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Bilingualism in North-East France with specific reference to Rhenish Franconian spoken by Moselle Cross-border (or frontier) workers

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Abstract

This chapter examines the phenomena of bilingualism in the contact zone of the Moselle area of North-East France on the border with the Saarland, where cross-border workers negotiate linguistic identity in the context of interaction with German and French. The study presents an extensive historical background and takes up an empirical investigation of this little-known corner of France, in a survey of language use amongst 120 cross-border workers, conducted in 1998. The consequences of mobility in this case are that the respondents do not find themselves in a stable diglossic situation, but rather in a situation of linguistic flux. There are several micro- and macro-level factors which mitigate against use of Rhenish Franconian dialect in daily life, with the result that dialect is not being spoken to the same extent as it was in the past. There has been a significant decline in the number of native speakers and a progressive erosion of the dialect's underpinning in the community. Hence, this location presents many cultural, social and economic repercussions to be explored. By reporting on the usage of, and attitudes to, the dialect spoken by cross-border workers, the chapter gives a baseline to which future studies may refer in order to track ongoing developments in cross-border workers' use of the Rhenish-Franconian variety within this border region between France and Germany.

Introduction

According to European Union figures, it is estimated that almost 40 million citizens of the Union speak not only the official language of their country but also a regional or minority language that has been passed on from generation to generation. This is the case in the Moselle *département* of the Lorraine region of North-East France. Rather better known examples of this linguistic situation exist elsewhere in France. In addition to the numerous studies on Breton, Basque and Catalan, when focussing on Germanic dialects in particular, it can be seen that Alsatian/Alemannic has been extensively researched by Veltman & Denis (1988), Phillipp (1994), Gardner-Chloros (1991 & 1995), Vassberg (1993) and Geiger-Jaillet (2001) among others. In Northern France, research has been done into Flemish by Ryckeboer & Maeckelberghe (1987), Sansen (1988). According to Euromosaic, current research on Flemish is being conducted in the region by the University of Ghent in Belgium, however this forms part of a study of Dutch dialects in general and does not take any particular account of French Flemish.

A linguistic community in a similar position to that of the Flemish speakers in Northern France are those who speak something which, when examined solely in terms of phonemes, morphemes and lexical structure, is closer to the official or majority language of a neighbouring State, but who live in a country where another language predominates. Rhenish Franconian speakers in the Moselle *département* of Lorraine between Forbach and Bitche, France are in this position and their native tongue and associated cultural heritage are subject to the pressures associated with minority language speakers for their dialect is not currently recognised as a separate '*langue régionale*' by the French government.

When discussing the dialects spoken in the Moselle on a general level, it is important to recognise that, contrary to many popular perceptions including that of the 1999 INSEE/INED survey (Héran *et al.* 2002) where the census referred to the different types of Franconian by either grouping them together under 'Franconian' or using the term 'Lorraine Platt'. there is not one dialect, but rather a group of dialects, including Rhenish Franconian, Moselle Franconian and Luxembourg Franconian, all with one common factor; they are spoken in areas where they are not dialects of the national language.

It is a commonly held belief that the number of those who speak dialect in part of the Moselle *département* of Lorraine is decreasing. A survey carried out by INED (*Institut national des études démographiques*) as part of the 1999 census confirms this. According to INED there has been a decrease in the number of those speaking Franconian in Moselle as a whole. According to Héran *et al.* (2002) reporting results of the 1999 INED/INSEE survey, 'Lorraine Platt' or Franconian appears to be being transmitted less and less among younger generations, because only 20% of those respondents aged less than 15 speak it. According to the 1999 census, there were 78 000 speakers in the *département* of the Moselle, mainly around Thionville, where Luxembourg Franconian and Moselle Franconian, not Rhenish Franconian, is spoken. As previously stated, no distinction was made between Moselle Franconian, Luxembourg Franconian and Rhenish Franconian.

This decrease in the number of speakers will undoubtedly have economic, social and cultural implications for the area, potentially also affecting the *frontaliers*, the cross-border workers who live in the dialect-speaking areas and who work across the border in the Saarland and in the Rhineland Palatinate and in Baden-Württemberg. The potential cultural, social and economic repercussions for cross-border workers in those areas are issues which have not yet been investigated, and which demand fuller investigation.

This analysis of the usage of, and attitudes to, the dialect spoken by cross-border workers in the border area between Forbach and Lemberg in the Moselle *département* of Lorraine carried out in 1998, one year before the 1999 census, serves as a marker to which future studies may refer in order to chart the development of the cross-border workers' use of Rhenish Franconian.

This paper examines the situation in this little-investigated corner of north-east France on the border with the Saarland, Germany and discusses language use amongst cross-border workers.

Fig 1 Area under investigation (linguistic)



Excerpt from Linguistic Map of Alsace-Lorraine published in *Notre avenir est bilingue. Zweisprachig unsere Zukunft* (Strasbourg: René Schickele Kreis, 1968) Map adapted by author. According to European Treaty No. 78 (1972), the European definition of a cross-border (or frontier) worker is as follows:

Le terme “travailleur frontalier” désigne un travailleur salarié qui est occupé sur le territoire d’une Partie contractante où il retourne en principe chaque jour ou au moins une fois par semaine; toutefois,

- i) dans les rapports entre la France et les Parties contractantes limitrophes, pour être considéré comme travailleur frontalier, l’intéressé doit être occupé et résider dans une zone dont la profondeur n’excède pas, en principe, vingt kilomètres de part et d’autre de la frontière commune;
- ii) le travailleur frontalier occupé sur le territoire d’une Partie contractante par une entreprise dont il relève normalement, qui est détaché par cette entreprise hors de la zone frontalière, soit sur le territoire de la même Partie, soit sur le territoire d’une autre Partie contractante, pour une durée probable n’excédent pas quatre mois, conserve la qualité de frontalier pendant la période de son détachement, dans la limite de quatre mois.

