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The Role of L2 Self-Assessment in Language Choice Behaviour: Immigrant Shift to Dutch in Flanders and the Netherlands

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Introduction

In 1991, Koen Jaspaert and Sjaak Kroon carried out a sociolinguistic investigation into language shift and language loss with Turkish and Italian immigrants in the Netherlands and in Flanders. They concluded that two of the most important (intermediary) determining factors for language choice and language shift are, first, the so-called 'linguistic market' of intra-group communication, that is the market in which communication within the immigrant group is organized, and, second, anticipation by the immigrants of their second language proficiency. These intermediary factors were for their part being determined by community characteristics and generation, respectively.

In 1996, a follow-up research project was started, mainly in order to study in depth the role of self-assessment of L2 proficiency and the development of this self-assessment. The concept 'self-assessment' has been derived from the notion 'anticipation' as used by Jaspaert and Kroon (1991). 'Self-assessment of language proficiency' expresses the 'confidence' people have in their language proficiency. A hundred Italians in Flanders and the same number of Turks in the Netherlands were extensively interviewed and tested. Both groups belong in their respective countries/regions of immigration to the largest ethnic minority groups. For a description of the Italian community in Flanders (and Eisden), and the Turkish community in the Netherlands (and Eindhoven), we refer to reviews of the literature in Aubert (1985), Bakker (1993) or Biasi (1996) for Italians, and Klatter-Folmer (1996) for Turks.

Theoretical framework

Undoubtedly, in the last decades, the most influential theory in the field of language shift and language loss research has been the Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory of Howard Giles and his colleagues (Giles, Bourhis and Taylor, 1977; Bourhis, Giles and Rosenthal, 1981). Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977) developed a theoretical framework exploring the internal relationships between language, ethnicity and inter-group behaviour. They

tried to link three theories, arguing that social — and also ethnic — categorizing is a vital process in attitude building and in influencing people's behaviour towards others. Language, and more specifically speech style, is a powerful instrument in ethnic categorizing. However, language variety as part of ethnic identity is only relevant in a situation of comparison with other ethnic groups. Also, if people want to increase the linguistic distinction between themselves and other groups, group members have to be aware of the cognitive alternatives that are available, such as language assimilation, re-definition of negatively perceived language characteristics, creation of new language dimensions, and direct competition with the dominant ethnolinguistic group.

The Core Values Theory, developed by Jerzy Smolicz (1981) in the early eighties, is generally accepted as an instrument to understand processes of maintenance, shift and loss of minority languages in ethnically multiform communities. Culture and cultural diversity are rather complex and somewhat intangible notions that are interpreted in many different ways by ethnic and cultural groups themselves. With respect to cultural values, such as ethno-specific language, religion, family structure, and political organization, Smolicz adopts the view that every ethnic group has a number of values that are of fundamental importance for its continued viability and integrity; and that these can be considered the pivots or, as he calls them, 'core values' around which the whole social and identificational system of the group is organized. The relative importance of different core values may vary considerably across different ethno-cultural groups.

With respect to language, Smolicz finds that ethnic groups do indeed differ in the degree to which they emphasize language as one of their core values. Starting from humanist sociology, Smolicz assumes that a group's culture is being conceptualized in terms of shared views or group systems of cultural values, of which the linguistic system is a major one. From these group systems individual group members build their own personal cultural systems.

Whereas Smolicz adopts a psychological/attitudinal perspective and Giles et al. both a psychological/attitudinal and a sociological view, Jaspaert and Kroon (1991) largely follow in their theoretical point of departure the sociological line of reasoning of Pierre Bourdieu (1982, 1991). Like Bourdieu, they start from the belief that when groups, or individual group members, with a different language or language variety come into contact with each other, new norms emerge (see also Bartch, 1987). Mostly, the group that has the greatest prestige and status and is the most dominant will impose its own language norm. Language choice and language shift are defined as a change in preference by members of an ethnic minority group to gradually accept an existing language norm at inter-ethnic level as legitimate in *intra-ethnic* group contacts. By analogy with an economic market where products have a price that is being determined by economic patterns and power relations, linguistic products also have a symbolic price. Two linguistic markets are distinguished: linguistic market 1, LM1, where

