1949 and shortly later my twin sister and I were born. We spoke and understood only Flemish until age 5 when we entered school. I cannot recall when we started answering in English. (respondent 68)

> My parents became Canadian citizens in 1932. [...] As children, we were encouraged to play with neighbourhood children to learn the English language. Once in school, we children conversed in English to the extent that it became our prime language. (respondent 87)

Second-generation respondents raised in a multi-ethnic home, on the other hand, often cite the need for the Belgian-born parent to acquire English. This need was felt to be incompatible with the use of Flemish inside the home and transfer of the language by the Belgian-born parent was therefore not attempted.

> My father was [from] Belgium. My mother is [of] Canadian-English descent. My father needed to learn English – therefore only English [was] spoken in our house. (respondent 84)

The ensuing assimilation of the second-generation was generally welcomed by their first-generation parents. Few opposed their children's use of English inside the home, as table 10 shows.

Did you encourage your child to speak Flemish?	
Very often	5 (12%)
Often	3 (7%)
Sometimes	12 (28%)
Rarely	7 (16%)
Never	15 (35%)

Table 10 Parental opposition to children's use of English

Only 8 of the 42 first-generation parents, i.e. 19%, actively encouraged their children to speak Flemish inside the home. Of the remaining 34 parents, 12, i.e. 28%, were inconsistent, and 22, i.e. 51%, rarely or never promoted the use of Flemish.

All of the numbers in this and the previous section indicate that the status of Flemish as home language is seriously compromised. Indeed, it seems that inside the home, Flemish is favoured only as the daily means of communication by first-generation spouses who are both native speakers and who use the language among themselves but *not* with their children. Flemish, then, only dominates in the private conversations between these first-generation spouses.

b. First-language use outside of the home

Outside of the home, Flemish migrants tend to strictly limit their use of Flemish, as is clear from table 11 below. Indeed, even in those areas where no societal restrictions in favour of the majority language exist, as opposed to such domains as *workplace*, *school*, *church, shops*, etc., the Flemings remain quite reluctant to choose their language over English.

At gatherings of the *Belgian Club*, for instance, only 14 of the 44 first-generation respondents (not quite 32%) regularly use their mother tongue; 4, i.e. 9%, always and 10, i.e. 22%, often. An almost equal number of respondents, 16 out of 44, i.e. 36%, speak the language sometimes, the remaining 14 respondents, another 32%, seldom (8 or 18%) or never (6 or 13%). Consequently, it is not at all uncommon for two Flemish migrants to converse in English during these meetings even when no native speaker of English is present.

With their friends, the Flemings are equally hesitant to use their mother tongue. Only 2 respondents, i.e. 4%, do so always, and 9, i.e. 20%, do so often, while 14 respondents, i.e. almost 32%, indicate they only do so sometimes. The remaining 19 respondents, i.e. 43%, seldom (5 or 11%) or never (14 or 32%) speak Flemish with their friends.

It is only in the realm of the extended family, and particularly with family members still living in Belgium, that Flemish is the preferred means of communication. Indeed, 28 of the 44 respondents (63%) choose Flemish over English in this setting; 23, i.e. 52%, always, and 5, i.e. 11%, often. 9 respondents, i.e. 20%, use the language sometimes, while the remaining 7 respondents, almost 16%, use their mother tongue seldom (2 or 4%) or never (5 or 11%) with their Belgian family members.