Throughout this paper, there are essentially three viewpoints which must be borne in mind to allow for an unbiased view of the linguistic situation occurring in the Moselle region:

- a) the German linguistic viewpoint, which states that Rhenish Franconian is a German (rather than Germanic) dialect
- b) the French political viewpoint which first listed ‘*Alsacien-Mosellan*’ in the Poignant Report (1998) and both ‘*Lorrain*’ and ‘*dialecte allemand d’Alsace et de Moselle*’ in the Cerquiglini Report (1999) yet did not mention the term ‘Franconian’ until 2002 and
- c) the regional politico-ideological viewpoint which states that the Rhenish Franconian is Germanic, not German.

The socio-political situation

It is interesting to note from the outset that in France, the French language is defined as a symbol of a country’s national unity. As Judge (2000) states, Article Two of the French Constitution reads ‘*La langue de la République est le français*’, and though this was originally the result of a debate around

the anglicisation of the French language, it is interesting to note that the *Assemblée Nationale* now uses a different argument when discussing any amendment to the said Article, namely the threat to the unity of France. When the Rhenish Franconian dialect spoken in the Moselle *département* of Lorraine is considered in the light of these observations, it is clear to see that tensions may arise.

Though the linguistic situation apparent in the Moselle *département* of Lorraine is by no means unique in France, nor in Europe as a whole, it is also interesting to note that the Rhenish Franconian dialect spoken in Moselle has up to now rarely been considered in its own right. In most of the literature hitherto consulted, it is referred to both linguistically and geopolitically as ‘Alsacien’, ‘Alsacien-Mosellan’, ‘dialecte allemande d’Alsace et de Moselle’ or ‘Lorrain’. Moreover, Rhenish Franconian does not appear in the following table on the vitality of minority languages in Europe. (Pooley 2000:132)

Fig. 2 Vitality of Minority Languages in Europe

Category	Language	Number of speakers Nelde et al (1996)	Number of speakers cited in Ball (1997) percentage population
Category A*	Catalan (Catalonia)	4,065,000	
	Luxembourgish	350,000	
Category B	Alsacien	1,800,000	1,000,000 (62%)
	Basque (Spain)	544,000	
Category C	Catalan (Roussillon)	150,000	200,000 (56%)
	Frisian (NL)	400,000	
Category D	Basque (France)	86,000	90,000 (39%)
	Corsican	125,000	150,000 (60%)
	Occitan	2,100,000	1,500,000 (12%)
	Breton	180-250,000	600,000 (40%)
Category E	Occitan (Italy)	35-80,000	
	Irish (UK)	142,000	
	Flemish	20-40,000	100,000 (29%)
	Berber	25,000	
	Cornish	1,000	

The table shows number of speakers and grouped ranking A-E for reproductive potential (Nelde et al. 1996) compared with Kloss and McConnell (1984), Kloss, McConnell and Verdoodt (1989), European Commission (1986) cited in Ball (1997) There is no mention of Franconian.

Pooley goes on to discuss other languages and cites Ball (1997) as stating that 200,000 people speak ‘Frankish (Mosellan)’. It is unclear whether ‘Frankish (Mosellan)’ here should be taken to mean Moselle Franconian as distinct from Rhenish Franconian, in which case Rhenish Franconian is not mentioned or whether it signifies the three different types of Franconian spoken in the Moselle.

In the area of France under investigation, it will be seen that Rhenish Franconian dialect speakers appear to reserve their languages for different functions, dialect in the home, with friends and family, and French in public. This is similar to classic diglossia, but over time, as will be seen, Rhenish Franconian gives way to French. Children end up learning what is perceived as the high variety and leaving the low variety behind. When investigating this part of France, where the native language and the national language are not one and the same, one must recognise the fact that the speakers of the dialect are members of an out-group, and that the native language they speak is

spoken in isolation, with members of the linguistic in-group of the Moselle speaking French. The speakers are not German, and therefore do not have Standard German as the language of the linguistic in-group, unlike the *Saarländer* over the border. In addition, the strong views of the *Académie Française* with regard to the purity of the French language coupled with the second article of the French Constitution stating that the language of the Republic is French, have led to a fascinating linguistic situation.

For many, it would be unthinkable to do as the Moselle cross-border workers do, travel daily to another European country to work, dealing with a different language, different customs and a different political, social and cultural system. The Moselle cross-border workers appear to have a similar culture, identity to, and, currently, a means of communication with their counterparts on the other side of the political border which means that travelling to work over the border in the Saarland is a perfectly normal occurrence for them.

Though the Rhenish Franconian dialect spoken by the cross-border workers in question is linguistically a German dialect, or a dialect of German, the use of the word “German” when discussing a dialect spoken in France still has historical connotations which are sometimes somewhat unwelcome to the people of Moselle. Moreover, the Poignant report on the status of languages in France to the Prime Minister of France in July 1998, states

L’alsacien-mosellan. Cette formulation, qui présente l’intérêt de situer l’aire de diffusion de la langue en question, ne rend pas compte cependant de la répartition territoriale des variétés linguistiques en usage dans les académies de Strasbourg et de Nancy-Metz : l’alémanique et le francique.

Judge (2000) states that though it now appears to be French government policy to label both Alemannic and Franconian as local spoken variants of German, traditionally speakers in the Moselle region have preferred to give Franconian the regional labels of *Platt Lorrain*, *dialecte lorrain* or *dialecte germanique* rather than the label ‘German’ for obvious historical reasons. It is however clear, historically speaking, that Rhenish Franconian has been spoken in the area that is now the Moselle *département* since the Fifth Century. As this is after the Upper Germanic sound shift took place it can be said that Rhenish Franconian is a Middle West Germanic dialect, belonging to the Germanic dialect family, but not a direct descendant of Proto-Germanic.