members of the majority group interact with members of the minority group, and LM2 which refers to contacts within the ethnic group. Bourdieu also argues that the different linguistic markets which exist in one political and economic entity show a tendency towards unification. The consequence of such unification is that the norms which hold for LM1 will be adopted for LM2. Of course members of an ethnic minority group will not adopt new norms automatically. In line with Bourdieu's theory on linguistic markets they will assess whether the product at their disposal — the language of the dominant group — is adequate to achieve their goals. They will opt for the use of the L2 at intra-group level, when they assess that they can realize social or economic profit at that level and when, in anticipation of the acceptability of their linguistic products, they assess their proficiency in that language to be sufficient for communication at intra-group level. Such language choice behaviour leads to language shift. Conversely, if an individual thinks their L2 proficiency is too low to function in LM1, and asssesses that they will sustain social or economic loss, they will not adapt to the norm that is valid on that market. Nor will they opt for the use of the L2 in their own ethnic market, and there will be little or no question of language shift.

Research Design

The aim of the research project described is to expand the model on social determination of language shift. In order to do this, we have studied the effects on language choice and processes of language shift of the confidence which ethnic minority group members have in their ability to comply with the linguistic demands of the dominant majority culture (measured by their self-assessment of language proficiency Dutch). To this end, we have investigated these factors, as well as the interaction between these and other determining factors.

The first research question is: to what extent a person's self-assessment of their language proficiency in Dutch determines their language choice behaviour with members of the own ethnic group. As an hypothesis it is represented in figure 1 by the solid line on the right. The dependent variable 'language choice behaviour at intra-group level' will be determined by the intermediate concept 'self-assessment of L2 competence'. In other words, language choice behaviour at intra-group level will be determined by ethnic minority group members' self-assessment of their language proficiency in the dominant language, rather than by the degree to which members of the ethnic minority group identify with their own ethnic group (represented by the dashed line on the right in figure 1).

The second question is: which factors play a role in the development of the informant's self-assessment of their proficiency in Dutch? The solid line on the left of figure 1 represents our hypothesis on this question: the self-assessment of an individual's proficiency in Dutch will be determined by a cluster of factors which has been labeled the 'sociological profile'. That same cluster will determine to a lesser degree a person's identification with

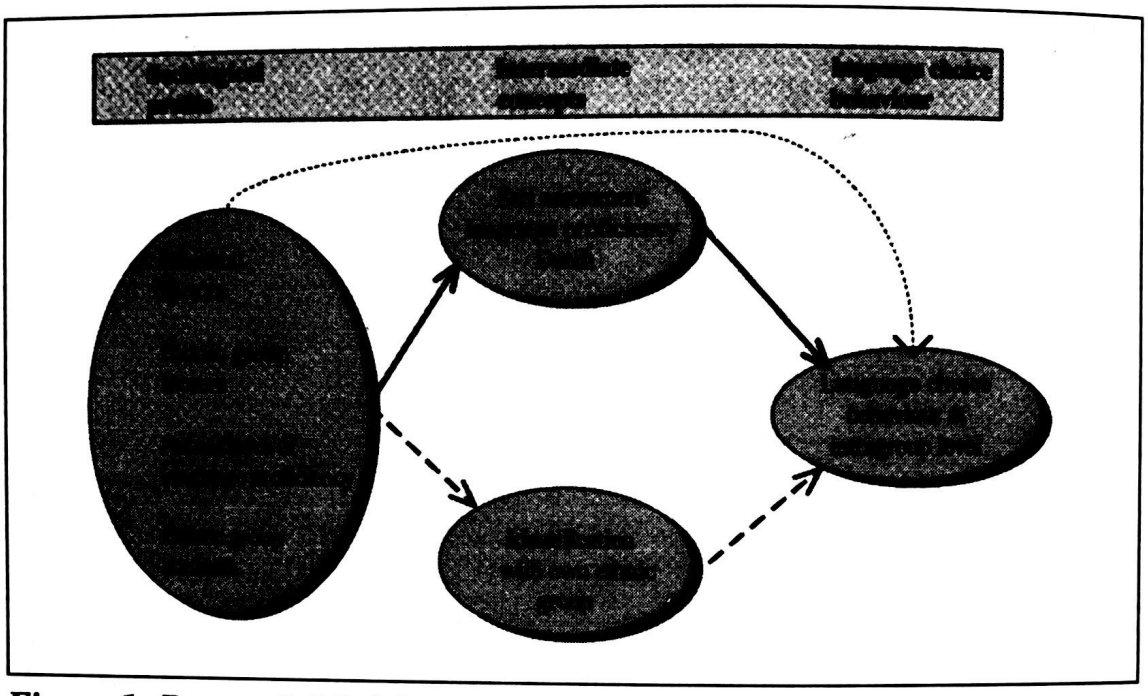

Figure 1: Research Model

their own ethnic group (the dashed line on the left). The dotted line indicates the theoretical possibility that language choice behaviour can be determined directly by the independent socio-cultural variables.