Flemish →	**Always**	**Often**	**Sometimes**	**Seldom**	**Never/NA**
Friends	2	9	14	5	14
Neighbours			6	1	37
Workplace	1	2	1	3	37
School				2	42
Church			5	1	38
Belgian Club	4	10	16	8	6
Shops				3	41
Letters - **Belgium**	23	5	9	2	5
Letters - **Canada**	3	5	6	1	29
Pets		3	4	1	36

Table 11 First-language use outside of the home

All of these numbers are consistent with Van den Bergh (1982), who identified three areas of continued first-language use outside of the home for the Flemings in Detroit, MI: at Belgian clubs, during typical Belgian *soirées* with Belgian friends, and with family members in Belgium.

c. First-language maintenance

In spite of the low rate of intergenerational transfer and of the limited resistance to the second generation's preference for English, most first-generation immigrants consider it important to maintain the Flemish language - at least for themselves. Indeed, as many as 30 of the 44 first-generation respondents, i.e. approximately 68%, ranked maintenance as *very important* or *important*, while 13 respondents, i.e. 29%, consider maintenance

somewhat important. Only 1 respondent, i.e. 2%, attaches *hardly any importance* to the question of heritage language maintenance but none of the respondents feel that it is *unimportant*.

First-language maintenance for oneself	
Very important	20 (45%)
Important	10 (23%)
Somewhat important	13 (29%)
Hardly important	1 (2%)
Unimportant	

Table 12 Importance of first-language maintenance for oneself

These results differ significantly from those obtained by Genee and Nemeth (2005). Most of their respondents, who settled in Alberta during a similar period – the 1950s, indicated *low importance* when asked to evaluate the importance of the Dutch language to them personally. These divergent attitudes are without a doubt symptomatic of the different positions language occupies in the cultural identities of both ethnic groups: central for the Flemish but peripheral for the Dutch. The numbers confirm furthermore De Ridder's (2008) contention that Flemish migrants in southwestern Ontario remained loyal to the Flemish language. However, in light of the statistics discussed in the previous sections, it needs to be underlined that these feelings of loyalty towards the language of the 'old country' apply only in the private sphere and do not extend to the Canadian-born children.

Towards the end of the questionnaire, first-generation respondents were asked to self-evaluate their current level of proficiency in Flemish. These statistics combined with those pertaining to the respondents' fluency in Flemish at the time of emigration indicate how these first-generation migrants subjectively view their levels of first-language attrition.

Table 13 shows that 34 of the 44 respondents, i.e. 77%, self-rate their current proficiency as *excellent* to *good*, compared to 40 out of 44 or 90% at the time of emigration. The number of *excellent* speakers has dwindled significantly, from 23 to 9; the number of *very good* and *good* speakers, however, has risen from 13 to 15 and from 4 to 10 respectively. 10 of the 44 respondents, i.e. approximately 23%, currently rank their proficiency as *somewhat poor* to *very poor*, compared to 2 out of 44, i.e. approximately 4%, at the time of emigration. The highest increase is in the *somewhat poor* ranking, with 7 respondents, i.e. 16%, using this self-rating to assess their current proficiency level, compared to none at the time of emigration.

	PROFICIENCY AT TIME OF EMIGRATION	CURRENT PROFICIENCY
Excellent	23	9
Very good	13	15
Good	4	10
Somewhat poor		7
Poor	1	2
Very poor	1	1
Inexistent		
No reply	2	

Table 13 Self-evaluation of first-language attrition

The attrition levels reflected by these subjective self-evaluations seem somewhat modest in light of the limited use of Flemish both inside and outside of the home. One has to bear in mind, however, that these respondents were for the most part adults or near-adults at the time of their departure. Furthermore, similar results have been obtained in longitudinal studies of Dutch immigrant communities in Australia, and have prompted de Bot and Clyne (1994: 17) to formulate the hypothesis that "first-language attrition does not necessarily take place in an immigrant setting and that those immigrants who manage to maintain their language in the first years of their stay in the new environment are likely to remain fluent speakers of their first language." Additional interviews and testing are planned to see whether this hypothesis applies to the Flemish community of southwestern Ontario.