There are few up-to-date statistical studies on the use of Rhenish Franconian dialect and what little has been written about the decline of the Rhenish Franconian dialect in the Moselle *département* of Lorraine such as work by Laumesfeld (1996) and, on a more prolific scale, about Alemannic in Alsace is often subject to regional bias. Previous studies on Alsace-Lorraine, concentrate almost exclusively on the dialect situation in Alsace and point to a definite shift from the use of dialect to the use of French. Vassberg (1993), echoing Tabouret-Keller (1985) states that many additional field studies are necessary in order to arrive at a more accurate overview of how the dialect situation is developing. Tabouret-Keller states that the existing studies, whilst clearly indicating the fate of the dialect, are too few in number to allow researchers to come to definite conclusions and make assertions based on them and calls for more empirical evidence to broaden the understanding of the complex dynamics of language change in Alsace and Lorraine.

This lack of evidence is far more apparent in Moselle for the following reasons. In Moselle, there is a lack of official written forms of any of the Franconian dialects, whereas in Alsace there is a standardised orthography of Alemannic. To rectify this situation, on May 15th 2004, Albert Hudlett of the University of Mulhouse, Alsace and around forty dialect speakers had their first meeting in

Saint-Avold, Moselle, to attempt to set down a charter for the harmonisation of the orthographies of the different Franconian dialects. The aim of the meeting was to agree the principle of a standard form of orthography from Moselle Franconian speaking Thionville to Rhenish Franconian speaking Bitche with the intention of presenting it to the French Ministry of Education.

In Moselle, there is also an absence of large dialect-speaking towns. Unlike in Alsace, where Strasbourg, Colmar and Mulhouse still have a significant proportion of dialect-speakers, in Lorraine, Metz and Nancy are almost exclusively French-speaking. In Alsace, Duée (2002) carried out a study which showed the apathy of the younger generations to the dialect, however no comprehensive research has been done in Moselle with the exception of a general survey linked to the March 1999 census entitled “Family History Survey” which resulted in a paper by Héran *et al.* (2002) examining language transmission in France in the course of the 20th Century in which, for the first time, ‘*Platt Lorrain*’ figures in the list of languages as an entry in its own right.

The book edited by Treffers-Daller & Willemyns (2002) which brings together sociolinguistic analyses of language contact along the Romance-Germanic language border, shedding light on the variable and universal elements in language contact and shift does not, as is claimed, cover the whole range of the border, from French Flanders through to South Tyrol. Though there is comprehensive coverage of Flemish in the North of France, the Flemish-French language border in Belgium, language use and language contact in Brussels, German in Belgium with specific reference to linguistic variation from a contact linguistic point of view, Luxembourg, as a multilingual society on the Romance/Germanic language border, the book then jumps geographically to Alsace, before continuing its journey southwards examining the German-Romance language borders in Switzerland, and German and Italian in South Tyrol. There is no separate mention of either Moselle Franconian or Rhenish Franconian spoken in the Moselle *département* of Lorraine.

Though Lorraine has its own sense of cultural identity which is not as strong as that of Alsace, the situation in Lorraine mirrors that of the rather better known Alsace region to some extent. According to Simmer (1995) the roots of the dialect in the current Moselle *département* of France can be traced back to the Fifth Century and the events of the past 250 years have defined the dialect speaking area of Moselle, Lorraine. The current political borders of the Moselle are recent and the *département* is divided into two by a linguistic border. This linguistic border coupled with the factor that there is no large dialect-speaking town sets the Moselle apart from the two *départements* (Bas-Rhin and Haut-Rhin) of Alsace and makes it unique. The Moselle dialect-speaking towns of Thionville and Forbach both lie in an area rich in natural mineral resources. Forbach lies in the coal basin, Sarreguemines is the home of the pottery industry and Bitche is not only a rich area of natural resources, but also had a good income from the crystal works, thus making the area under investigation part of an economically very sought after, and fought over, area. The recent crises in the coal and steel industries have, however, had a profound economic effect on the area leading to an increased number of people from the area under investigation seeking their fortune across the border in the Saarland.

Linguistic identity and geographic situation

With regard as to whether the linguistic community under investigation in this part of the Moselle *département* of Lorraine is bilingual or diglossic, Ferguson (1959:325-340) states that ‘Diglossia is a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body

of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any section of the community for ordinary conversation'. Ferguson's definition states that in order for a linguistic community to be described as diglossic then there must be the side-by-side existence of two structurally and historically related language varieties (a High variety and a Low variety, referred to as H and L) throughout a community, each of which has a distinct role. Contrary to Ferguson, Fishman (1967:29-38) hypothesised that diglossia could occur in any situation where two language varieties, even unrelated ones, are used in functionally distinct ways. Though Hudson(1996) pointed out that Fishman's reformulation of the concept of diglossia is problematic, because the direction of language evolution in a classic diglossic situation is opposite to that apparent in the case of widespread bilingualism it is clear that when instances of languages in contact are considered, where, unlike Ferguson's theory, the contact in question is not between two varieties L and H of the same language but two different languages, then Fishman's language evolution theory (L/H \rightleftharpoons H) holds true. In almost all situations of societal bilingualism, the L language loses ground to the H language which is usually spoken by those in economic and political power. Pooley (2000:142-143), discussing regional languages in France states that Ferguson's view of diglossia as being stable is a rare exception as most cases of societal bi- or multilingualism show considerable instability and more open manifestations of tensions and individual speaker choice in the face of perceived norms. Pooley also rejects Fishman's perspective of diglossia as a social phenomenon and bilingualism as a psycholinguistic issue. He reasons that 'bilinguals need the communicative competence to know when to use the varieties at their disposal appropriately'.

Rhenish Franconian currently enjoys little of the prestige of the French language, nor of the Standard German language. As Jan Goosens (1977:51) states, Will man die germanischen Dialekte dieser Randgebiete "deutsch" nennen, so kann man das auch nicht ausschließlich auf Grund der Feststellung, dass sie eine gewisse Ähnlichkeit mit der deutschen Hochsprache aufweisen, die es ermöglicht, sie mit Hilfe einer Anzahl von Regeln daraus abzuleiten. Das würde voraussetzen, dass eine Übereinstimmung zwischen zwei Sprachsystemen a und b genüge, das eine (a) als zum anderen (b) gehörig zu betrachten, ohne dass dieses Verhältnis umgekehrt werden könnte.

