



Università degli Studi di Venezia

**Dipartimento di
Studi Linguistici e Culturali Comparati**

Corso di Laurea Magistrale in Scienze del linguaggio

Tesi di Laurea

*The Italian community in Brussels: A closer look to
factors that determine parents' choices in the
bilingual education of their children.*

Relatore:
Graziano Serragiotto
Correlatore:
Giuseppe Maugeri

Laureanda:
Irene Dei
N° matricola 961724

Anno Accademico 2020 / 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My heartfelt thanks go to:

My students at the Lycée français Jean Monnet and their families, whose willingness and enthusiasm were the driving force behind my research.

Silvia Giugni who, with her great professionalism and friendship, helped me to put my ideas together.

Dr. Lorenzo Zanasi of EURAC, who with his kindness, availability and competence put me on the track of Family Language Policies.

Patrizia Civetta of FOYER, who unhesitatingly shared with me an immense amount of material for my work.

The administrators of the main Facebook groups of Italians in Brussels, Giovanna Bongiorno and Giacomo Laricca, for agreeing to talk to me and to help me understand the activities of Facebook groups.

Alessandra Giannessi of Inca-Belgium, for helping me to deal with the statistics on Italian emigration to Brussels.

My colleagues at the Italian Cultural Institute in Brussels, in particular Aldo Faraci, head of the library, for helping me to put together the bibliography in the difficult circumstances of the pandemic.

All the parents who responded to my Questionnaire and helped me to improve it with their valuable comments and advice. In particular, to those who spent time and energy helping me to distribute it.

Nina, Aurora, Bianca and Giorgio for showing me in daily practice what bilingualism is.

To the supervisor and co-supervisor of this thesis, Graziano Serragiotto and Giuseppe Maugeri, for their expert guidance and great patience.

To my family that supported me during the writing of this work.

ABBREVIATIONS

L1 = Mother tongue

L2 = Second language

OPOL = One person – one language strategy

ML@H = Minority language at home strategy

FLP = Family language policies

OP2L = One person, two languages

MLP = Mixed language policy

SUMMARY

| | |
|--|----|
| INTRODUCTION | 6 |
| CHAPTER 1 – BILINGUALISM | 9 |
| 1.1 – DEFINITION OF BILINGUALISM | 9 |
| 1.2 – EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS | 12 |
| 1.3 – FALSE MYTHS ON BILINGUALISM | 12 |
| 1.4 – FAMILY LANGUAGES POLICIES | 13 |
| 1.5 – BICULTURALISM | 16 |
| CHAPTER 2 | 17 |
| 2.1 – AN OVERVIEW OF THE ITALIAN EMIGRATION IN BELGIUM | 17 |
| 2.2 – A BRIEF HISTORY OF ITALIAN EMIGRATION TO BELGIUM | 18 |
| 2.3 – OFFICIAL EMIGRATION DATA | 23 |
| 2.4 – INTERNET | 28 |
| CHAPTER 3 | 32 |
| 3.1 – THE RESEARCH | 32 |
| 3.2.1 – <i>Research questions</i> | 33 |
| 3.2.2 – <i>Methodology</i> | 33 |
| 3.3 – INFORMANTS | 34 |
| 3.4 – THE QUESTIONNAIRE | 36 |
| 3.4.1 – <i>The family</i> | 36 |
| 3.4.2 – <i>Part 1</i> | 41 |
| 3.4.3 – <i>Part 2</i> | 43 |
| 3.4.4 – <i>Part 3</i> | 44 |
| 3.5 – WHAT I EXPECT FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE | 45 |
| CHAPTER 4 | 47 |
| 4.1 – ANSWERING RESEARCH QUESTION 1 | 50 |
| 4.1.1 – <i>Italian parents’ emigration</i> | 50 |
| 4.1.2 – <i>Level of education</i> | 51 |
| 4.2 – ANSWERING RESEARCH QUESTION 2 | 52 |
| 4.2.1 – <i>Planning ahead</i> | 53 |
| 4.2.2 – <i>Sources of information</i> | 54 |
| 4.2.3 – <i>Advice</i> | 56 |
| 4.2.4 – <i>Positive and negative aspects</i> | 57 |
| 4.3 – ANSWERING RESEARCH QUESTION 3 | 61 |
| 4.3.1 – <i>Institutions</i> | 61 |
| 4.3.2 – <i>Information sessions</i> | 62 |
| 4.4- ANSWERING RESEARCH QUESTION 4 | 62 |
| CONCLUSIONS | 64 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 67 |
| WEBOGRAPHY | 70 |
| ANNEX | 72 |
| ITALIAN VERSION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE | 73 |
| ENGLISH VERSION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE | 79 |

INTRODUCTION

This research project brings together my fieldwork as a teacher of Italian as a foreign language and my university studies. I have been working as an Italian teacher for more than fifteen years, giving language courses at all levels to young, teenage and adult learners.

At the *Lycee français* in Brussels, I have many bilingual children in my classes whose families are of Italian origin. Over the years I have been particularly struck by the fact that these children have very different language histories. They do show certain common features, namely they are proficient in speaking Italian while a little less so in writing. However, each of them has followed a unique path in language acquisition, as a result of factors that have profound consequences for their identity and their self-confidence.

Towards the end of my university studies, I encountered Cognitive Psychology and became particularly interested in the subject of bilingualism. This is partly due to my profession and partly due to my personal situation. I belong to a multilingual family. I am Italian, my husband is French, but we speak English at home. We live in Brussels, which is the capital of Belgium, a Nation that has three official languages: Dutch, French and German. It is also the city where the headquarters of the European Commission are located. All these factors make it an exceptionally multilingual and multicultural environment.

When my daughter was born four years ago, I became aware of the difficulties of raising a bilingual child. I had a good knowledge of Second Language Acquisition, but very little information about bilingualism and all the problems related to it. As the years went by, I realized that I was not the only parent having these difficulties. I started looking for shared experiences and met parents who were trying, or had tried, to create cultural associations, or private or public groups. They wanted to exchange information and were very active in doing so, though only over a relatively

short period. What was common to all these experiences was that they seemed to depend on the initiative of one or more individuals, none of whom ever seems to have received institutional support. As a result, parents' efforts tended to wane over time until they eventually ceased.

As soon as I started digging into the literature on bilingualism, I also realized that it is subject to many misinterpretations and clichés. When looking for information on websites or asking friends and for some advice on raising a bilingual child, many false myths proved to be still very much alive. I was also shocked that highly educated parents showed such a lack of planning for their children's language education. My work in schools was showing me how much this impacted on children's lives. As a result, I wanted to investigate this phenomenon further, so I decided to do a research project on the Italian community in Brussels. This was largely a practical decision as I am myself a part of this community and have built up many contacts within it over the years.

In the first chapter I try to define what is meant by bilingualism, paying particular attention to common or false assumptions related to this subject. I also try to describe the cognitive effects of bilingualism on the brain, and I explore the advantages of bilingualism throughout the lifespan.

Chapter two outlines the context of my research, the Italian community in Brussels. It starts with a brief account of the history of Italian emigration to Belgium and its main characteristics. It goes on to give a picture of the present-day Italian community and how it differs from the earlier one. Next, it explores a relatively recent phenomenon, the use of social networking, and tries to suggest the huge overall impact this has had on the community.

Chapter three introduces the instrument of my research project: a questionnaire to be distributed to a sample of families with bilingual children and/or teenagers at least one of whose parents is an Italian citizen. The questions aim, among other things, at establishing the family background

(origin, age, level of schooling) and the strategies devised by the parents for the language education of their children. They also try to ascertain whether the families feel that they are adequately supported by the Institutions and if so, how.

Chapter four describes how I distributed the questionnaire, collected data and formulated conclusions on the real situation of families and on the need for the Institutions to provide more support to them as part of a policy for promoting the Italian language and culture abroad.

CHAPTER 1 – BILINGUALISM

1.1 – Definition of bilingualism

In this chapter I will try to assess the progress made by research in the field of bilingualism.

To do this, I first wanted to give a definition of bilingualism, but I realised that this is very difficult. In fact, theory has conflicting opinions on the subject. On the one hand there are those who consider a person to be bilingual only when able to produce two languages perfectly and identically (Bloomfield 1974,64). On the other hand, there are those who consider bilingualism the ability to pronounce a few sentences in another language (Macnamara, 1967).

According to Grosjean (Grosjean, 2013) a bilingual person is on a *continuum* in which at the two extremes are: the native condition on one side and the beginner condition on the other. Grosjean suggests measuring a bilingual through the bilingual's use of two languages in everyday life:

"Bilinguals usually acquire and use their languages for different purposes, in different domains of life, with different people. Different aspects of life often require different languages".¹

This principle just stated is called the *principle of complementarity*, (Grosjean, 1997).

To understand it better, it is necessary to recall the meaning of the word *domain*. As we find in ADA (Cardillo et al., 2014), the domains represent the spheres of action and areas of interest of the speaker and the number of domains is unlimited².

¹ Grosjean, F. (1997). The bilingual individual. *Interpreting 2(1/2)*. 163-187.

² "L'uso della lingua varia ampiamente a seconda del contesto. Il bisogno di comunicare nasce sempre in una precisa situazione: forma e contenuto della comunicazione non possono che corrispondere a tale situazione. Le sfere di azione o le aree di interesse di un

According to the *principle of complementarity*, a person who uses two or more languages in the everyday life does so in different ways and using different *domains* depending on what he/she needs. If the context around this person changes, his/her needs change. Consequently, the degree of linguistic competence in the different *domains* may also change. Bilingualism is an evolving situation, a process that changes over time. Skills in either language may increase or decrease depending on the stage of the bilingual's life. This is what is described by Grosjean as the linguistic *wax and wane*, which literally means: to grow stronger and then weaker again.

Starting from the concept of the *continuum*, we deduce that most human beings are bilingual and, indeed, that being monolingual is a rather rare condition. When a bilingual speaks, he/she must decide which language to activate (language choice). The bilingual then decides whether to activate the monolingual mode or the bilingual mode. As we find in Grosjean:

"Language mode can be defined as the state of activation of the bilingual's languages and language processing mechanism at a given point in time", (Grosjean, 2013, 15).

The language mode can be defined according to the situation the person is facing, for example if he/she is reading a newspaper or if he/she is talking to another bilingual. A bilingual can switch from one language to another, even alternately (code switching), or integrating them (borrowing). In short, he/she is constantly adapting to the situation.

parlante sono in genere definite **Domini**. Ogni atto linguistico si inserisce pertanto in un contesto preciso e si riferisce a temi specifici. Il numero dei possibili domini d'uso linguistico e ovviamente illimitato [...], così come lo sono i contesti in cui si fa ricorso alla lingua o i temi che si possono affrontare. Il quadro indica quattro grandi **Domini** generali in cui si sviluppano poi "mini-domini" o contesti specifici. "(Cardillo, G. D'Angelo, K. Ferrari, S., Greco, N., Lucatorto, A. (2014), Attestato ADA, Alma Edizioni).

To conclude the introduction to bilingualism, I will mention some types of bilingualism that will be useful when I introduce methodologies for raising bilingual children later in this chapter.

In his book *Languages in Contact*, Weinreich proposed three types of bilingualism: *compound*, *coordinate* and *subordinate*.

Compound bilingualism occurs when a person grows up in an environment where two languages are spoken concurrently or interchangeably. A compound bilingual possesses a single meaning for two terms and expresses it in two ways. Normally this is the case of a child exposed to the two languages by two parents in a mixed couple. *Coordinate bilingualism* takes place when a person speaks two languages in two completely separate environments. The coordinate bilingual has two different meanings for two terms and controls and expresses them separately. This is normally the situation of a child where both parents speak the minority language at home and are exposed to the second language in the external environment, for example at school. We talk of *Subordinate bilingualism* when the speaker learns a second language and needs to use the L1 to access the L2. The subordinate bilingual has the meaning of the term only in his L1 and two ways of expressing it: that of the L1 and that of the L2.

The reasons why one language might be dominant over the other are varied, for example it might depend on the social status of the two language systems, or the amount of input given by the parents. The case of a balanced bilingualism is very rare.

1.2 – Executive functions

It used to be believed that bilingualism was a bad thing for a child, creating confusion and delay compared to monolingual children. Gradually and in recent years it has been realised that bilingualism does not have any negative effects but instead only benefits.

In fact, bilingualism is not only a linguistic issue but has also consequences for the cognitive system. While these consequences were initially thought to be negative, it was later realised that bilingualism has the greatest influence on executive functions. According to recent research, bilingualism appears to enhance the executive function system for both linguistic and non-verbal processing. When we speak of executive functions, we mean the processes that serve to cognitively control behaviour such as attention, selection, inhibition, monitoring, sorting, planning and shifting. They are essential for problem solving activities and the bilinguals that have to activate dual language processing seem to have an advantage over monolinguals.