6. Discussion

The data presented in the previous sections deviate somewhat from the historical accounts of Flemish emigration to southwestern Ontario, that hint at considerable levels of first-language use, maintenance and transfer, particularly for the first generation of migrants. The data point, on the contrary, to a significant shift towards English within the home, where Flemish tends to be used primarily in private conversations between Flemish spouses, and to levels of intergenerational transfer too modest to be successful. A similar shift in favour of English has occurred outside of the home where Flemish migrants curtail their use of Flemish even in those settings which are not conditioned by societal restrictions that favour the majority language. First-language retention at the individual level seems significant in spite of the extent of the shift, but more testing is required to verify these findings based on subjective self-evaluations. The retention rate, however, is compatible with the high level of importance migrants personally attach to the question of heritage-language maintenance.

The causes of these complex and contradictory patterns of intragenerational language shift and of intergenerational transfer are multiple. Some have already been identified. Firstly, there is the smallness of the Belgian-born community in southwestern Ontario, which meant that first-generation migrants often could not find suitable partners within that community. Marriage to a non-Flemish spouse, however, generally resulted in a swift

abandonment of Flemish inside the home. Not only could the language not be maintained for daily communication between the spouses but transfer to the children was usually also not attempted in such a predominantly English home environment.

> I married a man from Hungarian background, so they spoke Hungarian a lot [...]. So there was no Flemish spoken at all. But [I] kept the Flemish [language] up with my [...]brother living in Belgium and spoke over the phone a lot in Flemish. (respondent 44)

Secondly, there is the socialization process of the Canadian-born children at school. Their growing awareness of the minority status of Flemish in Canadian society, especially if transfer of the heritage language had been attempted before they became of school age; the growing imbalance in their proficiency in both languages due to the overabundance in their environment of speakers of English; and their increased desire to fit in, i.e. to be indistinguishable from their Canadian peers, led them to prefer English in all communicative settings, including the parent-child setting. This preference in turn exercised considerable pressure on their Belgian-born parents to shift to English. That children played a role in the abandonment of Flemish as home language is clear from the comments provided by at least 6, i.e. 25%, of the 24 respondents married to Flemish spouses. They maintain that the use of Flemish inside the home decreased when children became of school age and increased after the children left home. However, as has been shown above, few first-generation parents attempted to halt this trend.

These two factors, however, cannot account for the apparent inconsistency between the central position *language* occupies in Flemish cultural identity – at least according to its social historians (Vos 1998) and to its sociolinguists (Deprez 1998, Geerts, Hellemans & Jaspaert 1987) – and the large amount of intragenerational shift, as well as the lukewarm attempts at intergenerational transfer. Aspects of the migrants' sociolinguistic profile are of more use here. Indeed, to begin to understand why they seemingly lacked the motivation to continue using their language, particularly with their children, one has to remember that they had been embroiled in a century-old linguistic struggle in their home country. This struggle had endowed them with a language-first cultural identity, but the memories of the disdain of the upper classes for their language were also very much part of that identity, and so were the memories of their low social status. These memories may have negatively impacted the migrants' desire to maintain and transfer their mother tongue, though some may have tried to uphold the Flemish flag at least for a while. Personal rejection of one's language is likely, according to Pauwels (1985), when the decision to emigrate was triggered by negative feelings about the home country or when such feelings are used to justify that decision. The abandonment of the mother tongue, then, signals a complete break with the home country and in the Flemish case a rejection of what stood in the way of their and also their children's upward social mobility.

Canada's social stratification, which was much less rigid and lacked the hostility between the social classes that was typical of Flanders, may have further influenced this dynamic. We may add that Canadian society in general was very accepting of the Flemish, whom they considered to be *good immigrants*. Consequently, few or no obstacles stood in the way of the migrants' social integration.

The use of English then not only freed migrants from the social entrapment and stigma associated with speaking Flemish, but also liberated the children from these aspects of their parents' past. The abandonment of Flemish was socially acceptable on foreign soil; however, it would not have been acceptable in Flanders itself as it would have been seen as an utter betrayal of the Flemish cause. Indeed, the point in both cases is that one adopts the language and the culture of the place one lives in. Within the Flemish community in Canada no such censure existed, as enough of its members partook in this dynamic over time. Pragmatism prevailed in the community: trying to get ahead and securing a better future for the children was what mattered most.