If, as Goosens quotes Francescato (1965) as saying, "Dialects do not belong to a language, they 'are' a language", then it could be argued that they can be considered German dialects if German is the language normally used alongside the dialect, thereby fulfilling the sociological and political dimension. This is not the case in the Rhenish-Franconian dialect-speaking part of the Moselle, where French is the national language. Russ (1994) states that spoken language is multifaceted, and that there may also be the question, albeit unspoken, of the status of participants in any dialogue. For instance they may be equal, as in a dialogue between friends, or one may be in the role of authority, for example, someone asking a question or making a transaction at a government office. This may affect the use of not only the register of language, but also the (sub)conscious decision of whether to use standard speech or dialect. In this paper, Russ' observations are substantiated, but it must be noted from the outset that where switching between languages occurs in the home of the cross-border workers, it is between French and Rhenish Franconian. Over the border at work in the Saarland, between standard German with those in authority and Rhenish Franconian or French with cross-border colleagues.

Geographical area under investigation

From the following map it can be seen that the Forbach, Sarreguemines, Volmunster, Bitche area of the Moselle département of France are within easy commuting distance of the Saarland.

Fig 3



According to private correspondence with the cross-border workers' association '*Association des frontaliers Moselle-Est*' based in Sarreguemines, the most common destination for cross-border workers from the Sarreguemines area working in the Saarland is the Saarpfalzkreis and its main town, Homburg.

According to statistics published by INSEE in late 1999, the number of cross-border workers increased as illustrated in the following table during the eight years before the survey was carried out.

Fig. 4 Movement of Lorraine cross-border workers

Division of cross-border workers into place of work	1990	1998	1999 (e)	Increase 1990-1999	Increase 1998-1999
Luxembourg	14,350	35,100	38,900	+24,550	+ 3,800
Germany	15,300	22,400	22,900	+ 7,600	+ 500
Belgium	1,350	2,800	2,800	+ 1,450	0
Total	31,000	60,300	64,600	+33,600	+ 4,300

(e) Estimated figures drawn from INSEE, Arbeitsamt, Sécurité Sociale Luxembourgeoise, INAMI Belge, CPAM

From the previous table, it can be seen that whilst in 1990, there were 950 more Lorraine cross-border workers employed in Germany than in Luxembourg, the figures for 1998, the year the author conducted the survey, show that there were 12,700 more Lorraine cross-border workers employed in Luxembourg than in Germany. Whilst the total number of cross-border workers employed in Luxembourg had nearly doubled (from 31,000 to 60,300) in the period from 1990 to 1998, the number of those employed in Germany had only increased by 7,100 in that period. Whilst the number of cross-border workers had doubled in the space of nine years, the different employment areas in Lorraine benefited to different degrees from this increase. The increase in the number of cross-border workers finding employment benefited the Moselle by 73% for two reasons. The first is the length of the border, stretching from Thionville in the north of the area to Bitche in the south. This border makes up 80% of the Lorraine border. The second is the development of the flow of

cross-border workers. In 1999 the area from which the cross-border workers were prepared to travel to Luxembourg increased in size southward. In comparison to the Moselle, the *département* of Meurthe-et-Moselle hardly benefited from the increase in the number of cross-border workers at all, due to its geographical location.

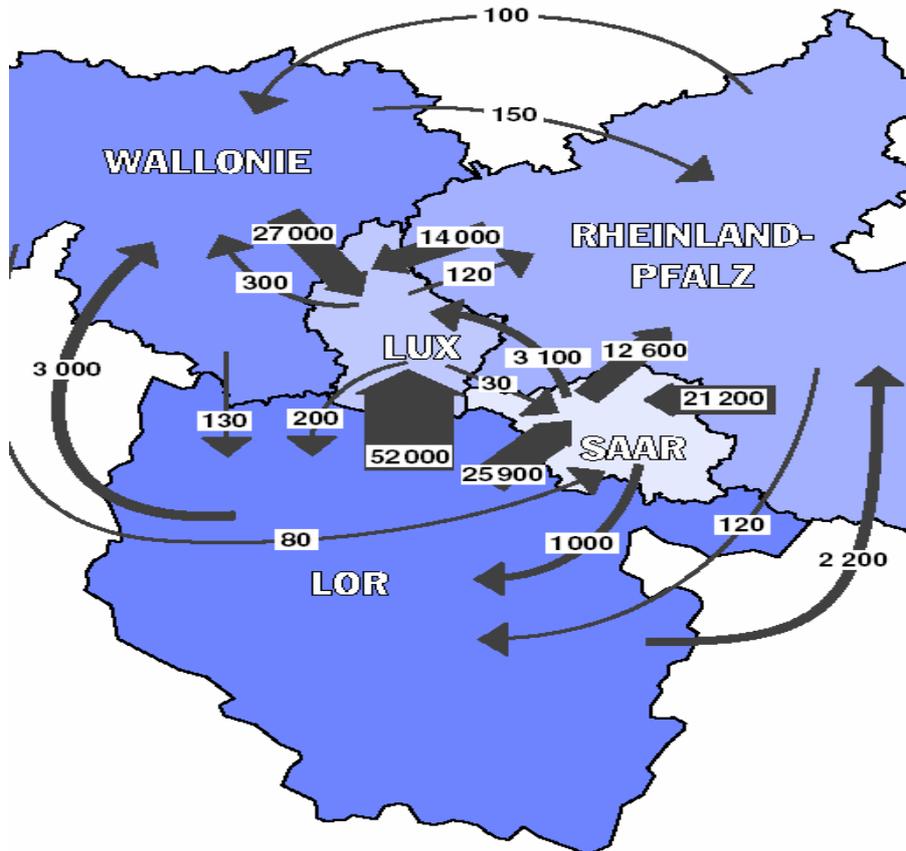
According to figures for 2000, published in September 2001 jointly by the five offices responsible for statistics in the cross-border region, the current total number of cross-border workers working in the Saarland and living in Moselle has then reached 24,638. Though this is an increase compared to the published figures for 1998, it is far smaller than the increase in the number of cross-border workers commuting to work in Luxembourg in 2000, (46,430). According to statistics published in 2003 by the Statistisches Landesamt Rheinland-Pfalz, from 2000 to 2001, the number of cross-border workers from the Lorraine crossing into the Saarland to work increased modestly, from 24,638 to 25,900. The number travelling to Luxembourg once again increased by a higher percentage, from 46,430 to 52,000 as can be seen on the following map.