Executive functions are not fixed but change throughout life and can be improved and enhanced through targeted work.

Research also suggests that speaking two languages has positive effects not only for young children. Beneficial effects of bilingualism are also proved to affect the elderly. Age-related problems such as dementia or Alzheimer's can be significantly slowed down by being bilingual.

1.3 – False myths on bilingualism

This short introduction, especially the concept of *continuum* and the *principle of complementarity*, serve to dispel some false myths about bilingualism.

Let us look at least three of them:

- *Bilingualism causes a delay in language learning*

The question many people ask is whether a bilingual child knows fewer words in each language than a monolingual child. The evidence says that bilinguals do indeed know fewer words for each language (Pearson, Fernandez, & Oller, 1993, 194). However, by doing a total concept analysis, no differences are shown between bilingual and monolingual children. Science today considers the vocabulary of bilinguals and monolinguals to be equal, calculating the total of the two languages in bilingual children.

- *The bilingual masters two languages equally*

This misconception influences a lot of parents, who are convinced that a child is “bilingual” only if he/she has a perfect proficiency in both languages. This general assumption generates a lot of pressure on children’s language performance. The *principle of complementarity* tells us that a bilingual will master the various language domains differently, depending on how they are to be used.

- *Mixing languages is the result of an inability to master the two languages*

The nature of code-switching and borrowing tells us that bilingualism is essentially the result of the extreme adaptability of the bilingual's cognitive abilities, never the sign of a difficulty.

1.4 – Family languages policies

In an interview, Grosjean states:

"It is a well-known fact that children do not acquire (or only partly acquire) the minority language if there isn't community or

*educational support or any other motivating factors that make using the language a natural thing*³.

Thanks to the evolution of scientific research, research techniques and the consequent more positive perception of bilingualism, in recent years there has been an emerging need for society to start addressing the issue of family strategies for developing the languages spoken in the family context. There is a strong need to address bilingualism in the place where it is born and nurtured: the family.

The new field called *Family Language Policies* is emerging and attracting the attention of experts and educators. *FLPs* were founded in 2009 to address a problem perceived as increasingly important in a globalised world where people move around, and languages come into contact.

Advances in research meant that there was a better perception of bilingualism, perceived as a positive factor in bilingual's cognitive development and no longer as a negative factor. The *FLPs* aim to intervene in language planning by connecting the languages spoken in the family with the outside world. In particular, the decisions made by parents regarding the languages spoken in the family are taken into account. The *FLPs* assume that the most important thing to consider is the context. That is, if until now parents' choices about which languages to cultivate for their children were considered an exclusively family matter, today there is an evolution into thinking that parents' choices should be discussed within the community and the whole society. The survival of minority languages is in fact closely interdependent with factors outside the family: school, friendships, the surrounding community.

³ <https://www.francoisgrosjean.ch/> [En ligne] Grosjean, F., Interview on bilingualism: Questions asked by Judit Navracscs, Veszprem University, Hungary (February 2002).

We see below (R. Kemppainen, S. E. Ferrin, C.J. Ward and J. M. Hite, 2004) some of the best-known methodologies that enable parents to raise a bilingual child:

- OPOL is perhaps the strategy most familiar to parents. According to this method, each parent speaks only one language with their child so as to avoid mixing them up and causing confusion in the child, as well as ensuring the child's continuous exposure to both languages.

- ML@H (Minority Language at Home) is a strategy to keep separate the language spoken in the community surrounding the family (dominant language) and the language spoken at home. In this case, the parents both speak the same language at home, which is different from the language spoken in the external environment.

- OP2L (One person, two languages). According to this strategy, both parents speak both languages in the family environment.

- MLP (Mixed Language Policy), a strategy whereby both parents use both languages mixed in the same conversation or even in the same a sentence.

- Time and place Language strategy, whereby parents change language depending on the place or moment in time. For example, they speak a certain language on holiday and another when at home; or they speak one language in the morning and another in the evening. The most important thing in this strategy is for the parents to try to remain consistent and always do the same thing.

According to a research (Paradowski, Michal B. & Michalowska, Monika, 2016), parents considered the following parameters of successful strategies to achieve the most effective results possible: consistency in language choice, parental motivation, early exposure to all the languages involved, using additional aids, contact with family and friends.

Another element that has a profound effect on parents' choices is the influence of the social and economic situation. In fact, if the parents speak a

language that is weaker from a socio-economic point of view than the dominant language, the parents' language usually suffers, specially from the point of view of vocabulary. Parents who are aware of the positive aspects of bilingualism would invest time and effort to grow their children multilingual.

1.5 – Biculturalism

Someone who is bilingual may or may not be bicultural. Being bilingual does not necessarily mean being bicultural. In fact, someone can live immersed in one culture but speak other languages. The concept of biculturalism is quite complex because it involves different aspects: cognitive, psychological, cultural. When someone is bicultural, he/she adapts to the situation he/she is in. Sometimes it is said that bicultural bilinguals seem to change personality when they switch language, but it is only because they adapt to the situation and the people they interact with.

Research is taking under consideration the influence of biculturalism on cognitive aspects, in particular those concerning lexicon and its organisation in bicultural bilinguals.

CHAPTER 2

2.1 – An overview of the Italian emigration in Belgium

The Italian community in Belgium is very varied, hence in this chapter I will try to outline its different features.

Firstly, there are the people who belong to the first wave of immigration, the one that began after the signing of the coal-mining agreement between Italy and Belgium in 1946. This community, which settled mainly in Wallonia and Limburg, ended up staying in Belgium and gradually, albeit with many difficulties, integrated into the socio-economic fabric of the country.

Then there are the second and third generations, the children and grandchildren of the miners. These generations, better educated and with fewer language difficulties than their parents, have achieved a good degree of integration and play an important role in the economic development of the country.

Finally, there are the new emigrants, who are the target of this research, the so-called *fuga dei cervelli* (brain-drain): employees of European institutions, interns, people working in big companies, consultants and so on.

To provide the geopolitical context of our research, I need to make a brief introduction to the administrative and linguistic situation in Belgium, which is a quite complex one. Since 1993, Belgium has been a federal state. It comprises three administrative regions: Flanders, Wallonia, and the Brussels-Capital Region. It has three language communities: Flemish, French and German.⁴

The Flemish-speaking population lives in Flanders, the French-speaking population in Wallonia and the German-speaking minority lives

⁴ <https://www.belgium.be/en>

along the eastern border of the country, as well as in Wallonia. The Brussels-Capital Region⁵ is the only area with a bilingual status (French and Flemish). It is located in the centre of the country and is smaller than the other two regions. The metropolitan area consists of 19 municipalities. There are many conflicts and tensions between the different language communities, which means that only a small percentage of Belgian citizens are actually bilingual.

In order better to understand where the Italian community is located today, I will give a thumbnail account of Italian emigration to Belgium.

2.2 – A brief history of Italian emigration to Belgium

The story I am about to tell started many years ago and continues to this day. Here I will limit myself to an overview from the Second World War until today. In 1946 a contract was signed between the Italian and Belgian governments providing for the following exchange: Italy undertook to send 50,000 workers to the Belgian mines and the Belgian government undertook in return to sell to Italy a minimum of 2,500 tons of coal per month for every 1,000 workers sent there.

Protocollo

La Conferenza che ha riunito a Roma i Delegati del Governo italiano e del Governo belga per trattare del trasferimento di 50.000 lavoratori nelle miniere belghe, e' giunta alle seguenti conclusioni:

1. Il Governo italiano, nella convinzione che il buon esito dell'operazione possa stabilire rapporti sempre piu' cordiali col Governo belga e dare la dimostrazione al mondo della volonta' dell'Italia di contribuire alla ripresa economica dell'Europa, fara' tutto il possibile per la riuscita del piano in progetto.

⁵ https://be.brussels/brussels?set_language=en

Esso provvedera' a che si effettui sollecitamente a nelle migliori condizioni l'avviamento dei lavoratori fino alla localita' da stabilirsi di comune accordo in prossimita' della frontiera italo-svizzera, dove a sua cura saranno istituiti gli uffici incaricati di effettuare le operazioni definitive di arruolamento.

2. Il Governo belga mantiene integralmente i termini dello "accordo minatori-carbone" firmato precedentemente. Esso affrettera', per quanto e' possibile, l'invio in Italia delle quantita' di carbone previste dall'accordo.

3. Il Governo belga curera' che le aziende carbonifere garantiscano ai lavoratori italiani convenienti alloggi in conformita' delle prescrizioni dell'art. 9 del contratto tipo di lavoro; un vitto rispondente, per quanto possibile, alle loro abitudini alimentari nel quadro del razionamento belga; condizioni di lavoro, provvidenze sociali e salari sulle medesime basi di quelle stabilite per i minatori belgi.

4. Con determinazione speciale, il Governo belga acconsente a che siano corrisposti gli assegni familiari alle famiglie dei minatori italiani i cui figli risiedano fuori del territorio belga. All'atto della loro assunzione i minatori italiani presenteranno all'azienda carbonifera a cui sono addetti un certificato ufficiale attestante lo stato esatto della loro famiglia. Tale certificato sara' rinnovato ogni tre mesi. I minatori italiani autorizzeranno le aziende carbonifere a versare al beneficiario residente in Italia l'importo degli assegni loro

dovuti. Essi forniranno, a questo riguardo, per iscritto tutte le notizie necessarie. Ogni eventuale frode in materia di assegni familiari sara' punita in conformita' alla legge belga.

5. Il Governo italiano si adopra' a che gli aspiranti all'espatrio in qualita' di minatori siano, nel miglior modo, edotti di quanto li concerne, attirando, in particolar modo, la loro attenzione sul fatto che essi saranno destinati ad un lavoro di profondita' nelle miniere, per quale sono necessarie un'eta' relativamente ancor giovane (35 al massimo) e un buono stato di salute.

6. La durata del contratto e' riportata a 12 mesi.

7. Allo scopo di ridurre al minimo il trasferimento di valuta dall'Italia in Belgio, e' reciprocamente stabilito un conto di compensazione per il tramite di una banca italiana e di una banca belga, designate ciascuna dal rispettivo Governo. In conseguenza, tanto i versamenti effettuati dai lavoratori italiani a favore delle loro famiglie, quanto quelli effettuati dalle aziende carbonifere secondo il disposto della legge sugli assegni familiari, saranno fatti alla banca belga di cui sopra. Questaeffettuera' per conto del Governo italiano i pagamenti delle somme dovute al "Comptoir belge des charbons". Sara' compito della banca italiana sia di ricevere dal proprio Governo le somme

dovute in pagamento del prezzo del carbone importato dal Belgio, sia di versare alle famiglie dei minatori italiani le somme che sono loro dovute.

8. Il Governo belga accetta il principio della possibilita' di recuperare mediante ritenute sui salari dei minatori le somme anticipate a questi ultimi in Italia per le loro spese di trasferimento in Belgio, a condizione, pero', che sia riconosciuta la prioritita' dei debiti, eventualmente contratti dall'operaio verso la Direzione delle miniere, e a condizione, altresì, che gli operai autorizzino esplicitamente tali ritenute.

9. In ciascuno dei cinque bacini carboniferi belgi il Governo italiano deleghera' una persona di fiducia, la cui retribuzione corrispondera' a quella di un "delegato all'ispezione delle miniere". Queste spese saranno a carico della "Federazione delle associazioni carbonifere del Belgio". Detta persona di fiducia avra' per compito di vigilare tanto sulla buona condotta dei suoi compatrioti al lavoro, quanto sulla tutela dei loro interessi particolari. Essa rendera' conto della propria attivita' tanto al Governo italiano quanto a quello belga.

10. Su tutti i treni a carico completo un interprete designato dal Governo italiano accompagnera' i minatori dal luogo di partenza previsto di detti treni fino a Namur a spese della Federazione delle associazioni carbonifere belghe, la quale assicurera' il ritorno di detto delegato in Italia e le spese per l'eventuale suo soggiorno in Belgio. L'interprete sara' sottoposto all'autorita' del capo della missione belga che accompagna i treni.

11. Il Governo italiano fara' tutto il possibile per inviare in Belgio 2000 lavoratori la settimana.

12. Il Ministero italiano degli Affari Esteri o, per sua delega, le Questure, rilasceranno a ciascun minatore un passaporto individuale o un foglio di identificazione personale, munito della fotografia del titolare. Questi documenti, salvo il caso di lievi condanne, non saranno rilasciati i minatori che abbiano subito condanne iscritte al casellario giudiziario. Il Consolato del Belgio a Roma, ad esclusione di ogni altro Consolato belga in Italia, riceverà le liste dei minatori e, previo esame, rilascerà i visti sui passaporti collettivi per ciascun convoglio.

I passaporti ed i visti avranno la validita' di un anno.