In order to test the two hypotheses outlined above, 100 Italian adults (aged 16 and above) in Flanders, and 100 Turkish adults in the Netherlands were interviewed and tested extensively. The Italian informants belonged to the second (N=52) and the third (N=48) generation. The Turkish sample covered three generations: 20 first generation, 40 second generation and 40 third generation adults.

The method adopted involved a quantifiable questionnaire and three language proficiency tests. The questionnaire formed the basis for an interview with the informants and focused on 'personal factors' and 'ethnic group contacts', as well as the intermediary concepts 'self-assessment of language proficiency in Dutch', 'identification with the own ethnic group', and the dependent variable 'language choice behaviour'. Actual language proficiency in Dutch was measured by three language proficiency tests: a listening comprehension test, a grammar test, and an editing test. For the editing test the following procedure was followed: in a newspaper article, comprising 200 words, 40 words at random selected from another article were added in a random order. The informants had to delete the unnecessary words from the first article. Both interview and tests were administered in the informants' home by an interviewer from their own ethnic group.

Results

The main objective of this research project was to find out to what extent correlations between primary social factors and language choice behaviour

at intragroup level could be explained via a theoretical intermediary concept that starts from the economic and symbolic attraction of the dominant majority group.

The data concerning the primary social factors and intermediary concepts has been extensively discussed in Klatter-Folmer and Van Avermaet (1997). The emphasis in this paper is on testing the hypothetical model presented above. In the next section, some interesting observations based on the language choice data are provided, revealing that the two ethnic groups are situated at different stages of the shift process. The selection and reduction of variables, and the development of measures are discussed in the following section, and, finally, a path-analytical model is presented.

Language choice data

In the questionnaire, domain related questions were used to establish language choice behaviour. The domains 'administration/services', 'work', 'mosque/church', 'shops', 'sportsclubs', 'friends', 'community centres/ clubs', 'neighbours' and 'family' were distinguished. Within the 'family' domain, the situations 'communication with grandparents', 'with parents', 'partner', 'children' and 'siblings' were distinguished. 64% (mean % for all domains) of the Italian informants indicated they had Dutch as their usual language. Communication with children' (85%) (within the 'family' domain) and 'administration/services' (83%) turned out to be most favourable to the use of Dutch. Also within the domain 'family', 'communication with partner' (75%) and 'communication with siblings' (77%) were sensitive to the use of Dutch. The situation 'communication with parents' (27%), on the other hand, was most resistant to the use of Dutch. Another resistant domain was 'neighbours' (47%).

With respect to the Turkish data, overall only 16% of the informants used Dutch as their usual language. While the Italian data indicates a substantial 'Dutchification', the Turkish data showed hardly any shift to the use of Dutch at intragroup level. The domains that seemed most favourable to the use of Dutch were 'work' (43%), 'administration/services' (43%) and 'shops' (31%), The more resistant domains/situations were 'mosque/church' (0%), 'communication with partner' (0%), 'communication with parents' (2%), and 'communication with children' (3%).

However, irrespective of the group and of whether a group was at the end or at the beginning of a shift process, the domains/situations appeared to be organized from solidarity to prestige. This is in line with other research (see Geerts, Hellemans and Jaspaert, 1985). The domains/situations 'communication with grandparents', 'communication with parents', 'neighbours' and 'community centres/clubs', that yield little symbolic gain when Dutch is used, seemed to be more resistant to the use of that language. On the other hand, those domains ('sports clubs', 'shops', 'work' and 'administration/services') that yield some or a great deal of symbolic gain when Dutch is used, seemed to be most favourable to the use of the language of the dominant majority. The domains/situations 'friends' and 'commun-

ication with siblings' deviated a little from this pattern. For the domains/ situations 'church/mosque', 'communication with partner', and 'communication with children' the deviation was larger. In the early phase of a language shift process these domains tend to be very resistant — as illustrated by the Turkish data — whereas when the shift process has almost reached a 'Dutchification' phase these domains seemed to become much more favourable to the use of Dutch — as illustrated by the Italian data.