Fig. 5 Cross-border workers movement 2001

GRENZÜBERSCHREITENDE BERUFSPENDLER

TRAVAILLEURS FRONTALIERS

2001



Statistisches Landesamt Rheinland-Pfalz

Given the state of unemployment in the Moselle, it is important to note that many cross-border workers have been able to find work in large companies in the Saarpfalzkreis, such as Bosch, Michelin, Schaeffler, due, in part, to the fact that they speak the Rhenish Franconian dialect. The third favourite destination for all Lorraine cross-border workers, but the most popular destination for the Moselle cross-border workers under investigation, is the Saarpfalzkreis, which attracted approximately 2700 cross-border workers according to a 1999 INSEE report. The cross-border workers working in the Saarpfalzkreis are mainly employed in industry and more particularly in metalwork (Bosch, Schaeffler, Krupp-Gerlach) or in the production of tyres (Michelin). This industrial specificity explains why the area under investigation appeals to more male than female cross-border workers.

The reasons for choosing to look at the dialect spoken in Moselle are outlined in the introduction to this paper. For practical reasons, it was decided that the research would focus on the current linguistic situation of the cross-border workers in the area between Forbach and Lemberg working across the border in the Saarpfalzkreis. Compared to other groups of dialect-speakers, the group chosen was homogenous, compact and more accessible to the author than other groups of dialect speakers. The group chosen is representative of cross-border workers in the area, and the results provide a picture of their language use and attitudes towards the languages they use. It was decided to target this group, as they are the people who potentially need the Rhenish Franconian dialect most of all. In theory, they use it as a working language, as a means of communicating, not only with their families but also with their employers and fellow-workers across the border in the Saarland. It must be stated at this point that the views of the subgroup chosen may not be representative of dialect speakers in the Moselle in general, as it was expected that the dialect would be more richly maintained by the cross-border workers than by other groups. It is however clear that the subgroup is representative of those cross-border workers who go to Germany, and who need to use dialect as a working language.

The official statistics for 1998 indicate that the number of cross-border workers living in the area under investigation and working over the border in the Saarpfalzkreis is 2500. Estimates from the “*Association des Frontaliers Moselle-Est*”, the cross-border workers’ association based in Sarreguemines, put the total number of those working in the Saarpfalzkreis at about 2800, a figure which may include some of those working under the then DM630 rule (€315) and thus not part of the target group.

Like Schorr (1998), the author relied on the self-assessment of the cross-border workers surveyed. In contrast to Schorr’s approach however, the author decided to implement delivery/collection questionnaires in order to increase the sample size, to choose a larger quota sample, according to age and gender breakdown, from a much smaller geographical area in order to increase the robustness of the sample data. The advantage of the delivery/collection questionnaire over a postal survey was that the author had easier access to the respondents. The questionnaire research focused solely on cross-border workers, most of whom are bilingual dialect/French speakers. Since the research chooses to sample the dialect usage and attitudes of cross-border workers, working in Germany, only those respondents who stated that they could understand French were asked to fill out the questionnaires. The sample of respondents chosen was representative of Moselle cross-border workers from this area working in the Saarpfalzkreis. All of the respondents live in the areas of Sarreguemines, Bitche and Saaralbe with many living in villages such as Lemberg and Montbronn. The general profile of the respondents surveyed corresponds to the average profile of the cross-border worker provided to the author by the *Association des frontaliers Moselle Est* in Sarreguemines. The questionnaire developed for this research was patterned on those used in previous language use and language attitude surveys by Jon Amastae (1978), Wolfgang Ladin (1982), and Liliane Vassberg (1993) and was revised once in the light of comments from the Personnel Directors during the semi-structured interviews and again in the light of a pilot survey. All questionnaires were in French and consisted of questions where the respondent had to give a numerical answer, depending on his or her response.

What follows is a brief summary of some of the research findings based on delivery/collection survey response data from 120 respondents, each of whom answered sixty-nine questions on their language use and twenty-three questions on their attitudes to Rhenish Franconian. The results which follow examine what the respondents themselves report is happening. The author does not attempt to answer the question “Why is this happening?” in great detail, for unlike anthropological research, such survey data does not usually provide information about cultural values and it is

therefore necessary to take into account other measurable causes such as migration, urbanisation, or economic shifts which are outside the remit of this research.

General findings

One comment encapsulated the views:

Moi, je suis frontalier et je comprends le Platt, mon père l'était et il parlait le Platt, mais mon fils...lui il ne parle pas le Platt, alors je ne sais pas...il n'y a pas de boulot pour les jeunes ici alors il doit aller sur Metz pour en trouver.

The majority of the respondents were male, and, in the case of the older cross-border workers, generally left school after primary school. The younger cross-border workers generally started work after finishing secondary school and/or technical school. Most respondents were either dialect-speaking, or, as in the case of younger respondents, capable of understanding the dialect. One thirty-five year-old cross-border worker wrote the following unsolicited comment on the questionnaire regarding the implications of a breakdown in communication for the cross-border workers from Moselle unable to speak the dialect.

Il y aura une barrière, si cette barrière n'existe pas déjà. S'ils n'ont pas un moyen de compréhension avec les chefs, ils peuvent se faire exploiter. Ça peut être aussi un problème pour certains pour trouver un emploi en Sarre car il n'y aura pas de moyen de communication orale.'