I convogli saranno formati nel luogo designato di comune accordo fra le Autorita' italiane e belghe. Per nessun motivo detto luogopotra' essere modificato senza previo accordo dei due Governi. Nella stazione di partenza saranno apprestati locali ai fini di un'accurata visita medica di ciascun operaio, della firma del suo contratto di lavoro e del controllo della polizia belga. Un servizio d'ordine organizzato nella stazione avra' il compito di

impedire l'accesso al treno ad ogni persona che non abbia adempiuto a tutte le formalita' sopra indicate.

Nessuna autorita' potra' modificare l'itinerario dei treni, ne' fissare ore di partenza che non lascino il tempo sufficiente per i controlli e per la definizione dei contratti di arruolamento.

Fatto in duplice esemplare a Roma, il 23 giugno 1946.

[...]

Full text of the Italian-Belgian protocol.⁶

After the Second World War Belgium needed workers to win what they called “the battle of coal”, while Italy needed to solve its high unemployment rate and required coal for its industries. As a result, every week a train loaded with 2,000 Italian workers, aged under 35 and in good health, left Milan for Belgium where they would work in the mines. The problem was that many of the workers did not understand the contract they were signing. They left Italy out of necessity, to escape from extreme poverty and to find a job that would give them a better life, but they were not told what they were really getting into. Moreover, many of them were illiterate and signed their contracts with a cross. The protocol between the two countries was signed on 23 June 1946, just a few weeks after the Italian Constitutional Referendum had sanctioned the end of the Monarchy and the birth of the Republic (2 June 1946). The protocol became law on 16 December 1947. The initial number of workers requested by Belgium was 50,000 but, in the end, almost 64,000 were sent.

As I have said, the workers were young men looking for a brighter future.

The poster circulated in Italy advertising the Belgian job offer read:

“Approfittate degli speciali vantaggi che il Belgio accorda ai suoi minatori. Il viaggio dall'Italia al Belgio è completamente gratuito per i lavoratori italiani firmatari di un contratto

⁶ <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1948/02/19/047U1663/sg>

annuale di lavoro per le miniere. Il viaggio dall'Italia al Belgio dura in ferrovia solo 18 ore. Compiute le semplici formalità d'uso, la vostra famiglia potrà raggiungervi in Belgio".⁷

English translation: *"Take advantage of the special benefits that Belgium grants to its miners. The journey from Italy to Belgium is completely free of charge for Italian workers who have signed an annual mining contract. The journey from Italy to Belgium by rail takes only 18 hours. Once the simple formalities have been completed, your family can join you in Belgium".*

Many of them were thrilled by this new opportunity, but we can imagine their difficulties once they arrived in Belgium. They did not speak the language of the country; they had a low level of schooling and thus were more likely to be unable to assert their rights. Furthermore, the lodgings they were promised under the terms of the agreement were actually the barracks in which prisoners of war had been kept during the recent war.

Reuniting with one's family, wife and children, presented major problems. For example, finding a house to live in: the Belgians were unwilling to rent lodgings to Italian families. The Italian men lived in a state of segregation, not only because working hours were extremely long and working conditions in the mines extremely hard (men often worked in deep tunnels barely 70 cm high), but also because they were not accepted by the Belgian population.

The families of the workers who did manage to reunite with them lived in a state of extreme hardship, often overcrowded in the few rented flats they found. Children had great difficulty integrating and were subjected to acts of racism at school. Many of them spoke Italian, in most cases dialect,

⁷ AA.VV., *Per un sacco di carbone*, ACLI Belgium, Liège, December 1997.

only at home. Things only began to change in the aftermath of the Marcinelle disaster that occurred on the 8th of August 1956. On that day, 262 miners died in a fire in the Bois du Cazier mine; 136 of them were Italians. The tragedy triggered a huge wave of controversy and debate throughout the country and abroad. As a result, thanks to the pressure of the trades unions, this led to a gradual improvement in living conditions and, above all, greater safety in the mines. It also led to an abrupt halt to Italian emigration to Belgium.

Italian culture, music, and cuisine have certainly contributed to facilitating the integration process. King Albert of Belgium married an Italian aristocrat, Paola Ruffo di Calabria in 1959. Singers such as Rocco Granata and Salvatore Adamo, and politicians such as Elio Di Rupo testify to how much the Italian community has brought to Belgium. But we must not forget that the integration process was a long and difficult one. The Italians were able to improve their living conditions, but it was much more difficult to achieve equal opportunities for social advancement. The children of the miners certainly had an easier life than their fathers and mothers, but they could not really aspire to bettering their social position.

Today we have the children's children, the third generation, who were born in Belgium. After 1985, thanks to the Gol law that regulated nationality, it became possible for resident foreign citizens to acquire Belgian nationality, among these many Italians. Over time, the Italians managed to integrate successfully, achieving living standards similar to those of Belgian citizens of equal social status.

2.3 – Official emigration data

Today, especially after the global economic crisis of 2007-2008, we are witnessing a massive new emigration phenomenon that, as I have said, is often labelled the *brain drain*. But what exactly is meant by this term? And

above all, where can we look for reliable data describing the phenomenon in numbers? The label refers to young graduates with professional specializations who leave their country to work abroad where their skills are better utilized and valued. The obvious place to look for official data on the numbers involved is in the consular services of the host country. Consulates are the ones in charge of registering Italians living abroad, but this was not always the case, because the representations of Italian citizens abroad are newly created institutions. Since the 1980s, thanks to the efforts of associations and trades unions all over the world, Italian citizens living abroad have finally managed to acquire important instruments of representation.

Below is a list of the institutions we have obtained which act on behalf of Italian citizens living abroad:

a. The Comites

*Established in 1985, the Comites are representative bodies of the Italian community, directly elected by compatriots residing abroad in each consular district where at least three thousand compatriots registered in the updated list referred to in Art. 5, paragraph 1 of Law 459/2001 reside.*⁸

b. The CGIE

*The Consiglio Generale degli Italiani all'Estero (C.G.I.E.), established by Law No. 368 of 6 November 1989 (last amended by DL 24 April 2014, No. 66, converted with amendments, by Law No. 89 of 23 June 2014) and governed by the implementing regulation set out in Presidential Decree No. 329 of 14 September 1998, is an advisory body to the Government and Parliament on major issues of interest to Italians abroad.*⁹

c. The A.I.R.E.

The Registry of Italians Residing Abroad (A.I.R.E.) was established by Law no. 470 of 27 October 1988 and contains the data of Italian citizens residing

⁸ www.esteri.it/mae/it/servizi/italiani-all-estero/organismirappresentativi/comites.html

⁹ www.esteri.it/mae/en/servizi/italiani-all-estero/organismirappresentativi/cgie.html

abroad for a period of more than twelve months. It is managed by the Italian municipalities (Comuni) on the basis of the data supplied by the Consular Representations abroad. Registration with A.I.R.E. is both a citizen's right and a duty (Art. 6 of Law no. 470/1988). It is a prerequisite for making use of a series of services provided by consular representations abroad, as well as for exercising important rights, such as:

- *The possibility of voting in political elections and referendums by post in the country of residence, and of electing Italian representatives to the European Parliament in the polling stations set up by the diplomatic-consular network in the countries belonging to the EU;*
- *the possibility of obtaining the issue or renewal of identity and travel documents and certifications;*
- *the possibility of renewing driving licences (only in non-EU countries; for details see the section Motor vehicles - Driving licence).*

Italian citizens who must register with A.I.R.E.:

- *those who transfer their residence abroad for periods of more than 12 months;*
- *those who already reside there, either because they were born abroad or because they subsequently acquired Italian citizenship for any reason.*

Italian citizens who do not have to register with A.I.R.E.:

- *those travelling abroad for a period of less than one year;*
- *seasonal workers;*
- *permanent State employees serving abroad who are notified in accordance with the Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic Relations and Consular Relations of 1961 and 1963 respectively;*

- *Italian military personnel serving in NATO offices and facilities abroad.*¹⁰

d. *The introduction of voting from abroad, launched in 2001 and practised in general elections since 2006.*

According to the Report *Iscrizioni e cancellazioni anagrafiche della popolazione residente | anno 2019*¹¹, published on 20 January 2021, by ISTAT (the Italian National Institute of Statistics), in the last decade there has been a marked increase in the emigration of Italian citizens (899.000 in total). Conversely, there have been far fewer returns to their homeland, so the balance between expatriates and returnees is distinctly negative.

According to the report, the preferred destinations for Italian emigrants are the European countries, with a record number of transfers to the United Kingdom (+49% in 2019). Belgium, which has received 22.000 Italian expatriates in the last ten years, is in eighth place in a ranking that also includes non-European countries. One in four expatriates had at least a university degree in 2019. Over the last five years, the number of emigrants with a university degree has risen sharply (+23%).

This trend is attributed to the shortage of demand in the labour market in Italy, which is not able to meet the needs of young people and women. A greater openness towards foreign countries is also mentioned in the report, a phenomenon typical of the generations born and raised with globalization. This confirms that there is a real migratory wave which, in the last decade, has been led by young people with a high level of education.

The problem with these figures is that they do not reflect the real numbers of people leaving Italy. Many people do not register to the *A.I.R.E.* because they leave for less than 12 months, at least in their original

¹⁰ www.esteri.it/mae/it/servizi/italiani-all-estero/aire_0.html

¹¹ www.istat.it/it/archivio/244848

intentions. Others work abroad illegally and do not want to lose their right to the Italian health care system. In any case, the numbers recorded are certainly lower than the real ones.

As regards the specific situation in Belgium, I would like to mention the Myria report of 2019¹², which states that, according to a Statbel¹³ statistic, 1,259,091 persons of foreign nationality were in possession of a valid identity or residence card on 1 January 2018. 67% of them are from a European country, with the majority coming from France, Italy and the Netherlands. These figures are interesting when compared to those in the ISTAT report. Because, by cross-referencing the data, they give us a better idea of the numbers of people leaving Italy and where and how they arrive.

To get a clearer idea of the real number of Italian citizens living in Belgium, we should probably try to cross-reference the data between the A.I.R.E. registrations and local institutions such as the municipalities and the health insurance companies with which residents have to register in order to obtain a residence permit.

In conclusion, I believe that the data leads us to recognize a new type of Italian emigration abroad, and that Belgium is still a popular destination for people who leave Italy in search of a job and a better life. The data also shows that, among emigrants, the proportion of young graduates is growing rapidly. Many indicators suggest that the official data found in Italian reports on the one hand, and in Belgian reports on the other, do not correspond to the real numbers of people moving abroad for work.

In the next section we will examine another tool that enables us to paint an unofficial picture of the Italian community in Belgium and especially in Brussels: *social networks*.

¹² https://www.myria.be/files/Myria_RAMIG-FR_2019-AS-gecomprimeerd.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0zpR1jFWdFpAwpVH7EYS7SGOgDo_5ltedYayPQTFoK8noZoVj9214DjqA

¹³ <https://statbel.fgov.be/en/themes/population/population-movement>

2.4 – Internet

With the advent of *social networks*, the dynamics of relationships between people have undergone major changes. In recent years there has been a massive use of social networks to create virtual communities. In particular, what I want to explore for the purposes of my research is the use of *Facebook groups* as a means of connecting people who are part of the Italian community in Brussels.

A *Facebook user* can create a group that has a name and a theme. The group becomes a tool that allows people with something in common, for example the same passions or interests, to gather around that theme and create a community that provides listening, help and sharing. The group can be open, i.e., its contents are accessible to everyone, even non-members; or closed, i.e., only members of the group can view the materials.

It was in this context that, in 2008, the first groups bringing together communities of Italian citizens were created in various host countries or cities. Initially, the groups had just a few hundred members, then with a snowball effect, they swelled to thousands. Today, some of them have many thousands of members. In Brussels there are various groups whose aim is to facilitate the creation of a virtual community of Italian expatriates. They serve many purposes, some of which are listed below:

- posts about daily life in Brussels - bureaucracy, finding a house, applying for or offering a job, finding Italian food products;
- invitations to events related to the Italian community in Brussels;
- requests for help or advice of various kinds.

Within the groups, there are sections that allow you to create shared documents. These are very useful for simplifying the lives of compatriots. For example, files with lists of shops selling Italian products, of professionals, of construction companies, where users mainly look for anyone offering a

professional service, or who speaks Italian, or in some way acts as a cultural mediator between typical aspects of Belgian and Italian life. For example: a person living in Brussels needs to see a specialist. They decide to contact their compatriots in the *Facebook group* by creating a post explaining their problem and asking if someone is willing to recommend a specialist who speaks Italian and is a good doctor. The doctor will therefore be someone who works in the Belgian system but is able to speak Italian and better understand the expectations of the patient, who is used to the Italian health system. Some *Facebook groups* have a more general function, where what unites the members is sharing a sense of belonging to Italy, its traditions, festivities, anniversaries, etc. Here are some actual groups with their characteristics:

- ***Italiani a Bruxelles*** - 32,000 members (private group)

It was born in 2008, as soon as this function became available on *Facebook*, with the important aim of providing mutual assistance and a site of aggregation. In this first phase, the community emphasis was strong. Within a few years, the small initial group turned into a gigantic group with more than 32,000 members. It started out as an open group, but eventually the administrators realized that they needed to turn it into a closed group because the access of members was out of control and many people wanted to use it for commercial reasons or to create controversy. This group shows all the positive and negative aspects of social networks: on the one hand, their great usefulness for finding information on everyday life; on the other hand, their risk of becoming vehicles of negative comments, especially on hot topics such as politics, religion etc.