> The immigrants were struggling to make a living [...] and had varying degrees of sympathy with the [Flemish] cause. The great majority were concerned with earning enough to buy their farms as soon as possible and secure better economic conditions for their families. (Magee 1987: 84)

Flemish nationalist activities in southwestern Ontario may therefore have played a role in the preservation of a Flemish consciousness among the migrants and their descendants; but ultimately, these activities did not result in a significant transfer and maintenance of this consciousness's key ingredient: its language. First-generation migrants have nevertheless overwhelmingly retained this key ingredient of their initial cultural identity as it remains relevant today within the context of their new *Flemish-Canadian transcultural self* (Yoshizawa Meaders 1997). The second generation, on the other hand, is seen as *Canadian* and as such it has not had to integrate into its cultural self the complexities and the ambivalences of their parents' linguistic identity.

Finally, the migrants' feelings of *linguistic insecurity* and of *linguistic inferiority* may explain why they are most at ease using the Flemish language outside of the home with Belgian relatives and close friends, i.e. in intimate settings *only*. English, because of its masking properties – it does not reveal level of education nor social background to the extent that Flemish does - is preferred in all other settings, resulting in the observed curtailing of the use of Flemish in communicative situations that do not intrinsically call for English. Consequently, within these settings as well, the lingering effects of the Flemish system of social stratification through language – Flemish *versus* French; Flemish dialect *versus* standard Dutch (*Algemeen Nederlands*) – may account for the extent of the language shift noted within the first generation[15].

7. Conclusion

This study attempted to chart for the first time the patterns of minority language shift and of intergenerational transfer of the Flemish community in southwestern Ontario. It has revealed that this community exhibits, despite its language-centredness, high levels of language shift, particularly within the first generation, and low levels of transfer from the first to the second generation, so that the survival of the Flemish language beyond the first generation seems unlikely. The study, however, is far from completed. The hypotheses put forward in the *Discussion* section, which rely heavily on the migrants' sociolinguistic profile, still need to be verified through a series of interviews. These are currently being planned with the help of the Windsor Belgian Club.

NOTES

1. The author wishes to thank the Office of Research Services (ORS) of the University of Windsor for the financial support that made this study possible.
2. The Flemings constitute one of three main ethnic groups in Belgium. They speak a variant of the Dutch language also spoken in Holland. This variant is officially called Dutch in Belgium (at least since 1973 when a decree to that effect was issued by the Vlaamse Cultuurraad, predecessor of the current Flemish Parliament), but is still often referred to as Flemish by the Flemings. Linguists call this variant South Netherlandic to differentiate it from the North Netherlandic spoken in Holland. The two remaining ethnic groups are the Walloons, who speak French, and a German minority, whose members speak both German and French.
3. *Gazette van Detroit*, ISSN 1073-4708, Belgian Publishing Company, Roseville (Michigan), Business manager: Margaret Roets, Editor-in-chief: Elisabeth Khan-Van den Hove. At its inception, the newspaper's articles

were written exclusively in Flemish, i.e. the South-Netherlandic non-standardized variant carried overseas by its immigrant journalists and readers. Today, however, the *Gazette van Detroit* features articles written in both English and modern standardized Dutch.