The results of the survey showed some interesting trends. It was interesting to note, for example, that the findings of the survey correlated with those of other surveys done in Alsace, and that the younger the interlocutor was, the more likelihood there was that the respondents, though often perfectly capable of speaking dialect, would nevertheless speak French. This does not bode well for the future of the dialect, as the survey has shown that though the dialect is still spoken at home with grandparents, it is not spoken so frequently with partners, and less still with the respondents' children in the area under investigation. It is also important to note that sometimes the respondents' attitudes belie their behaviour. The following graph indicates what the current situation is with regard to the transmission of the dialect.

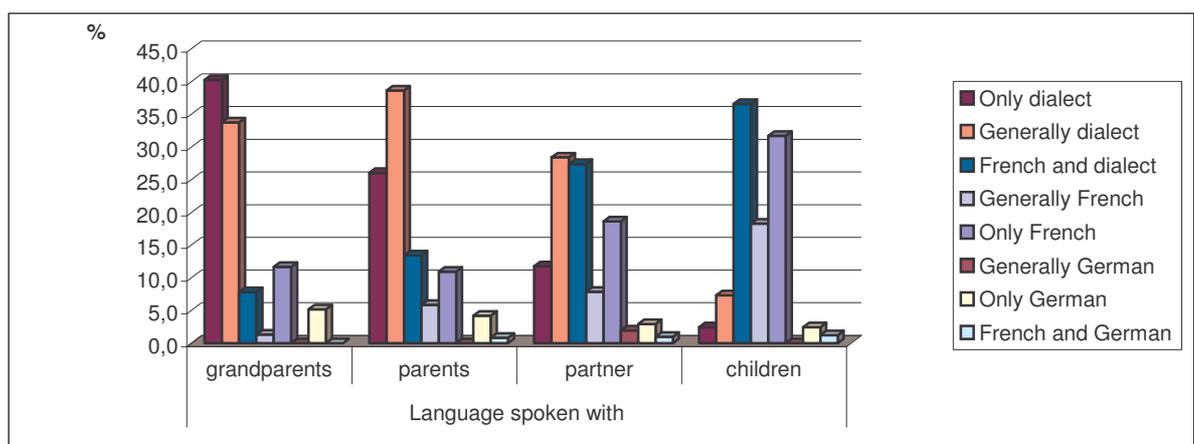
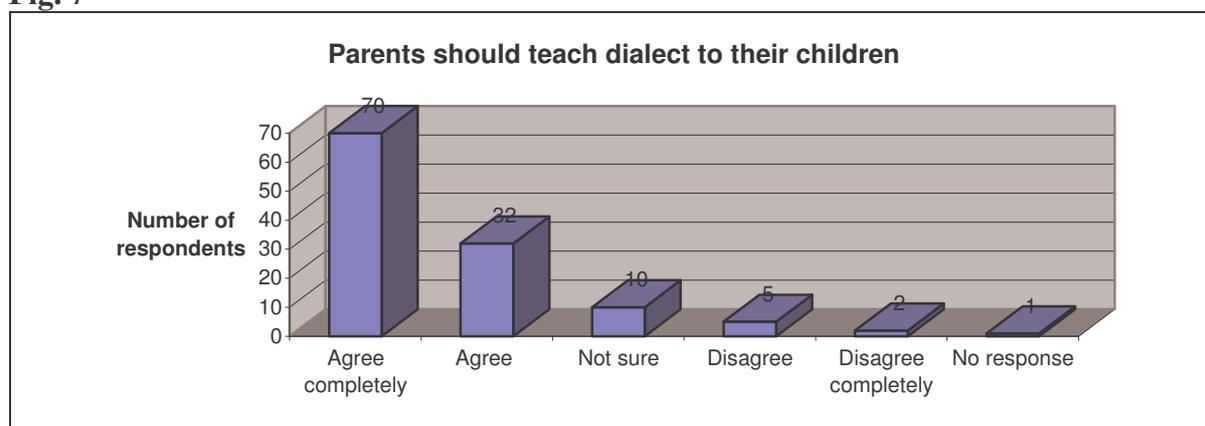


Fig. 6

It can be seen from the above graph that where a total of less than 10 per cent of respondents generally or only use the dialect as a means of communication with their children, where the same cross-border workers were asked to state their feelings with regard to the transmission of the dialect,

58.3 per cent agreed completely and a further 26.6 per cent agreed with the statement that parents should teach dialect to their children.

Fig. 7



General language use in the street mirrors that used at home, in the case of the incidence of dialect used with senior citizens and with children. The picture painted by the respondents' answers indicates that the younger generations do not have the same linguistic profile, and that the children of bilingual parents are being brought up monolingually, due to the prestige of the French language and the lack of support for, or interest in the dialect at the time of the survey. Again, this does not bode well for the future of the dialect. Moreover, any contact with the authorities, for example, the police, is mainly carried out in French. From the respondents' answers, it appears that the dialect is not as commonly used with children as with senior citizens.

In commerce, the language of preference is French, above all in large shops and with market traders. One reason for this is that the respondents are not necessarily aware of the linguistic profile of their interlocutor, and therefore often choose the language of communication most likely to be mutually understandable, French. It is interesting to note that when the respondent is aware of the linguistic profile of their interlocutor, such as when talking to a friend in the same situation, then there is a higher incidence of dialect use.

In other situations in Moselle outside work, the language spoken often depends on either the situation, the respondents' knowledge of the linguistic profile of the interlocutor or both. It is interesting to note once again, that the respondents' language use often changes depending on the situation they find themselves in. If they feel the need to use French, either because their interlocutor is using it, or because it carries more weight in a particular situation, then they will code-switch. In a bank or in a café, the respondent is more likely to use French than dialect with the bank teller or waiter. With friends in the same situation, the respondents tend to use more dialect. It is as if the dialect-speakers belong to an in-group, and the in-group only admits other members when it is sure that they belong to the group, i.e. that they are dialect-speakers.