- ***Italiani e italiane a Bruxelles*** - 21,400 members (private group)

This group is similar to the previous one and was created as an alternative to the first group that was becoming too big. In fact, many of the people who are enrolled in the first group are also enrolled in the second.

The origin of this differentiation is not very clear. One can imagine that a group of people who wanted to refresh the themes of the first group founded the second one. Afterwards, new members joined now one group or the other more casually than intentionally.

- ***Italians in Belgium*** - 19,000 members (public and private group)

It brings together people of Italian origin residing throughout the country.

In the general groups, the need gradually emerged to create subgroups that were more specialized in different topics. The ones I am interested in for this research were created by Italian parents to provide a virtual space where they can easily and rapidly exchange ideas, ask for and give advice, report interesting events on parenting. Like the general groups they originated from, they brought together parents who were friends in real life and felt the need to get in touch with other people in similar situations. Typical of these smaller, specialized groups is that they are easier to manage. Generally, their administrators set rather strict criteria for joining the group, so it is easier to spot when applicants have dubious intentions. Controversy, unpleasant or inappropriate comments are few and far between, and the group is therefore more effective.

Here are some of the more prominent groups:

- ***Genitori italiani a Bruxelles*** - 1,400 members (Private group)
- ***(Neo) mamme italiane a Bruxelles*** - 1,100 members (Private group)
- ***Famiglie italiane a Bruxelles*** - 4,500 members (Private group)
- ***Ad alta voce*** - 374 members (Public group)

In conclusion, we can say that now, more than a decade after the birth of *Facebook groups*, a number of trends have become more evident. Thanks to the success of this network and the vast number of members worldwide,

it guarantees high visibility and the chance to connect a large number of people in a very short time. On the other hand, there is a growing need to regulate access to, and use of, groups, to avoid the fatigue generated by controversies or excessively violent, irritating and off-topic discussions. However, it is clear from the multitudes of people who gravitate towards this phenomenon that they gather in these spaces because they feel the need to find a place where to share their experiences.

If we compare the data of the beginning of the new wave of emigration, according to the ISTAT report mentioned in paragraph 2 of this chapter, with the beginning of the snowball effect of *Facebook groups* around the year of 2010, it looks that there is a parallel between these two trends. This subject would require a specific investigation of its own. I have mentioned it here simply to add another piece to the puzzle that enables us to reconstruct the various aspects of Italian emigration to Belgium.

In the next chapter I will present the profile of those who will become the subjects of my study, the informants.

CHAPTER 3

3.1 – The research

In the early stages of my research, when I was putting together the pieces of the puzzle that would become my work, I had a very interesting, though informal, conversation with Dr. Lorenzo Zanasi of EURAC. EURAC is a private research centre located in Bolzano. It is part of a web that creates links between researchers and has partners in more than 50 countries all over the world ¹⁴. The Researchers working for EURAC have a unique overview of the progress in research and how it is shaping the future.

Dr. Zanasi gave me an account of the progress in studies on bilingualism at the European level. Among other things, he informed me that EURAC was collaborating with Patrizia Civetta, a researcher in the field based in Brussels. He put me in contact with her and she agreed to have an informal conversation with me about the project she was working on, namely: *Tales@home* ¹⁵. During our exchange, she informed me that she was also working with her team on a new project, called *Planting Languages* ¹⁶. *Tales@home* is a project which aims to develop awareness among members of multilingual families (including children) of the issue of the languages spoken in their home. *Planting Languages*, on the other hand, is a project that aims to develop parents' awareness of multilingualism as a strategic phase, i.e., before the family language dynamics have even begun.

It was extremely useful for me to discover the work of this team. The ideas they were developing were relevant to the issues I was thinking of tackling in my own research project. Starting from the approach of Family Language policies, which we discussed in chapter 1, and according to which

¹⁴ <http://www.eurac.edu/en/pages/default.aspx>

¹⁵ <https://www.talesathome.eu/>

¹⁶ <https://www.plantinglanguages.eu/?lang=en>

each multilingual family constitutes a unique case, it became clear to me that I needed to find a way to talk to each family directly.

3.2.1 – Research questions

Once I decided on the approach through Family Language policies, I asked myself some basic questions, that from now on I will call Research questions. Finding the answers to them is the purpose of this research.

1. Is there a new generation migrating from Italy that is highly educated and specialized?
2. Among these highly educated new immigrants, some form families. In some couples both partners are Italian, in others they are mixed; some are already parents and bring their children with them, others have children in the host country: are these families aware of the benefits of multilingualism? Are they ready to make efforts to give their children the opportunity to develop their multilingualism and multiculturalism?
3. Are there institutions that can assist these new generations of immigrant parents?
4. Where do these parents meet and share ideas?

3.2.2 – Methodology

I began to explore various methodologies for conducting my research. One possible way was to select families, make an appointment to go to their homes and interview them on the subject of multilingualism in relation to their family dynamics. But this would have taken a great deal of time. I then considered organizing focus groups, but soon realized that since I had to work in the middle of a health emergency due to the *COVID-19* pandemic, the only way would be to organize groups on videoconferencing platforms such as *Skype* or *Zoom*.

However, this method was likely to prove complicated for several reasons. Most families at the moment are overloaded with online work, whether parents for their jobs or children for their schooling. It did not seem a good idea to ask them to spend even more time in conference calls. In the end, I opted for the distribution of a questionnaire that would allow families to answer my questions whenever they wanted or whenever they could find time.

3.3 – Informants

I decided to limit my investigation to the Italian community in Belgium for the following reasons: first of all because I am part of this community myself; secondly because my own work consists in teaching and communicating the Italian language and culture, so I am familiar with the local schools and institutional context.

It was necessary to decide whether it was worthwhile doing a survey of the whole of Belgium or only the city of Brussels. I realized I did not have the means of contacting many people throughout the country. I would have risked obtaining fragmentary data and not getting satisfactory results from the research. So, I decided to restrict my field to the city of Brussels, among other things because I have many contacts there. I thought I could engage in word-of-mouth communication with the families and that this would give me the opportunity to reach many people in a reasonable amount of time. But I also considered the downside of this decision, namely that by starting from parents I knew, I would risk drawing from a pool of informants of a specific type. For example, among my acquaintances there are many parents who hold positions of responsibility, with a high level of specialization. In the end, however, I decided that I would make these the target of my research after all: I would select parents with a highly specialized job and change the criteria for my analysis. I would make *time* my criterion. That is, I would take

a time-lapse 'photograph' of two generations of parents with highly specialized jobs, all of them resident in Brussels. I would see if I could perceive differences in the level of their education and their approach to issues such as spoken languages, bilingualism.

The objectives I set myself were:

- to reach a wide age-range of parents;
- to reach parents with different cultural backgrounds. In other words, I was interested in including parents both of whom were Italian, as well as mixed couples, one Italian and the other of a different nationality.

A wide age-range would allow me to contact parents of different generations to see whether:

- there were any differences between them in terms of language education strategies or knowledge of the phenomenon of bilingualism.

With regards to the mixed couples, I wanted to understand:

- if this led to different strategies for the language education of their children;
- if one language was dominant in the family.

Another decision I had to make was whether or not to use social networks to distribute the questionnaire. As I explained in the previous chapter, Facebook groups can prove very effective for spreading a request to participate in a research project as an informant.

Nevertheless, after careful reflection I decided that I would not use social networks because I did not want to risk all those negative elements that characterize this medium. For instance, people's comments might distract from or overshadow the initial messages, or, in the event of very

negative or irrelevant comments, people might feel dissuaded from participating.

3.4 – The questionnaire

The questionnaire is anonymous; it asks neither for names, surnames nor addresses. It is divided into 4 sections:

- The Family
- Part 1
- Part 2
- Part 3

There is a single questionnaire for the whole family. By 'family' I mean parents (Parent 1 and Parent 2) and children. I did not include questions about other members of the family (e.g., grandparents), although these could have been relevant. This was to avoid making the questionnaire too long and dispersive. It was distributed in WORD format and parents were asked to fill it in and send it back in PDF format.

3.4.1 – The family

The opening section, *The family (Table 1)*, was created to provide a profile of the members of the household. It is divided into Parent 1, Parent 2, Child 1, Child 2 and so on. Each member of the household was asked to provide some basic information. For parents: nationality, sex, place of birth, year of birth, plus some specific questions on expatriation, residence, languages, marital status, education, language of schooling, profession. For children: nationality, place of birth, sex, age, languages and education.

The terms *Parent 1* and *Parent 2* were chosen in order to allow parents of the same sex to answer. We decided, however, to include the item 'gender' because it could have a certain relevance for the languages

spoken by the children, especially in relation to family dynamics (Velasquez, 2019).

Place of birth and *Nationality* allow me to determine whether the family consists of two Italian parents or is a mixed couple.

Year of birth allows me to establish which generation the couples belong to and to link this data with data appearing elsewhere in the questionnaire. For example, we can cross-reference the data between the year of birth and the level of education, in order to establish whether the generations of younger parents have a better level of schooling.

Residence enables me to ascertain that the family is actually resident in Brussels.

The questions about *Expatriation* are very important because they aim to determine the type of emigration in question (long or short term) and whether the family may intend to return to its country of origin. The question “Are you planning to go back to your home country?” does not enable me to establish whether the return plan is concrete or just a wish, but it can provide important indicators. For instance, it is interesting to consider that if a family decides to return to Italy after a few years of residence in Brussels, the children may have to face difficulties when returning to an Italian school system. For a mixed couple, questions related to expatriation are important for differentiating them from couples made up of two Italian parents.

The section on languages is divided into mother tongue and other languages, and the parent is asked to indicate the level of proficiency they have in each of these languages. This information, cross-referenced with other questions such as the one asking in what language(s) schooling was received, can be of fundamental importance in establishing the hierarchy of languages spoken in the family.

The questions that seek to establish *Level of education* are highly significant, because when I analyse the data, they will make it possible to

establish whether there is a relationship between generations and the level of education. Furthermore, they will allow me to understand whether there is a relationship between the level of schooling and the language education strategy of the children.

The question about *Profession* is important when cross-referenced with data concerning school education, to give greater depth to the profile of the parent.

In the section on children, an attempt is made to identify factors that can determine their profile in relation to that of the family. The nationality and place of birth of the children are data that could be relevant¹⁷: if we cross-reference these data with those concerning the movements of the parents, we are likely to get a clearer picture of the situation. The languages spoken by the children and the school they attend will allow me to improve the understanding of the languages spoken in the family and to relate them to the outside world.

¹⁷ It is important to specify that in Belgium, as in the rest of Europe, the *jus sanguinis* applies, so a child born of a couple whose parents are both Italians will have Italian nationality. A child born of two parents of different nationalities, on the other hand, will be entitled to both parents' nationalities.

FAMILY SITUATION

Parent 1

Nationality:

Birthplace:

Domicile (City, Country):

If expatriated:

- When did you leave your home country?
- Have you lived in Italy? If so, please state for how long:
- Are you planning to go back to your home country?

Languages:

- Mother tongue:
- Other languages (please specify if basic, intermediate, or proficient user):

Civil status:

Education: High School University Post-Graduate Degree

In what language/ languages did you receive a school education?

Profession:

Parent 2

Nationality:

Birthplace:

Domicile (Address, City, Country):

If expatriated:

- When did you leave your home country?
- Have you lived in Italy? If so, please, state for how long.
- Are you planning to go back to your home country?

Languages:

- Mother tongue:
- Other languages (please, specify if basic, intermediate, proficient user):

Civil status:

Education: High School University Post-Graduate Degree

In what language/ languages did you receive a school education?

Profession:

Children (*)

First child

Nationality:

Birthplace:

Gender:

Age:

Languages:

- Mother tongue:
- Other languages (please, specify if basic, intermediate, or proficient user):

Education (please, specify if the school is within the Belgian, International or Other system):

Second child

Nationality:

Birthplace:

Gender:

Age:

Languages:

- Mother tongue:
- Other languages (please, specify if basic, intermediate, proficient user):

Education (please, specify if the school is within the Belgian, International or Other system):

(*) If you have more than 2 children, please fill in their profile in the email in which you return your questionnaire.