One possible explanation can be found in the social position and the social opportunities of the groups involved, which may be better for Italians than for Turks. The situation 'communication with children' supports this line of reasoning. The shift for this situation was rather low for the Turkish data, perhaps because Turkish parents perceive their social position as rather weak, and assume that the use of Turkish with their children will be better for their future, since their confidence in their Turkish proficiency was higher than their confidence in their Dutch proficiency. An additional factor may be their presumption that Dutch will be taught at school. They may therefore prefer to use Turkish in the home context. These parents wanted their children to learn the mother tongue as well as Dutch, and the option of remigration was still very much alive (Klatter-Folmer 1996). For the Italian data, however, the shift in this domain was very high, perhaps because Italian parents perceived their position in society as rather good, and assumed that the use of the majority language in communication with their children was better for their educational and professional future.

Italians and Turks can be situated in a different stage of the shift process. On the basis of these findings one might conclude that the two groups should be discussed separately. However, as language choice behaviour in the first place has been considered as a socially determined and universal rather than an ethnically determined process, it has been decided to combine the two groups, and to develop measures and a path analytical model on the basis of the whole data set.

Selection of variables

In order to draw a clear picture of the most important social factors that influence language shift, as many social variables as possible were included in the questionnaire. As a first step in the analyses, all the independent variables (i.e.social factors) were submitted to a regression analysis with language choice behaviour as dependent variable. Unfortunately, but as expected, there were too many independent variables that inter-correlated. So, interpretation of the direction of the correlations became very difficult, as well as the selection of variables for a path analytical model. Therefore, a reduction of the data was necessary.

The most obvious statistical procedure to solve this problem is factor-analysis (obviously, only numerical variables were included in this analysis). None of the nominal variables seemed to explain variance in the dependent variable (ANOVA, difference of means). The independent variables are listed in table 1.

– generation	– informant's level of education in home country
– age	– informant's level of education in host country
– length of stay informant	– level of education of father
– length of stay father	– level of education of mother
– length of stay mother	– contact with family members belonging to majority group
– number of children	– written contact (letters) with family in home country
– profession father	– oral contact (calls) with family in home country
– profession mother	– actual level of language proficiency (scores on edit test)
– religious activity	– ethnic group contacts (scores on domain related contact questions)

Table 1: List of independent variables selected for the first factor analysis

A first factor analysis was run in order to gauge how the variables clustered. This information was then used for further variable reduction. This first factor-analysis with the 18 variables (number of cases = 198) yielded seven factors (eigenvalue > 1) with a cumulative explained variance of 72% (see table 2).

However, as expected, the factors were very difficult to interpret (see table 3).

In order to solve this problem, a second factor analysis was run excluding some of the variables. The rationale for eliminating some of the variables can be found above in figure 1. The independent socio-cultural variables were grouped in the following clusters: 'personal factors', 'actual level of proficiency' and 'ethnic group contacts'. The cluster 'ethnic group factors' will not be discussed here, for the variables/items of this cluster were not included in the questionnaire and have a more qualitative character. As the three remaining clusters differ from each other, it was decided not to include them all in one factor analysis. The clusters 'actual level of language proficiency' consisted of one simple variable: the score on the edit test. The cluster 'ethnic group contacts' consisted of four variables: contact with family members belonging to the majority group; written contact with family members in the home country; oral contact (calls) with family members in the home country and domain related group contacts. The variables of these clusters were deleted from the original list (see table 1). They were used at a later stage of the analyses (see table 7). So, due to interpretation problems of the first factor analysis, a second factor analysis was run with only the cluster 'personal factors'. Within this cluster 13 variables could be distinguished. The variables 'religious activity' and 'number of children' seemed not to be applicable to many of the subjects. So finally, only 11 variables remained (see table 4).

	initial eigenvalues		
component	*total*	*% of variance*	*cumulative %*
1	4,262	23,675	23,675
2	2,172	12,065	35,741
3	1,665	9,253	44,993
4	1,339	7,436	52.430
5	1,294	7,189	59,618
6	1,166	6,476	66,094
7	1,045	5,808	71,902
8	,907	5,040	76,942
9	,720	4,002	80,944
10	,707	3,928	84,872
11	,559	3,108	87,980
12	,538	2,988	90,968
13	,444	2,466	93,434
14	,427	2,371	95,805
15	,350	1,942	97,747
16	,219	1,216	98,963
17	,131	,729	99,692
18	,055	,308	100,000

Table 2: First factor analysis: initial eigenvalues and total variance explained

A new factor analysis with these variables (number of cases = 198) yielded four clearly definable factors (eigenvalue > 1) with a cumulative explained variance of 76% (see tables 5 and 6).