Many interviewees bemoaned the current employment situation in and around Sarreguemines, but again, they did not appear to be concerned for the future of cross-border employment. One younger cross-border worker boasted of the fact he had obtained employment in the Saarland via a private employment agency although he did not speak dialect and only spoke schoolboy German. When asked how he communicated, he shrugged his shoulders and said that there were other cross-border workers who translated for him if necessary, but that it was not often necessary because others on his part of the production line were also cross-border workers, so he could speak to them in French. At work in the Saarland, the respondents identify with the in-group more than when they are in

Moselle . This becomes apparent when they respond that they speak German, rather than dialect in situations such as with superiors or with colleagues or employees, i.e. with those who consider the respondents to be their superiors. Despite the fact that the dialect of the Saarland and the dialect of the respondents are, in the main, mutually intelligible, the respondents make a distinction between what they speak with others from Moselle , the other members of the in-group, and what they speak with the Germans, the members of the out-group. Many of the dialect speakers appear to be as comfortable switching from dialect to German as from dialect to French.

When questions were asked with regard to specific subjects in such a way that it was clear that the interlocutor was a dialectophone, the main factor contributing to the decision whether to use French or dialect was the availability or lack of subject-specific vocabulary at the respondents' disposal. Where the subject matter was technical, and there were fewer dialect expressions, there was a greater tendency to use French. If the subject was one which the respondents had learnt about at school, such as religion, or one they had learnt about from the media, through the medium of French, such as politics, then there was a higher tendency to use French.

This confirms the views expressed by Hughes (1987) when considering the newspaper *France Journal*, which, though published in German, was geared to an ever ageing dialect-speaking readership. Though the newspaper published articles in German, they contained French vocabulary specific to their readership who read about “*der Maire*” “*die députés*”, etc. Even then, the dialect speakers were reading French terms.

Generally, the respondents selected the television programmes they want to watch for reasons other than linguistic ones. They are as undiscerning when listening to the radio. Few mentioned the existence of the dialect radio station, Studio Bitche. Younger respondents chose to listen to French music stations, rather than the dialect radio station which broadcasts to the local area. Press reading habits varied, the younger respondents read newspapers in French, older respondents read either French or German, and several respondents mentioned the demise of the German language regional newspaper, *France Journal*, which had served the needs of those who speak dialect and could read German. These respondents now rely on the regional French language newspaper, *Le Républicain Lorrain*, for their news.

When asked about language use with a specific aim in mind, it became clear that in some cases there was no conscious decision to switch, and the switching which took place was often arbitrary. For some respondents, the use of French versus dialect became a use of French or dialect depending on the aim to be achieved. When being flattering, for example, respondents were more likely to use French, again because of the vocabulary, but potentially also because of the prestige of the language.

Conclusions and perspectives

These survey findings go some way to illuminating a little-investigated corner of France where the national language and the native tongue are not always one and the same and give an insight into linguistic and cultural diversity amongst cross-border workers for whom the idea of mobility of the labour force and the situation of languages in contact are part of daily life.

The conclusions to be drawn from the history of the area prior to the last five years and the evidence presented in the survey results are bleak as it has been seen that dialects will begin to form whenever there is a barrier or other factor (economic, religious, political, etc.) isolating one group from another. If, as appears to be the case in the Rhenish Franconian speaking area, there is

evidence of the Rhenish Franconian-speaking group being in an inferior or weaker position than that of the French-speaking group then it is logical that French will predominate over time, providing there is little effort on the part of the Rhenish Franconian speakers to defend their language. Given the lack of support accorded to their dialect prior to the Cerquigliani Report of 1999 in which '*Lorraine*' was mentioned for the first time, it is understandable that the respondents do not find themselves in a stable diglossic situation, but rather in a situation of linguistic flux. Differences have arisen between the prestige and use of dialects in Alsace and in Lorraine, because the groups are developing their dialects separately with different levels of support. According to Henriette Walter writing in Blanchet et al (1999: 15-24) "The situation of Alsace is far stronger than that of Lorraine as regards its traditional language." Conversely, although dialects of the same language will merge and homogenise when brought into contact again, this is not likely to happen in Lorraine because the dialect and the national language are not similar and Rhenish Franconian dialect is now spoken, almost as a 'badge of honour' amongst middle-aged and older inhabitants of the Moselle region.

When a dialect spoken in an area is not a dialect of the national language, then the national language may eventually dominate if it is perceived by the population to be the 'more important' means of communication. A dialect can "convert" speakers of another dialect by being identified with a group of power or money, either because of the need to communicate with that group or in order to imitate it. Conversely, a dialect will lose speakers if the group it is identified with loses its prestige or if another (e.g. standard) dialect can be used to communicate with it. If a dialect attracts speakers because of its association with some group and manages to keep them for a sufficiently long time, then at some point the importance of the association wanes. If the prestige of the group falls after this point, that alone will not greatly affect the number of speakers given that the dialect is spoken as a dialect of the national language also spoken in the area.

Where, however, the dialect is not a dialect of the national language, and the national language is deemed to be of greater value or more important, then a situation such as that which is developing in Rhenish Franconian speaking Moselle will occur, where the dialect is superseded by French. As confirmed by the survey results, the younger generation are clearly not all capable of speaking the dialect of their grandparents, or even, in some cases, their parents, and where they do not consider it important to speak it.

Trask (1997) states that one might ask why individuals do not simply remain bilingual, learning and using their traditional language at home and using the local prestige language with outsiders. In Moselle, it takes a great effort to maintain Rhenish Franconian. It becomes increasingly expedient for dialect-speakers to slip into the prestige language in all domains, precisely because the prestige language, French is the language of education, publishing, broadcasting, films, and the law. Trask adds that many minority-language speakers are currently trying to maintain a policy of bilingualism despite these considerable pressures. Increased communications may also encourage the development of a 'standard' language to bridge the dialects and languages as has been seen with the use of English as a language of communication on the Internet. Having seen the results of this survey, and the attitudes of the younger generation to the dialect, viewed by many as '*une langue des vieux*' one may ask the question whether, in the generations to come, the language of communication between the people of Moselle and their neighbours in Germany will not be a different one, English. Already, amongst the younger generation there are those of dialect speaking parents who no longer speak the dialect themselves, and for whom English is their first foreign language, rather than German. It is also important to note that across the border in the Saarland, which, as a legacy of the Second World War, traditionally taught French as the first foreign language, schools now have the choice between English and French as the first foreign language

and, according to Klaus Zeßner, *Bürgermeister* of Homburg/Saar and former Headmaster of the *Staatliches Saarpfalzgymnasium Homburg* more than 50% choose English.