4. The 2006 Census distinguishes between Belgian and Flemish ethnic origin, but does not have an entry, surprisingly, for Walloon ethnic origin. Canada-wide, 33,675 respondents indicated they were of Belgian origin with another 135,240 indicating Belgian as one of their multiple origins. Taken together, these single and multiple ethnic origin responses amount to 168,915 Canadians claiming to be of Belgian descent. However, in addition, a total of 12,425 respondents indicated being of Flemish descent – 2,175 respondents mentioned they were of single Flemish origin with another 10,250 listing this ethnicity as one of their multiple origins. If one adds these single and multiple Flemish ethnic origin responses to the number of Canadians of Belgian descent, the total reaches 181,340.
5. In 2006, the province of Ontario had a total of 54,935 residents claiming to be of single (11,430) or multiple (43,505) Belgian ethnic origin. In addition, 4,390 Ontarians listed Flemish as their main ethnic origin (995) or as one of their multiple origins (3,395). If one adds these numbers, the total number of Ontarians of Belgian descent reaches 59,325. The numbers for Ontario also do not mention Walloon ethnic origin.
6. In Canada's multicultural mosaic, the Belgians constitute a small community, by any measure. They are largely outnumbered by their closest European neighbour, the Dutch. Indeed, in the 2006 census, as many as 1,035,960 respondents Canada-wide claimed being of single (303,400) or multiple (732,560) Dutch ethnic origin, ranking this ethnicity among the top 10 ethnic origins.
7. The Flemings are predominantly Roman Catholic. The Dutch, however, tend to be either Roman Catholic or Protestant (mainstream Calvinists – *hervormden* or orthodox Calvinists – *gereformeerden*).
8. Smolicz (1981: 75-77) defines *core values* as follows: "Core values can be regarded as forming one of the most fundamental components of a group's culture. They generally represent the heartland of the ideological system and act as identifying values which are symbolic of the group and its membership [...] Whenever people feel that there is a direct link between their identity as a group and what they regard as the most crucial and distinguishing element of their culture, the element concerned becomes a core value for the group."
9. The question of *porous boundaries* is tackled as follows by Horn (1997: xi and 307) in his *Becoming Canadian: Memoirs of an Invisible Immigrant*: "In Victoria, British Columbia, in the mid-1950s, assimilation was the sensible course of action for newcomers who faced no significant barriers to acceptance by the majority population (...)." He adds: "One truth about Canada, though only one, is that the Anglo-Canadian majority was long dismissive of French Canadians, Jews, immigrants from eastern and southern Europe, and anyone whose skin colour was not white. For that reason, assimilating into that majority was the sensible thing to do for those immigrants who were able to do so."
10. "[...] voor de katolieke Nederlands-Vlaamse groepen [...] bestaat [er] dus een dualiteit, maar daarom nog geen tegenstelling, tussen hoog integratievermogen en -verlangen aan de ene, en niet op taalnationalistische tendenzen gebaseerd bewustzijn van eigen aard en speciale oorsprong [...]." (Breugelmans 1968: 33)
11. According to Deprez (1998: 105), the Flemings see themselves as "the 'soldiers' of Dutch", since "they know much better what language struggle and language care are all about." The Dutch, they fear, do not sufficiently care about the language.
12. The sociolinguistic survey was adapted from Hulsen (2000).
13. Lightbown and Spada (2006: 68) mention that "it has been hypothesized that there is a critical period for second language acquisition just as there is for first language acquisition. [...] the Critical Period Hypothesis is that there is a time in human development when the brain is predisposed for success in language learning. [...] the critical period ends somewhere around puberty, but some researchers suggest it could be even earlier."

They add that the more general learning abilities that older learners rely on may not be "as effective for language learning as the more specific, innate capacities that are available to the young child."

14. Table 7 does not include the possibility of language-mixing, i.e. Flemish intermixed with English, on the part of the Belgian-born parents, who acquired English overwhelmingly in a natural setting. Second-generation respondents, however, do refer to this peculiar type of language use: "*My grandparents often spoke in a mixture of Flemish and English. Strangely, I often understood them" (respondent 10)*.
15. Interestingly, Schryer (1998: 194) uses a similar argument based on the micro-politics of language (class distinctions and "proper" *versus* regional Dutch) to account for the rapid linguistic assimilation of first-generation Dutch-Canadians: "Given the range of variation in regional and class dialects, difficulties with speaking standard Dutch and the negative connotations of using dialects, it is safer to [...] resort to English as a common language [especially with other speakers of Dutch]."

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