The first factor can be defined as 'social historical and educational context'. The first part refers to the length of stay of the parents. This refers to more than just the period they have lived in the host country. It represents the social historical context of the migration: the moment of migration, reasons for migration, social cultural and migration policy in the host country. All this interacts and changes over time as a result of social economic and political changes. The second part is characterized by the educational background of the informant. Educational opportunities and success also depend a great deal on the political and policy situation in the host country.

The second factor is distinguished by generation, age and length of stay of the informant. This factor has been defined as 'generation'. The variable 'generation' has a high loading on factor 1 as well (see table 6). This is not surprising, as the social background and the educational situation

	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*
– generation	-,617	,332	,378	,203	-,052	,186	-,032
– age	-,943	,049	,023	,034	,031	,122	,031
– length of stay informant	,907	,157	,065	,118	-,018	-,098	-,036
– length of stay father	,610	,296	,222	,514	-,046	-,002	,019
– length of stay mother	,571	,355	,121	,576	-,035	,060	,061
– number of children	,841	-,126	-,059	-,071	-,181	-,041	-,019
– profession father	-,013	-,051	-,036	,064	,067	,904	,061
– profession mother	-,040	-,048	,745	,127	,072	,028	-,178
– religious activity	,095	,190	,084	-,776	-,118	,050	-,105
– informant's level of education in home country	,092	-,327	,536	-,279	-,033	-,156	,141
– informant's level of education in host country	-,211	,069	,165	-,076	,766	-,086	-,026
– level of education of father	-,444	,094	,168	-,176	-,023	,656	-,108
– level of education of mother	-,226	,386	,650	-,076	,110	,162	-,008
– contact with family members belonging to majority group	,141	,732	,114	,009	-,095	,013	,065
– written contact (letters) with family in home country	,005	-,210	,020	,208	-,069	-,095	,782
– oral contact (calls) with family in home country	-,052	,208	-,145	-,070	,125	,099	,800
– actual level of language proficiency (scores on edittest)	,078	-,036	-,009	,202	,836	,167	,092
– ethnic group contacts (scores on domain related contact questions)	-,209	,594	-,163	-,142	,336	-,085	-,111

Table 3: First factor analysis: rotated component matrix factors

of ethnic minority group members may differ from one generation to another. However, the highest loading for a variable on a factor has been used as criterion here. In addition it is very straightforward to label the factor including the variables 'age', 'length of stay of the informant' and

– generation	– age
– profession of mother	– level of education of mother
– profession of father	– level of education of father
– length of stay informant	
– length of stay of father	– length of stay of mother
– informant's level of education in host country	
– informant's level of education in home country	

Table 4: List of independent variables selected for the second factor analysis

	initial eigenvalues		
component	*total*	*% of variance*	*cumulative %*
1	3,810	34,636	34,636
2	2,275	20,682	55,318
3	1,165	10,589	65,907
4	1,121	10,194	76,101
5	,733	6,668	82,768
6	,551	5,007	87,775
7	,503	4,575	92,350
8	,441	4,013	96,363
9	,219	1,991	98,354
10	,097	,886	99,240
11	,084	,760	100,000

Table 5: Second factor analysis: initial eigenvalues and total variance explained

'generation' as 'generation'. Finally, the third and fourth factor can be defined as the 'maternal' and 'paternal social background'. These are represented by their profession and their educational level.

In addition to the four factors discussed in the previous section, several other independent variables (see table 7) were selected for the development of the path-analytical model. The selection is based on the other clusters presented in figure 1: 'actual level of proficiency' and 'ethnic group contacts'. For the cluster 'actual level of language proficiency Dutch', the data of the editing test were used. Most of the variation was found in this variable and it was the most reliable of the three (Cronbach's alpha was .95). For the cluster 'ethnic group contacts' two measures were developed: firstly, a functional domain related frequency measure which is called 'domain

	factors			
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*
generation	,570	,639	,265	,105
profession mother	-,030	-,028	,890	-,052
profession father	-,002	-,041	-,057	,923
age	,298	,903	,033	,054
length of stay mother	,930	-,098	,108	,036
length of stay father	,905	-,056	,166	,005
length of stay informant	,636	-,866	,010	-,122
education in home country	,597	-,193	,209	,035
education in host country	,591	,460	,154	-,049
education mother	,296	,372	,606	,193
education father	-,013	,484	,185	,663