Table 1 – Questionnaire section – The family

3.4.2 – Part 1

The previous section of the questionnaire allowed me to establish a linguistic and generational picture of the family. I come now to the questionnaire proper, starting with Part 1, presenting the questions in numerical order:

- Question 1 allows me to get a picture of the family's linguistic dynamics. This question is of great relevance, especially in the light of *the principle of complementarity* theories that we discussed in Chapter 1.
- Questions 2, 3 and 4 deal with the parents' reflections on the subject of bilingualism, in particular whether they have sought information or advice that has enabled them consciously to formulate strategies for their children's language education.
- Question 5 was designed to detect the presence of commonplaces or misinterpretations regarding bilingualism.
- Questions 6-7-8 aimed to see if there are any institutions involved in assisting the families of bilingual children. These institutions might intervene in the area of organization:
 - information and guidance sessions for parents on bilingualism;
 - language courses for children and teenagers designed for specific age groups;
 - extra-curricular activities administered in the target language (e.g. drama, book reading, or music education in Italian).

3.4.3 – Part 2

The questions in this section (*Table 3*) ask parents what language their children receive their schooling in and whether they participate in school or extracurricular activities in Italian. This question appears to be decisive for understanding whether there are places in Brussels where children can receive Italian lessons to help them develop some essential skills for the most harmonious linguistic development possible. The answer, along with that of question n.7 of PART 1, allows me to highlight the role of possible institutions for family support. Question 3 helps to outline what factors influenced the parents' school choice.

| |
|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;">PART 2</p> <p>1) In which language(s) did your children receive their school education?</p> <p>2) Do your children participate in school activities in Italian? YES/NO If yes, please specify whether the activities are part of the school curriculum or extra-curricular:</p> <p>3) When you chose your children's school, which of these elements influenced your choices most (multiple answers are possible):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Languages offered in the school curriculum- School excellence and prestige- Public/private school- Nearness to your home- Other (please specify): |
|---|

Table 3 – Questionnaire section – Part 2

3.4.4 – Part 3

This section of the questionnaire (*Table 4*) asks some questions of a very general nature about the cultural identity issue, which, as I pointed out in chapter 1, is very complex. Once again, we have to reflect on the fact that cultural identity is part of everybody's individual journey and therefore is different from person to person.

I thus decided first to ask a question about the existence of strong ties with Italy (e.g. family and friends). Such ties could lead to a significant increase in the motivation for cultivating an Italian cultural identity, something that may not be easy when living abroad. Question 2 is closely linked to question 1, in the sense that if one has strong ties with Italy, these may consciously or unconsciously favour the preservation of cultural traditions. Question 3 is important for understanding the children's relationship with Italian culture. If we cross-reference this data with that of the section *The Family*, which identifies the languages spoken by the children, the outcome can sometimes be surprising.

My personal teaching experience with siblings born a few years apart has shown that situations can vary considerably. For example, there may be siblings who, although they come from the same family background, have a completely different cultural identity¹⁸.

¹⁸ De Houwer, A. (2013) Harmonious bilingual development: Young families' well-being in language contact situations. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, vol. 19 (2) 169 - 184.

| |
|--|
| <p>PART 3</p> <p>1) Do you have strong ties with Italy (such as family, friends, etc.)?</p> <p>YES/NO</p> <p>If yes, please specify:</p> <p>2) Do you keep up Italian traditions (such as festivities, celebrations, food, sporting events etc.)?</p> <p>YES/NO</p> <p>If yes, please specify:</p> <p>3) Do you think your children have an Italian cultural identity?</p> <p>YES/NO</p> <p>If yes, please specify</p> |
|--|

Table 4 – Questionnaire section – Part 3

3.5 – What I expect from the questionnaire

First of all, I expect to find that younger parents are more highly educated. I also expect to see that parents, especially the highly educated ones, have not really planned how to deal with their children's language education.

As regards the institutions, I expect the answers to confirm that there are no institutions in place to support parents in their language choices. Or at least, that if these institutions exist, they need to review their communication strategy with the people they are supposed to represent.

I believe that parents will confirm that they would like to have information sessions on the subject of bilingualism and multilingualism, for example via a language information desk. When asked about their criteria for selecting a school for their children, I expect that parents born in the '60s will answer that they prefer a prestigious school offering their children greater opportunities, and that the Italian language will not be considered a

priority. On the other hand, I am not really sure what to expect from younger parents, especially since their children are still very young, and they might not have decided yet.

As regards the cultural identity issue, I expect to see that in couples made up of two Italians the answer will be definitely oriented towards an Italian identity. In mixed couples the answers will probably be more complex. It is to be expected that the Italian parent will find it more difficult to keep the Italian cultural identity of the children alive without places outside the family where it can be nourished.

Chapter 4

The questionnaire for parents was distributed from 27 January 2021, sent as an attachment to an email (*Table 1*) explaining the researcher's intentions and the purpose of the research. To help get a positive outcome, in the preceding days I personally contacted what I will call the 'contact parents', i.e., all the parents I knew directly, though not closely, and who met the criteria outlined in chapter 3. My aim was to explain the project and ask them to forward my email and questionnaires to other parents they knew. The questionnaires were to be filled in and returned to my email address. I set the deadline of 12 February 2021 for parents to return completed questionnaires.

Cari genitori,

Mi chiamo Irene Dei e sono insegnante di italiano presso l'Istituto italiano di cultura di Bruxelles. Sto facendo una ricerca per l'Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia sul tema del bilinguismo e in particolare sui fattori che influenzano le scelte di genitori italiani (o di coppie miste) nell'educazione linguistica dei propri figli e sugli aspetti che riguardano l'identità culturale di questi ultimi. Il mio target sono coppie di residenti a Bruxelles in cui almeno un genitore sia italiano.

Vi chiedo di riempire il questionario che trovate in allegato a questa email. Ne troverete due versioni, una in italiano e una in inglese. Potete scegliere in quale delle due lingue rispondere. Si tratta di un file *WORD* su cui potete scrivere direttamente. Poi potete salvarlo in *PDF* e inviarmelo completato. L'ideale sarebbe ricevere tutti i questionari entro il 12 Febbraio 2021.

Naturalmente voi genitori siete liberi di rispondere al questionario come e quando volete, tuttavia il modo migliore sarebbe quello di trovare un attimo per leggerlo e rispondere insieme. Potrebbe rivelarsi un momento interessante di riflessione comune su un tema di grande importanza per tutta la famiglia. Come vedrete, il questionario è completamente anonimo.

Vi prego di aiutarmi a diffondere questo questionario e di inviarlo a tutti gli amici che rispondono ai requisiti che ripeto qui di seguito: coppia italiana o mista di residenti a Bruxelles con figli bilingui in italiano.

Se avete domande da rivolgermi per il questionario e la mia ricerca, non esitate a scrivermi a questo indirizzo.

Vi ringrazio moltissimo per la vostra attenzione e spero di sentirvi presto.

Cordialmente,

Irene Dei

Email sent to the families

Of the people contacted by word-of-mouth, about three quarters answered the questionnaire. In the end, I received 34 completed by both parents (68 parents). To analyse the contents of the questionnaire, I decided to divide them into two blocks according to age group: parents born in the 1950s and 1960s (Group 1); parents born in the 1970s and 1980s (Group 2). From now on, for simplicity, parents will be referred to as either Group 1 or Group 2. As explained in chapter 3, the classification by age was chosen in order to clarify some fundamental aspects of the new wave of emigration (Group 2).

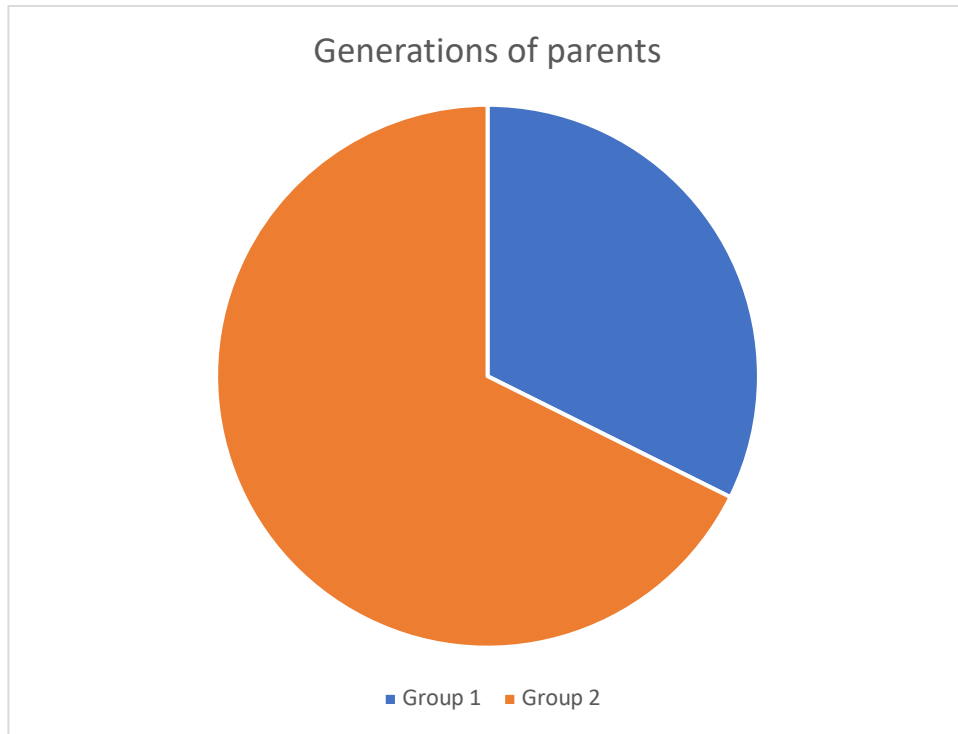


TABLE 1- Parents born in the 50s-60s => 11 questionnaires=> 22 parents

(Group 1)

Parents born in the 70s-80s=>23 questionnaires=> 46 parents

(Group 2)

This method of analysing the questionnaire data is aimed at answering the 4 questions I posed when setting up the project (*Chapter 3*), that I called “Research questions”:

1. Is there a new generation migrating from Italy that is highly educated and specialized?
2. Among these highly educated new immigrants, some form families. In some couples both partners are Italian, in others they are mixed; some are already parents and bring their children with them, others have children in the host country: are these families aware of the benefits of multilingualism? Are they ready to make efforts to give their children the opportunity to develop their multilingualism and multiculturalism?

3. Are there institutions that can assist these new generations of immigrant parents?
4. Where do these parents meet and share ideas?

4.1 – Answering Research question 1

Is there a new generation migrating from Italy that is highly educated and specialized?

In order to answer this question, I used answers from the part of the questionnaire called Family section.

4.1.1 – Italian parents' emigration

I asked to each parent to say when did they leave their home country.

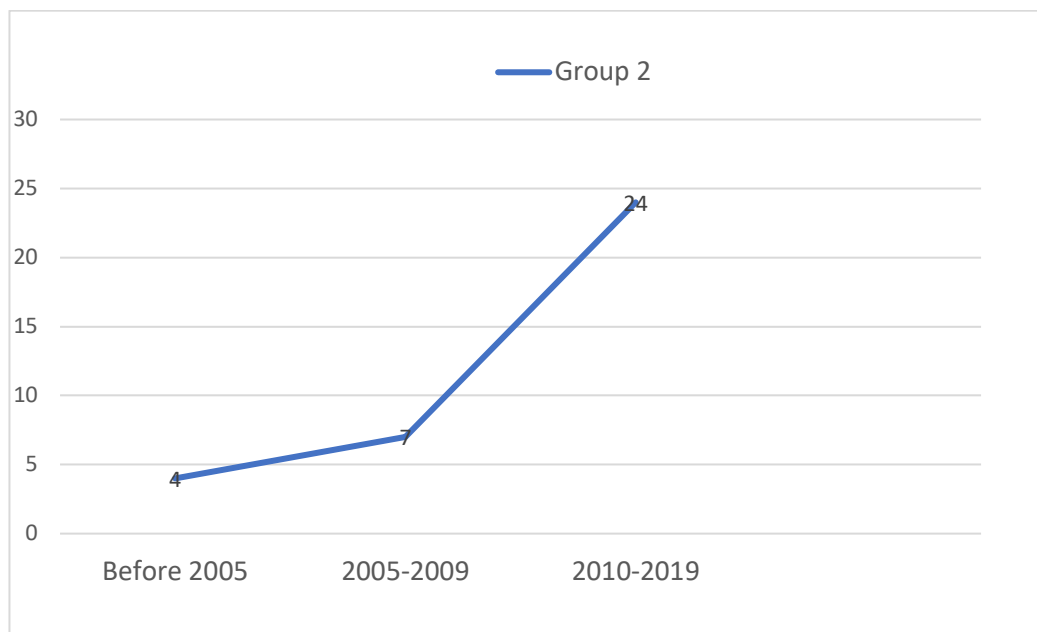


TABLE 2 - Italian parents' emigration related to year they left Italy

Table 2 allows us to visualise the migration pattern over time. In order to do this, we take into account only Group 2. Within it, we consider

only Italian citizens, not those of other nationalities who are in a mixed couple with Italians. We observe the number of emigrants before 2005; those between 2005 and 2009; and finally, those from 2010 to the present.