It is clear from the results of the survey that Rhenish Franconian is clearly not being spoken to the same extent as it was in the past. As in other regions of France where dialects, or 'regional languages' are spoken, there has been a significant decline in the number of native-speakers and a progressive erosion of the underpinning in the community. There is clear evidence of increased use of French, not only depending on circumstance but also depending on the age of the interlocutor. The evidence clearly suggests that the use of the dialect is not as widespread amongst younger generations as amongst older ones. Pooley (2000) states that with regard to general competence in regional languages the speakers of regional languages are clearly on the wrong side of the young-old, urban-rural divide. Speakers of Rhenish Franconian spoken in the Moselle are certainly in this category as the research by Héran *et al* (2002) shows.

The cross-border workers' attitudes to their dialect also indicate that they feel that the younger generations do not have the same mastery of the dialect as they themselves do. This view is substantiated by François Clanché of INSEE (2002) discussing the initial results of the 1999 census.

Les langues régionales se transmettent de moins en moins. Si la transmission des langues étrangères a légèrement progressé tout au long du siècle, il n'en est pas de même des langues régionales: avant 1930, une personne sur quatre parlait une langue régionale avec ses parents, le plus souvent de façon habituelle. Cette proportion passe à une personne sur dix dans les années 1950, puis une sur vingt dans les années 1970. De plus, depuis le milieu des années 1950, les langues régionales sont deux fois plus souvent reçues comme langue occasionnelle que comme langue habituelle. La tendance ne s'est pas retournée dans les années 1980 et 1990. Les enfants nés durant cette période n'ont pas été interrogés à l'enquête, n'ayant pas atteint 18 ans. Mais leur faible contact avec les langues régionales peut être appréhendé indirectement: 3 % seulement des adultes interrogés ayant des enfants nés durant cette période disent leur avoir parlé une langue régionale. La probabilité d'avoir été élevé dans une langue régionale est multipliée par dix pour les natifs de Corse ou d'Alsace. Elle est également plus élevée qu'ailleurs pour les natifs des Pyrénées-Atlantiques, des Pyrénées-Orientales, de la Moselle, du Finistère ou des Côtes-d'Armor. Le simple fait d'être né dans le même département que ses deux parents augmente aussi la probabilité d'avoir reçu d'eux une langue régionale, de même que le fait d'avoir eu des parents ouvriers, ou plus encore agriculteurs.

The attitudes of the survey respondents towards the use of the dialect clearly indicate that, without support from the authorities and without a change in attitude from those who are currently speaking French to their children, it is only a matter of time before the linguistic border will shift yet further towards the political Franco-German border. Given the current industrial infrastructure in this particular area of the dialect-speaking Moselle *département* of Lorraine, and excepting major investment in the area in years to come, future generations of cross-border workers will, no doubt still make the journey to the Saarland to work. The language of communication remains a very different question. Hughes (1987) predicted that the French news, German language newspaper France Journal would cease publication, and two years later, it did. It may well be that, unlike their ancestors, the future generations of cross-border workers will have learnt German as a foreign language at school, just as they currently learn English, and that they still perceive German to be important, if not a necessary in order to find employment over the border. Yet, without increased support, Rhenish Franconian spoken in the Moselle *département* may become, before too long, perceived as '*la langue du voisin*' rather than the native tongue of the cross-border workers' ancestors. Measures are now being put in place to encourage cultural and economic co-operation

between the two regions, but it remains to be seen whether the dialect spoken in the border region of Moselle will remain the working language of those who travel to the Saarland for employment. Despite the decision of the *Assemblée Nationale* not to support the Bill of November 21 2002 to amend Article Two of the Constitution to include mention of the defence and support of 'regional languages' it would appear that the picture is now slightly less negative than it was at the time the survey was carried out. This is thanks to a certain number of measures put in place by the *Conseil Régional* to support cross-border initiatives and to evidence of recent increased awareness of and support for the Rhenish Franconian dialect spoken in the eastern part of the Moselle *département*.

As Louis-Jean Calvet (1999) states

De quelles langues les humains ont-ils besoins? Nous avons tous besoin de trois types de langues. Notre langue identitaire, celle que nous parlons dans notre environnement immédiat, en famille ou avec les amis. La langue de l'État, celle qui nous permet d'accéder à la vie politique et sociale. Et enfin une langue de communication internationale. Ces trois fonctions peuvent s'incarner dans trois langues différentes, dans deux ou dans une seule.

Whether Rhenish Franconian will continue to be used by cross-border workers in the immediate environment, with family and friends, and, indeed as a 'working language' and whether future generations of cross-border workers will indeed use it with their children, only time will tell, but, without continued effort to promote it and to encourage the younger generations to speak it, the future does not look promising. It is to be hoped that support for Rhenish Franconian will increase and that it may one day achieve the status currently accorded to the dialects of Alsace.

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November 2002

Interview with Dr. Klaus Zeßner, Bürgermeister of Homburg/Saar and former Headmaster of the Staatliches Saarpfalzgymnasium Homburg, February 20 2002

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See Transcript of debate held on Thursday 21 November 2002 regarding motions for the amendment of Article Two of the French Constitution to include mention of respecting and defending regional languages. The motions were not carried.

<http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/12/cri/2002-2003/20030073.asp>

Overview of the Saar-Lor-Lux region

http://www.grande-region.lu/html_fr/saar_lor_lux/index.html

Flemish in France:

<http://www.uoc.edu/euromosaic/web/document/neerlandes/an/i1/i1.html>