Table 6: Second factor analysis: rotated component matrix

SOCIAL PRIMARY VARIABLES

1 Social historical and educational context (factor)
2 Generation (factor)
3 Maternal social background (factor)
4 Paternal social background (factor)
5 Actual level of language proficiency Dutch (simple variable)
6 Domain related group contacts (compound variable)
7 Contact with home country (compound variable)

INTERMEDIARY CONCEPTS

8 Self-assessment language proficiency of Dutch (compound variable)
9 Self-assessment language proficiency of mother tongue (compound variable)

LANGUAGE CHOICE BEHAVIOUR

10 Language choice behaviour at intragroup level (compound variable)

Table 7: Factors and measures used in the development of a path-analytical model

related group contacts', and secondly, a 'contact with home country' measure. The first measure was obtained through the addition of appropriate questions to the questionnaire. The second measure was obtained through the addition of questions concerning written and oral contacts with the home country.

At the intermediate level two concepts were distinguished: 'self-assessment language proficiency of Dutch' and 'identification with own ethnic group' (see figure 1). However, the 'identification with own ethnic group' concept is not discussed in this article. The focus is on the role of the 'self-assessment' concept. This concept was measured both in a direct and indirect way. As those two ways of measuring correlated fairly highly, the measures based on the indirect questions were used . A variable that was not introduced in the hypothetical model (see figure 1) was 'self-assessment language proficiency of the mother tongue'. However, for reasons of curiosity the researchers operationalized this variable in the questionnaire. This variable was operationalized only directly. For both variables one measure was developed.

As for the dependent variable an overall measure for the domain related questions on 'language choice behaviour' was worked out.

In table 7 an overview of the variables, the factors and measures that were selected for the development of a path-analytical model is presented.

The construction of a path-analytical model

Only four of the seven independent variables correlated significantly with the dependent variable. They were included in the path-analytical model (see figure 2). Regression analysis was used to calculate the path coefficients. The obtained path coefficients were used to construct a path analytical model to test our hypotheses. This path-analysis was based on linear regression. The model which will be presented, will be discussed in two steps. First, we take a closer look at a model in which the direct influence of the independent variables on the dependent one is presented (see figure 2). And secondly, the intermediary concepts are introduced in order to examine the amount of variance of the independent variables that can be explained indirectly via these concepts (see figure 3).

Not all of the variables were the result of a factor analysis (see previous section and table 7). This explains the inter-correlation that can be observed (see figure 2). This interaction is represented by the correlation coefficients: .20 for 'actual level of language proficiency Dutch' and 'social historical and educational context'; .27 for 'social historical and educational context' and 'domain related group contacts'. Therefore, partial correlation coefficients were calculated for three of the independent variables ('actual level of language proficiency Dutch'; 'social historical and educational context' and 'domain related group contacts'). The figure near the arrow of the fourth variable 'maternal social background' is a simple correlation coefficient. The figure near the arrow that does not correspond to a variable represents the non-explained variance (the error term).

The independent variables explain 45% of the variance in the 'language choice behaviour' variable (1- error^2). The factors and variables that seem to correlate with the dependent variable correspond very well with the predictions in our second hypothesis. As for the 'personal factors' cluster (see figure 1) the factors 'social historical and educational context' and