The questionnaires of Group 2 are 23 in total (46 parents). Among them there are 12 mixed couples, so 12 parents are of a different nationality and we do not take them into account. Out of 34 Italian parents, 24 of them declared they left Italy after 2010.

According to the ISTAT report that we saw in chapter 2¹⁹, a new massive wave of emigration from Italy started around ten years ago and is underway.

It seems that the parents of Group 2 could be referred as part of the new wave of emigration.

4.1.2 – Level of education

I asked to each parent to say what was their level of education.

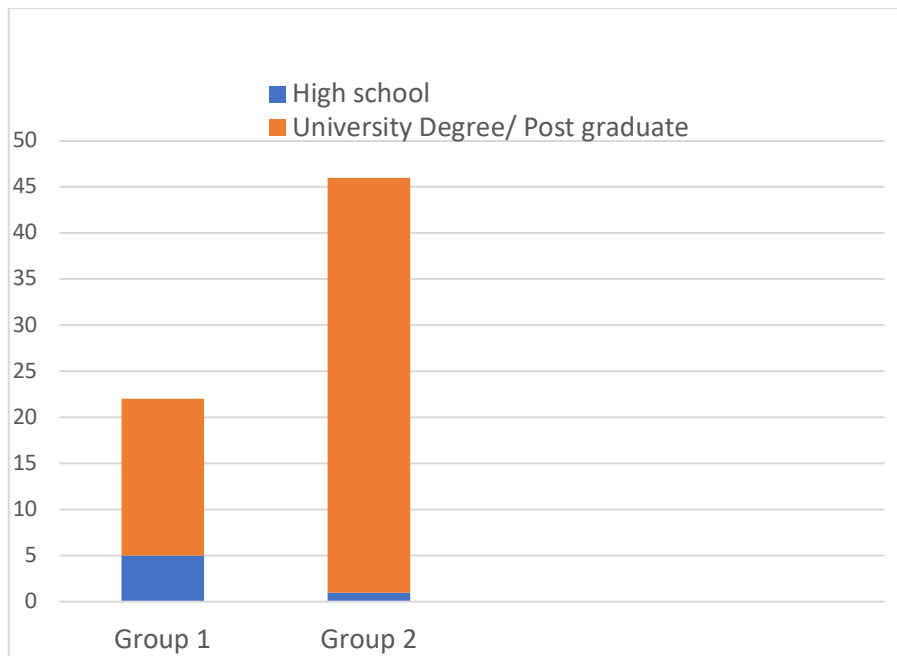


TABLE 3 Levels of education shows that Group 2 is proportionally more highly educated than Group 1

¹⁹ www.istat.it/it/archivio/244848

Table 3 shows the comparison between the level of education of group 1 and group 2 in proportion.

Among parents in Group 1, those who belong to the previous generation, 5 out of 22 say they have a high school diploma, the 17 others all have a university degree or postgraduate diploma.

Among the parents in Group 2, only 1 out of 46 say they have a high school diploma while all the others have a degree or a postgraduate diploma. The new emigrants are young, in their 30's and 40's and they are highly educated and specialised.

The data emerging from the questionnaire seem to give a positive answer to Research question 1: the new emigrants are young, and they are highly educated and specialised.

4.2 – Answering Research question 2

Among these highly educated new immigrants, some form families. In some couples both partners are Italian, in others they are mixed; some are already parents and bring their children with them, others have children in the host country: are these families aware of the benefits of multilingualism? Are they ready to make efforts to give their children the opportunity to develop their multilingualism and multiculturalism?

To answer this broad question, it was necessary to analyse the content of several questions in the questionnaire.

4.2.1 – Planning ahead

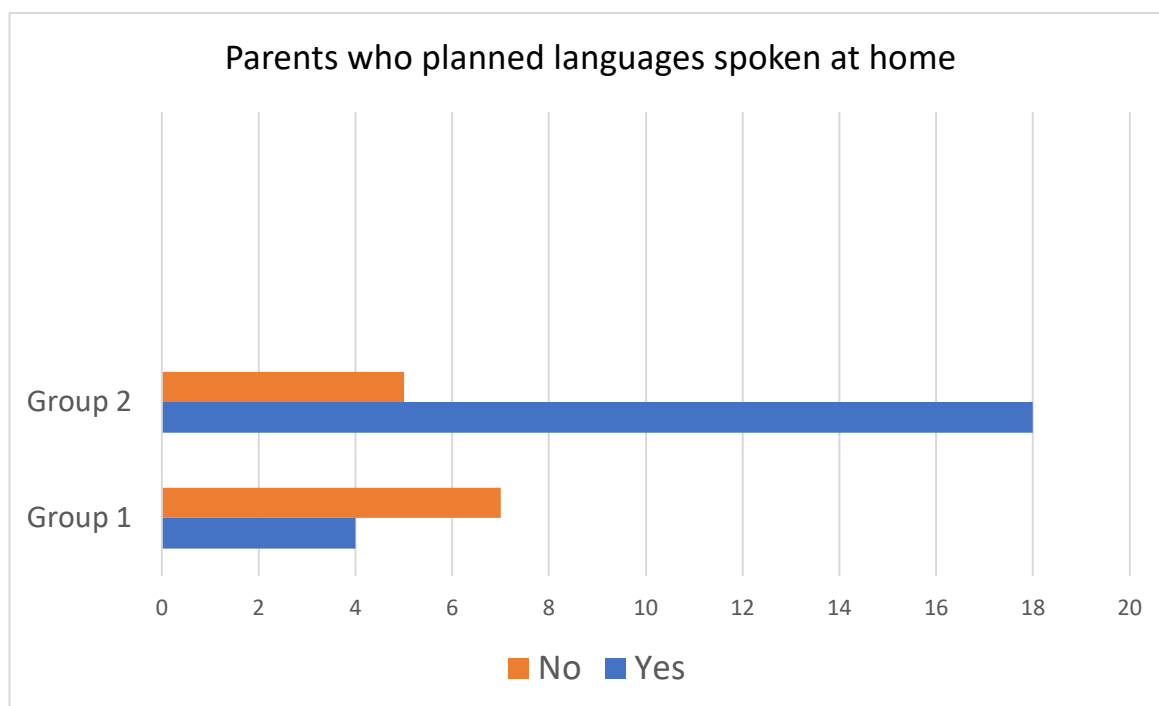


TABLE 4 – The table shows the number of parents who planned ahead the language education of their children

Question 2 of Part 1 of the questionnaire was to find out whether parents had tackled the problem of languages to be spoken at home. In general, mixed couples have more of a tendency to discuss the problem, as within the family they don't speak the same language.

In Group 1, four questionnaires said that they did not plan ahead the languages to be spoken at home. Among those who stated that they did not, three are mixed couples, four are Italian couples.

In Group 2, five questionnaires responded they did not plan ahead, while 18 responded they did. Among those who say they planned, there are 12 mixed couples and 6 Italian couples. The parents that are both from Italy have decided to speak only Italian at home.

Among the four parents who said they did not plan, there was only one mixed couple.

Overall, there seems to be a reversal of the trend between Group 1 and Group 2. The younger generation seems to be more concerned with planning. The answers seem to suggest that in the past there was a more relaxed attitude towards bilingualism: what the parents themselves described as a "more natural" approach.

4.2.2 – Sources of information

The question number 3 of Part I of the questionnaire was “Did you look for information or literature regarding bilingualism such as:

- Books
- Articles
- Documentaries
- Websites
- Other (please explain):”

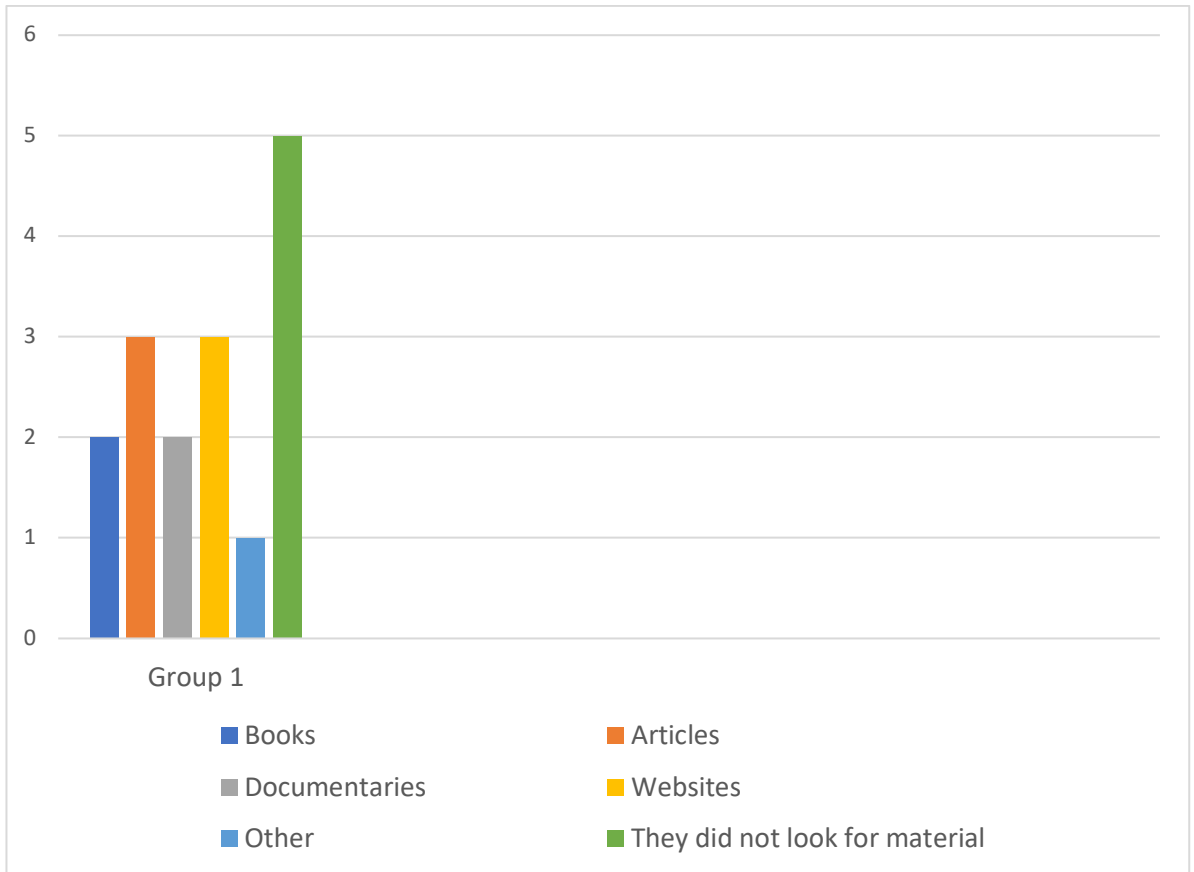


TABLE 5 – Sources of information on bilingualism for Group 1

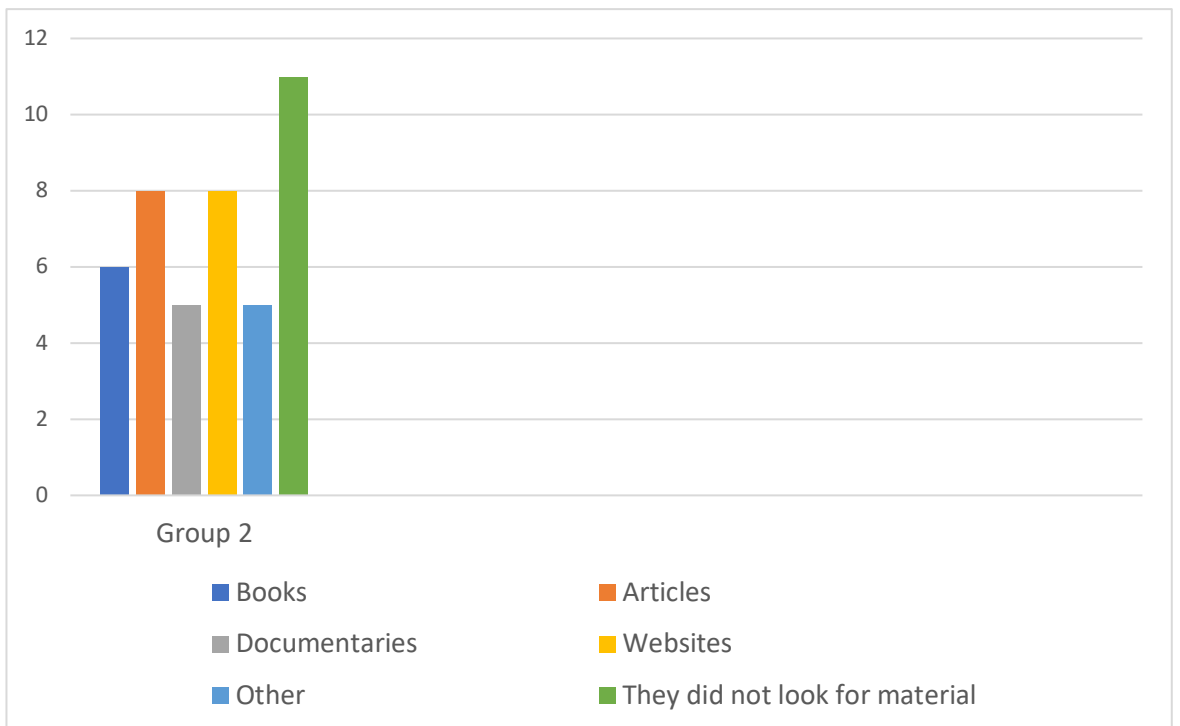


TABLE 6 – Sources of information on bilingualism for Group 2

The responses to the question about the sources of information used by the parents made me realise that neither Group 1 nor Group 2 look for many sources of information on the subject. As parents had more than one choice among books, articles, websites, documentaries and other sources, the total figures for each medium are very low for both Group 1 and Group 2 (*Table 5 and 6*). Many parents declared they did not look for any source of information. However, the tendency in both Groups is to search websites and articles.