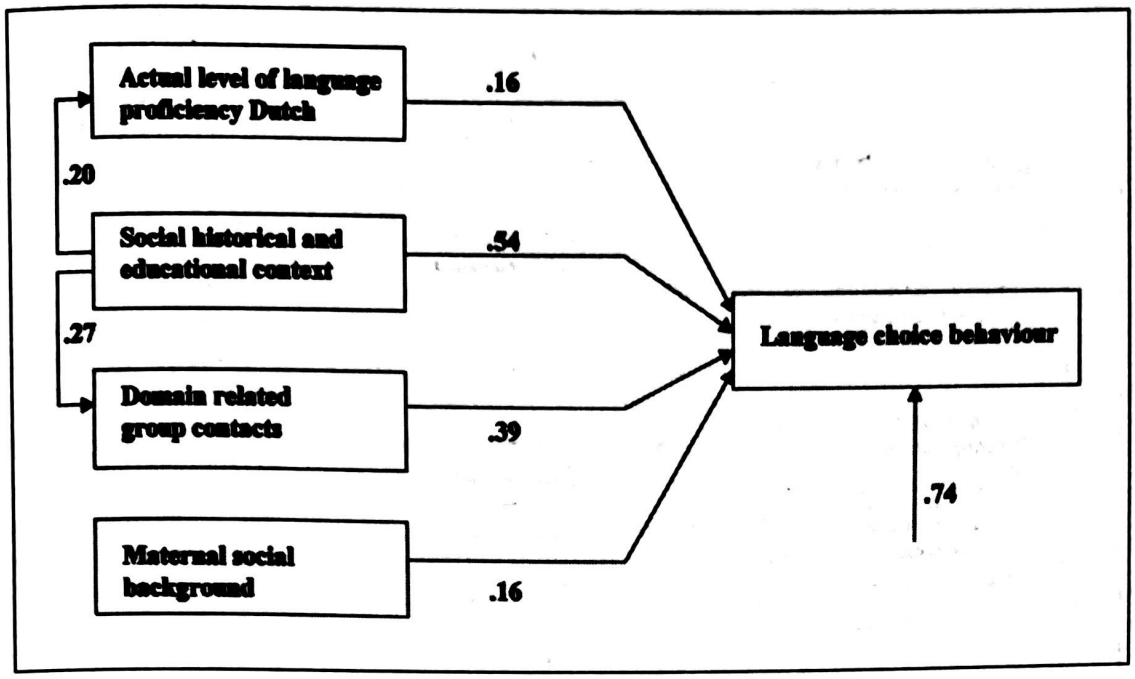

Figure 2: Path-analytical model without intermediary concepts

'maternal social background' can be distinguished (see table 7). The clusters 'actual level of language proficiency Dutch' and 'ethnic group contacts' — the latter through the measure 'domain related group contacts' — also explain some of the variance in language choice. The informant's social historical and educational background and the kind of group contacts they have, seem to contribute most to a changing language choice behaviour. The variable that most surprisingly does not correlate significantly with choice is 'generation'. It has already been argued that this is partly represented in the 'social historical and educational context' factor (see discussion on second factor analysis in the previous section). On this assumption 'generation' is not seen as a variable in itself that predicts language choice behaviour, but as part of the social historical and social structural context in which the minority and majority groups function. Other factors that have no correlation with choice are 'paternal social background' and 'contacts with the home country'.

By introducing the intermediary concepts 'self-assessment of L2 competence' and 'self-assessment of L1 competence' (see figure 3) the explained variance of the choice variable rises to 56%. So this concept contributes 11% to the explained variance. This is fairly high in comparison with Jaspaert and Kroon (1991). The introduction of the 'anticipation' concept (comparable to our 'self-assessment concept) and the 'importance of LM2' concept in their model gave a rise of 6% explained variance. Since we consider these concepts simply as intermediary theoretical constructs, we could argue — in line with Jaspaert and Kroon (1991) — that they function as a catalyst for the primary social factors and that the 11% can be seen as additional indirect effects of primary factors that were not included

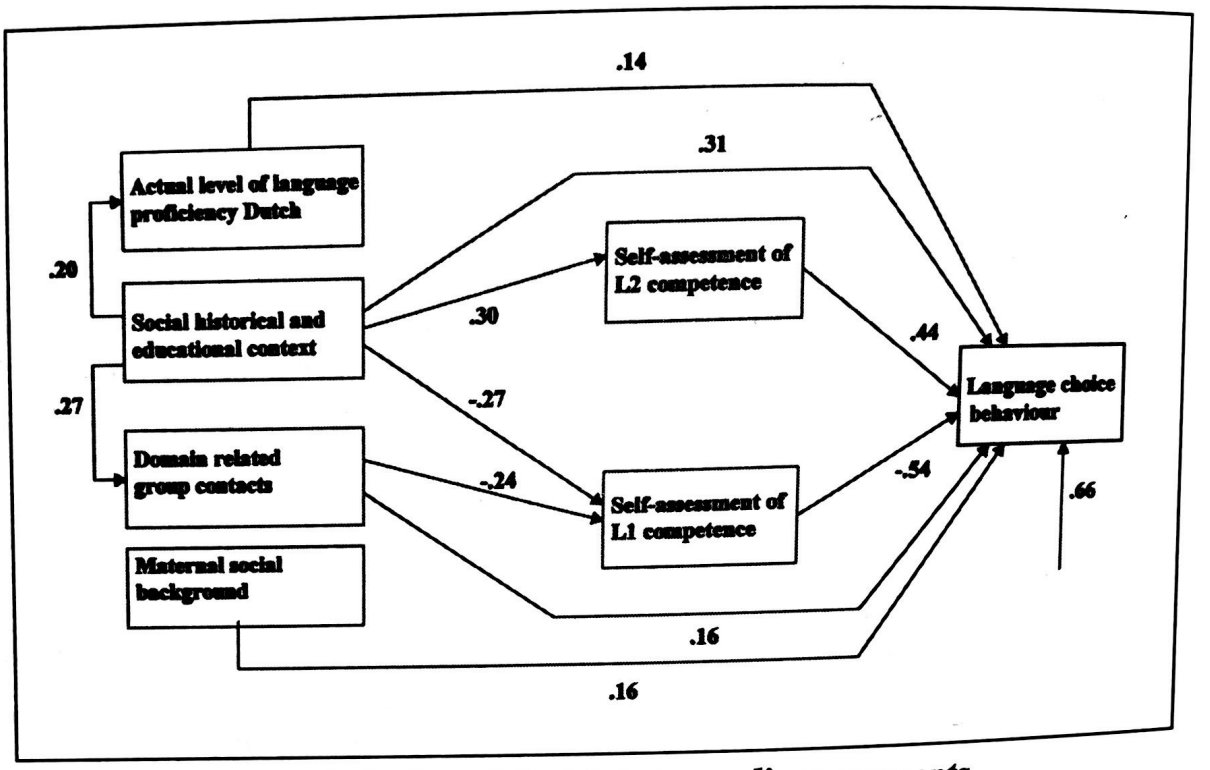

Figure 3: Path-analytical model with intermediary concepts

in the research design (JaspaertandKroon, 1991). It is interesting to see that not only the assessment of one's own proficiency in the dominant language is a relevant contributing concept (as predicted), but also the self-assessment of mother tongue proficiency plays an important part. When we compare the two models, we see that — due to the introduction of the intermediary concepts — 60% of the original 45% explained variance by the primary social factors can be explained as indirect effects. So 40% of the explained variance is still direct. At this point, we have to take into consideration that we only included one theoretical construct in the second model: anticipation of the acceptability of products in the dominant language, operationalized through 'self-assessment of language competence'. If we had introduced also the construct 'importance of LM2', as Jaspaert and Kroon (1991) did, or 'structure of LM1', the percentage of variance that could be explained indirectly would probably have been even higher. The variables 'social historical and educational context' and 'domain related group contacts' are fully responsible for the indirect effect (via the intermediate concepts) of the primary social factors on language choice.

Conclusion

The first hypothesis put forward was supported to a large extent by the analyzed data. The assumption that the role of the dominant majority is determinant for language choice behaviour is supported. An individual's language choice behaviour seems to be determined by the attraction of the dominant majority. When an individual assesses their proficiency in the

dominant language as sufficient to communicate in LM1, they will opt for the use of that language in LM2. A high self-assessment of their mother tongue, on the contrary, in connection with fewer contacts in LM1 will lead to less shift in LM2.

The second hypothesis, however, is only partly supported by the data. Only a few social factors explain the concept 'self-assessment'. The factors that contribute most to a changing language choice behaviour are 'social historical background and educational context' and 'ethnic group contacts'. The effect of the first factor operates — apart from its direct effect — via the two intermediary concepts. So, informants whose parents have a longer migration history and who themselves have a rather high level of education tend to assess their L2 proficiency as high and their L1 proficiency as low. The second factor only operates via the concept 'self-assessment of L1 competence'. So, informants whose contacts are predominantly with members of the dominant majority group tend to assess their L1 proficiency as low, while those who have more contacts with members of their own ethnic group tend to assess their L1 proficiency as high.

To conclude, the historical context (migration history of the parents) and the educational background of the informants, together with the social networks in which the informants function seem to partly explain in an indirect way — i.e. through the attraction of the dominant majority group, and the anticipation on the acceptability of linguistic products in LM1 — the variation in language choice behaviour. The observation that a variable such as 'actual level of language proficiency Dutch' seems to have only direct effects, together with the absence of some other social variables, remain the subject for further research. However, on the basis of this analysis we can claim that, from the perspective of unifying linguistic markets, when people think that their proficiency is sufficient to communicate at an interethnic level, and when they think that by using Dutch they can realize symbolic or economic profit, they will shift gradually towards the use of Dutch even within their own ethnic group.

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