4.2.3 – Advice

The question 4 of Part 1 of the questionnaire was “Did you ask for advice (from family, friends etc)?”.

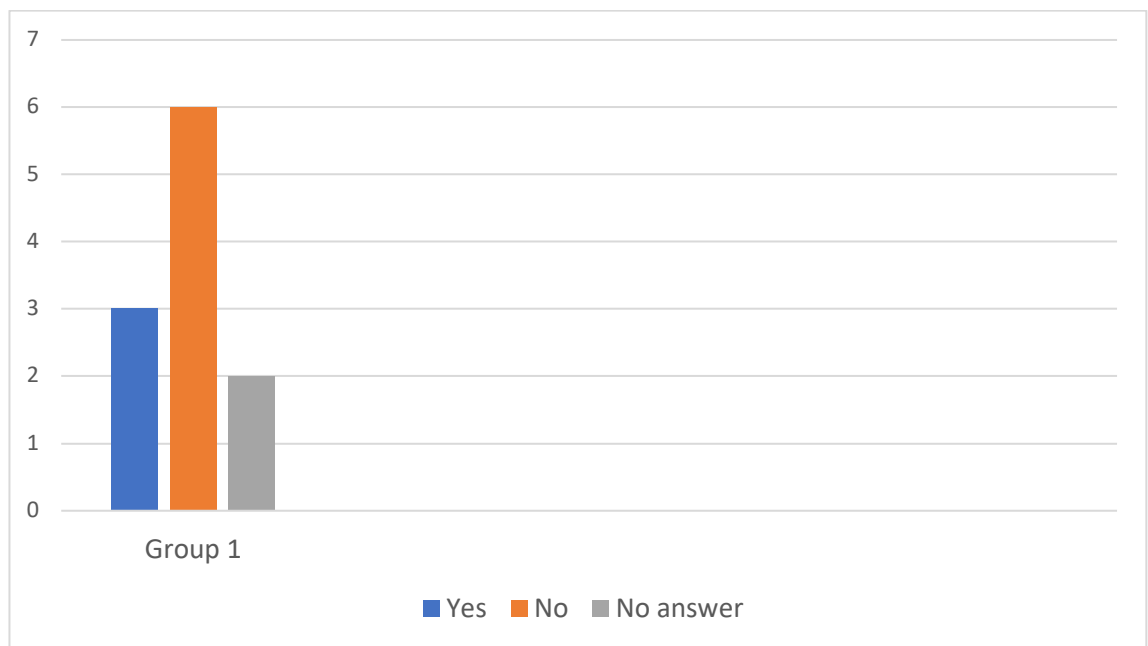


Table 7 – Number of parents seeking for advice in Group 1



Table 8 – Number of parents seeking for advice in Group 2

As can be seen from Table 7 and 8, there is a tendency among both Group 1 and Group 2 not to ask for advice.

Among those who do ask for advice, out of a total of 34 questionnaires, 7 couples declared they asked to friends, and 3 of them said they asked to family. Only two families consulted specialists (a psychologist and a paediatrician).

4.2.4 – Positive and negative aspects

The question 5 was “What do you think about your children being bilingual?” and the family had to describe positive and negative aspects of the bilingualism of their children.

For Group 1, the answers about the positive aspects were similar:

- opportunities for personal development and training;
- openness to others;
- increase in speed of thinking;
- true, unmediated interaction with others.

As regards negative aspects, 6 out of 11 questionnaires said they found none; two families did not fill in this section. The remaining questionnaires reveal some minor problems at the beginning of primary school or the child's knowing of fewer words in the mother tongue.

For Group 2 parents, the positive aspects were all very similar (I report in translation the answers given by the parents):

- openness to others;
- mental or intellectual flexibility;
- opportunities for future exchanges with other people or business;
- ease in learning other languages;
- possibility of having two mother tongues;
- facilitating the study of Latin at school;
- understanding different cultures;
- excellent accents in both languages.

On the other hand, many negative aspects are mentioned (I literally quote from the questionnaires):

- Risk of limited proficiency in the mother tongue (written);
- lagging behind their peers;
- risk of confusion between the two languages;
- more complex aspects of identity;
- conflict between home and school language;
- possible confusion in writing skills;
- difficulty in making friends on return to Italy;
- may be disappointed when they return to Italy;
- difficulty in fully developing the two languages within the standard timeframe;
- risk of losing part of the Italian cultural heritage;
- slowness and frustration when they begin to speak;

- risk of not mastering both languages;
- occasional interference between the two languages;
- possible penalisation at school;
- limited vocabulary;
- grammar and syntax errors;
- words invented by mixing languages;
- lower level of attainment in the single language than that of a monolingual;
- difficulty in learning grammar without attending school;
- difficulty in managing so many languages.

From the long list of negative aspects or difficulties that can be attributed to bilingualism, it would appear that even if the Group 2 parents have more knowledge than those in Group 1 and have sought information on this subject, and even if they stressed the positive aspects of being bilingual, as we see from the list of positive aspects immediately above, they have many qualms about this issue.

Given our analysis of the research and literature in chapter 1, if we consider the parents' answers closely, in both their positive and negative aspects, it is not difficult to find some false myth on bilingualism. Let us look at some of them:

- *The possibility of having two mother tongues, and an excellent accent in both languages.*

These positive responses highlight the fact that it remains difficult for parents to understand that being bilingual does not mean having an identical proficiency in two native languages, or even having a very good accent in both languages. False myths make life particularly difficult for parents. Parents tend to blame themselves if they see that their children are not equally proficient in the two languages.

- *Delays compared to peers.*

This shows the great importance parents give to the comparison with peers, whether bilingual or not. In particular, parents tend to assume that all bilinguals should show a similar development through precise stages.

- *Risks of confusion between the two languages, grammar and syntax errors, words invented by mixing languages.*

These responses, taken together with those on the negative aspects of bilingualism, make us realise that it is not at all clear to parents that mixing languages is part of the normal evolution of bilingualism, and that grammatical and syntactical errors, or words invented by mixing, may, on the contrary, be evidence of a positive linguistic development.

- *Possible penalisation at school*

This response is understandable. It often happens, even in a multilingual environment like Brussels, that school staff have not been trained adequately to accommodate bilingual children. Bilingualism at school is rarely taken into account and is often categorised as a 'delay in a child's development'. In this sense, greater sensitivity to the issue of Family Language Policies, as we presented them in Chapter 1, could help parents become more aware and to demand more from schools, and help schools improve their teaching practices.

- *Lower level of attainment in the single language than that of a monolingual.*

As we saw in Chapter 1, research suggests that a bilingual's vocabulary should be considered in its totality, and not in a single language.

To finish our analysis on the level of awareness of Group 2 toward the issue of bilingualism and language planning, let us have a closer look at the parents who declare they planned a strategy. As we previously said, 18 families out of 23 stated that they did plan. 12 couples out of are mixed couples. 9 mixed couples out of 12 stated that they use the methodology

called *OPOL* (one language- one parent); 3 mixed couples out of 12 stated they use a method that they define as spontaneous or natural.

When parents did seek information, they seem to have done so spontaneously on websites or in articles, i.e. via time-saving sources of information. Few of them seem to consider investing time and resources in finding out about the subject. Similarly, when they asked for advice, they turned mainly to friends or family and did not seek help from experts. Moreover, the figures in 4.2.4 show that many of them had doubts about the beneficial effects of bilingualism. The question that arises is whether the parents planned their strategies consciously or not.

4.3 – Answering Research question 3

Are there institutions that can assist these new generations of immigrant parents?

To answer to the general question 3, we used the answers to question number 7 of the part 1 of the questionnaire.

4.3.1 – Institutions

Do you know any public or private institution providing support for parents of multilingual children?

Both Group 1 and Group 2 answered predominantly that they knew of no institutions working in this area. In Group 1, one mentions the European School. In Group 2, one questionnaire suggests the names of some language schools, implying that these could be of help to bilingual parents. Another mentions the *Istituto italiano di cultura* saying that the latter might be helpful.

It should be added that in the section devoted to the school, some families declared that their children attend or have attended the Italian section of the European School. Officials of the European Commission are entitled to enrol their children in the European section and are thus able to give their children a concrete opportunity to be educated in Italian too.

4.3.2 – Information sessions

Would you consider useful to have information sessions on bilingualism to make choices on your children's education?

To answer to the general question 3, we also used the answers to question number 6 of the part 1 of the questionnaire.

In Group 1, 6 parents responded that they would find it useful to have information sessions on bilingualism, 4 responded negatively and 1 did not respond at all. The number of negative answers may have been influenced by the fact that these parents already have grown-up children and no longer consider it necessary to have sessions (the question did not specify whether they considered them useful in general or for the future).

In Group 2, 19 families responded that they would find it useful to have information sessions, 1 responded negatively and 3 failed to respond.

4.4- Answering research question 4

| |
|--|
| Where do these parents meet and share ideas? |
|--|

To answer Research question 4, it is necessary to put together information that we found both in the questionnaire and in the socio-cultural context that we analysed in chapter 2. Once it was made clear from the parents' answers to the questionnaire that they did not know institutions that could help them and once we figured the numbers of

members of Facebook groups, it seemed that the Italian community of parents looking for a place where to meet and share information is mainly the *social networks*.

CONCLUSIONS

In chapter 1, I looked at the progress made by research in the field of bilingualism. I tried to give a definition of the term and mentioned some of the false myths and misrepresentations that still exist on this topic. I mentioned the most recent literature that provides evidence that bilingualism has only positive characteristics, especially on a cognitive level. I noted that in recent years a new area of research has been emerging, that of Family Language Policies, and tried to briefly explain what they were and what they could be used for.

In chapter 2, I analysed the most recent statistics that tell us that there is a new wave of migration of people between 30 and 40 years old who have started, since around 2010, to leave Italy to find better job opportunities. Statistics also tell us that the people leaving their country have a high level of education. The phenomenon of emigration is not a new one to Italy. What has changed is that in the past, emigrants came from extremely poor backgrounds with low levels of education. Today, this is not the case, and scientists have to set new parameters for the interpretation of this phenomenon. In chapter 2 I also examined the role that social networks play today in creating gathering places for the new migrants.

Among these newcomers are many who leave with their families or start new ones when they arrive in the host country. In this research, I analysed the issue of family language planning in households of both Italian parents and mixed couples living in the city of Brussels, Belgium.

To get in direct contact with the families, I prepared a questionnaire to be distributed to them which I presented in chapter 3. The questions included establishing the background of the family (origin, age, level of education) and the strategies devised by the parents for the language education of their children. I also tried to ascertain whether the families felt that they were adequately supported by the Institutions and if so, how.

In chapter 4 I examined the results of the questionnaire. I received 34 completed questionnaires and I divided them by age group. One group (Group 1) equated to parents born between the 1950s and 1960s. The other group (Group 2), equated to parents born in the years 1970s and 1980s.

The distinction in two age groups allowed me to make considerations about the characteristics of the parents belonging to the new wave of emigration (Group 2). The latter seem to have a higher level of education than their peers of the previous generation. They seem to take more into account the factor of language planning. Despite this, when analysing the sources through which the two Groups found information about bilingualism, no significant changes appear.

Above all, Group 2, compared to Group 1, seems to notice many more negative aspects of their children's bilingualism, showing that they still believe many false myths that should have disappeared in recent years, thanks to the evolution of research.

The questionnaire also seems to indicate that parents would very much like to have information sessions on the topic of family language planning, but that they do not know of any institutions working in this field.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Baker, C. (2007) *A Parents' and Teachers' Guide to Bilingualism*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingualism Matters.
- Bialystok, E. (1992) Attentional control in children's metalinguistic performance and measures of field independence. *Developmental Psychology*, 28(4), 654–664.
- Bialystok, E. (1992) *Selective attention in cognitive processing: The bilingual edge*. In R. J. Harris (Ed.), *Advances in psychology*, 83. *Cognitive processing in bilinguals*. North-Holland, 501–513.
- Bloomefield, L., (1974) *Il linguaggio*, Milano, Il Saggiatore.
- Cardillo, G., D'Angelo, K., Ferrari, S., Greco, N., Lucatorto, A. (2014). *Attestato ADA*, Alma Edizioni.
- De Houwer, A. (1999) Environmental factors in early bilingual development: The role of parental beliefs and attitudes. In G. Extra & L. Verhoeven (eds.), *Bilingualism and migration*. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 75–96.
- Fishman, J. A. (1991) Reversing language shift: Theoretical and empirical foundations of assistance to threatened languages. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters. 1–25. *Publications in Sociolinguistics* 3. Dallas: SIL International.
- Fishman, J. A. (2001) From theory to practice (and vice versa): Review, reconsideration and reiteration. In J. A. Fishman (ed.), *Can threatened languages be saved?*, Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter. 451–483.
- Franciosi, M. L. (1996) *... per un sacco di carbone*, Bruxelles, Acli.
- Grosjean, F. (2010), *Bilingual: Life and Reality*. Cambridge, MA.
- Grosjean, F., Li, P. (2013) *The Psycholinguistics of Bilingualism*, Wiley.

- Istat (2021) Iscrizioni e cancellazioni anagrafiche della popolazione residente | anno 2019. <https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/252732> (Accessed on 27/01/2021).
- Kemppainen, R., S.E. Ferrin, C.J. Ward, J.M. Hite (2004) *One should not forget one's mother tongue: Russian-speaking parents' choice of language of instruction in Estonia. In: Bilingual Research Journal 28(2), 207–229.*
- Kendall A. King, Lyn Wright Fogle (2013) *Family language policy and bilingual parenting. Language teaching, 46, 172-194.*
- King, K. & L. Fogle (2006) Bilingual parenting as good parenting: Parents' perspectives on family language policy for additive bilingualism. *The International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism 9(6), 695–712.*
- King, K., L. Fogle & A. Logan-Terry (2008) Family language policy. *Language and Linguistics Compass 2(5), 907–922.*
- King, K.A., Fogle L. (2013) Family language policy and bilingual parenting. *Language teaching, 46, 172-194.*
- Macalister J. & Mirvahedi S.H. (redactors) (2017) *Family Language Policies in a Multilingual World. Opportunities, Challenges, and consequences.* London, UK: Routledge.
- MacNamara, W. (1969) How can one measure the extent of one person's bilingual proficiency? In L. G. Kelly (Ed.), *Description and Measurement of Bilingualism: An International Seminar*, University of Moncton, June 6–14, 1967. (80–98). Buffalo, NY: University of Toronto Press.
- Marcato, C. (2012) *Il plurilinguismo*, Laterza.
- Myria (2019) *La migration en chiffres et en droits 2019.* https://www.myria.be/files/Myria_RAMIG-FR_2019-AS-gecomprimeerd.pdf (Accessed on 27/01/2021).

- Okita, T. (2002) *Invisible work: Bilingualism, language choice and childrearing in inter-married families*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Pearson, B., Fernandez, S., Lewedeg, V., & Oller, D. (1997) The relation of input factors to lexical learning by bilingual infants. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 18(1), 41-58.
- Salsi, S. (2013) *Storia dell'immigrazione italiana in Belgio. Il caso del Limburgo*, Pendragon.
- Tannenbaum, M. (2005) Viewing family relations through a linguistic lens: Symbolic aspects of language maintenance in immigrant families. *The Journal of Family Communication* 5(3). 229–252.
- Velazquez, I. (2019) *Household Perspectives on Minority Language maintenance and loss. Language in the small spaces*. Bristol, UK: Blue Ridge Summit.
- Weinreich, Uriel. (1968) *Languages in Contact*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Wong Fillmore, L. (2000) Loss of family languages: Should educators be concerned? *Theory into Practice* 39(4), 203–210.

WEBOGRAPHY

- https://ambbruxelles.esteri.it/ambasciata_bruxelles/it/
- https://be.brussels/brussels?set_language=en
- <https://www.belgium.be/en>
- <https://bilingualfamily.eu/>
- <https://bilingualkidspot.com/2017/08/21/time-and-place-language-strategy-raising-bilingual-kids/>
- <http://comites-belgio.be/it/>
- https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics/it
- <https://www.esteri.it/mae/it/>
- <http://www.eurac.edu/en/pages/default.aspx>
- <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1948/02/19/047U1663/sg>
- <https://www.inca-cgil.be/>
- www.istat.it/it/archivio/migrazioni
- <https://mothertongues.ie/>
- www.myria.be/en/publications
- <https://plantinglanguages.eu/spip.php?lang=en>
- https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321589803_Successful_Family_Language_Policy_Parents_Children_and_Educators_in_Action
- statbel.fgov.be/en/themes/population/population-movement
- <https://www.talesathome.eu/>

ANNEX

LA FAMIGLIA

Genitore 1

Nazionalità:

Sesso:

Luogo di nascita:

Anno di nascita:

Residenza (città, Paese):

Se espatriato:

- quando ha lasciato il suo Paese di origine?
- ha mai vissuto in Italia? Se sì, specifichi per quanto tempo:
- ha pensato di tornare a vivere nel suo Paese di origine?

Lingue:

- Lingua madre:
- Altre lingue (La preghiamo di specificare se ne ha una conoscenza di base, intermedia o padronanza):

Stato civile:

Educazione:

- Scuola superiore
- Laurea
- Master
- Dottorato

In che lingua/e ha ricevuto l'educazione scolastica?

Professione:

Genitore 2

Nazionalità:

Sesso:

Luogo di nascita:

Anno di nascita:

Residenza (città, Paese):

Se espatriata:

- quando ha lasciato il suo Paese di origine?
- ha mai vissuto in Italia? Se sì, specifichi per quanto tempo:
- ha pensato di tornare a vivere nel suo Paese di origine?

Lingue:

- Lingua madre:
- Altre lingue (La preghiamo di specificare se ne ha una conoscenza di base, intermedia o padronanza):

Stato civile:

Educazione:

- Scuola superiore o
- Laurea o
- Master o
- Dottorato o

In che lingua/e ha ricevuto l'educazione scolastica?

Professione:

Figli (*)

Primo figlio

Nazionalità:

Luogo di nascita:

Sesso:

Età:

Lingue:

- Lingua madre:
- Altre lingue (vi preghiamo di specificare se ne avete una conoscenza di base, intermedia o padronanza):

Educazione: vi preghiamo di specificare se si tratta di una scuola del sistema di educazione belga, internazionale o altro):

Secondo figlio

Nazionalità:

Luogo di nascita:

Sesso:

Età:

Lingue:

- Lingua madre:
- Altre lingue (vi preghiamo di specificare se ne avete una conoscenza di base, intermedia o padronanza):

Educazione: vi preghiamo di specificare se si tratta di una scuola del sistema di educazione belga, internazionale o altro):

PARTE 1

1) Che lingua parlate a casa?

- Nella coppia:
- Con i vostri figli:

PADRE:

MADRE:

- In famiglia:

2) Avete pianificato quali lingue parlare con i vostri figli?

SI/NO

Se sì, vi preghiamo di specificare:

3) Avete cercato delle informazioni specifiche o fatto delle letture sul tema del bilinguismo come

- Libri
- Articoli
- Documentari
- Siti internet
- Altro (vi preghiamo di specificare)?

4) Avete chiesto consiglio a qualcuno (amici, famiglia, professionisti ecc.)?

SI/NO

Se sì, vi preghiamo di specificare:

5) Che cosa pensate del bilinguismo dei vostri figli?

- Aspetti positivi:
- Aspetti negativi:

6) Riterreste utile avere delle sessioni informative sul tema del bilinguismo per poter fare delle scelte il più possibile consapevoli sul tema dell'educazione linguistica dei vostri figli?

SI/NO

7) Conoscete delle istituzioni pubbliche o private che si occupino di dare un supporto ai genitori di figli bilingui?

SI/NO

Se sì, vi preghiamo di specificare:

PARTE 2

1) I vostri figli in che lingua/e hanno ricevuto l'educazione scolastica?

2) I vostri figli partecipano ad attività scolastiche in italiano?

SI/NO

Se sì, vi preghiamo di specificare se le attività fanno parte del curriculum scolastico o se sono extra-curricolari:

3) Quando avete scelto la scuola dei vostri figli, quali di questi elementi hanno influenzato di più le vostre scelte (più risposte sono possibili):

- Lingue offerte nel curriculum scolastico
- Eccellenza e prestigio della scuola
- Scuola pubblica/ privata
- Prossimità da casa vostra
- Altro (vi preghiamo di specificare):

PARTE 3

1) Avete dei legami forti con l'Italia (come famiglia, amici ecc.)?

SI/NO

Se sì, vi preghiamo di specificare:

2) Mantenete tradizioni italiane (come festività, celebrazioni, cibi, eventi sportivi ecc.)?

SI/NO

Se sì, vi preghiamo di specificare:

3) Pensate che i vostri figli abbiano un'identità culturale italiana?

SI/NO

Se sì, vi preghiamo di specificare

(* Se avete più di due figli, vi preghiamo di aggiungere un altro profilo.

| |
|--------------------------------------|
| English version of the questionnaire |
|--------------------------------------|

FAMILY SITUATION

Parent 1

Nationality:

Birthplace:

Domicile (City, Country):

If expatriated:

- When did you leave your home country?
- Have you lived in Italy? If so, please state for how long:
- Are you planning to go back to your home country?

Languages:

- Mother tongue:
- Other languages (please specify if basic, intermediate, or proficient user):

Civil status:

Education: High School University Post-Graduate Degree

In what language/ languages did you receive a school education?

Profession:

Parent 2

Nationality:

Birthplace:

Domicile (Address, City, Country):

If expatriated:

- When did you leave your home country?
- Have you lived in Italy? If so, please, state for how long.
- Are you planning to go back to your home country?

Languages:

- Mother tongue:
- Other languages (please, specify if basic, intermediate, proficient user):

Civil status:

Education: High School University Post-Graduate Degree

In what language/ languages did you receive a school education?

Profession:

Children (*)

First child

Nationality:

Birthplace:

Gender:

Age:

Languages:

- Mother tongue:
- Other languages (please, specify if basic, intermediate, or proficient user):

Education (please, specify if the school is within the Belgian, International or Other system):

Second child

Nationality:

Birthplace:

Gender:

Age:

Languages:

- Mother tongue:
- Other languages (please, specify if basic, intermediate, proficient user):

Education (please, specify if the school is within the Belgian, International or Other system):

(If you have more than 2 children, please fill in their profile in the email in which you return your questionnaire.*

PART 1

1) What language do you speak at home?

- Between parents:
- Individually with your children:

FATHER:

MOTHER:

- In the family as a whole:

2) Have you planned which languages to speak with your children?

YES/NO

If yes, please specify:

3) Have you looked for specific information or done any reading on the subject of bilingualism, such as:

- Books
- Articles
- Documentaries
- Internet sites
- Other (please specify)?

4) Have you asked anyone (friends, family, professionals, etc.) for advice?

YES/NO

If yes, please specify:

5) What do you think about your children's bilingualism?

- Positive aspects:
- Negative aspects:

6) Would you find it useful to have information sessions on the topic of bilingualism in order to be able to make informed choices about your children's language education?

YES/NO

7) Do you know of any public or private institutions that provide support to parents of bilingual children?

YES/NO

If yes, please specify:

PART 2

1) In which language(s) did your children receive their school education?

2) Do your children participate in school activities in Italian?

YES/NO

If yes, please specify whether the activities are part of the school curriculum or extra-curricular:

3) When you chose your children's school, which of these elements influenced your choices most (multiple answers are possible):

- Languages offered in the school curriculum
- School excellence and prestige
- Public/private school
- Nearness to your home
- Other (please specify):

PART 3

1) Do you have strong ties with Italy (such as family, friends, etc.)?

YES/NO

If yes, please specify:

2) Do you keep up Italian traditions (such as festivities, celebrations, food, sporting events etc.)?

YES/NO

If yes, please specify:

3) Do you think your children have an Italian cultural identity?

YES/NO

If yes, please specify