

Introduction

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This is the second issue that the General Editor of this journal has devoted to the various research endeavors on the sociology of language in Belgium. The first, which appeared in 1978, was essentially the product of Belgian authors and primarily alluded to the efforts of Belgian politicians in establishing the linguistic communities and economic regions. Since then, these political institutions have come into being. The only point of consensus to emerge from this experience is that there is now a certain amount of confusion. Hence, this is a particularly opportune time to solicit analyses from foreign experts who are well acquainted with Belgium: two Canadians (Aunger and Covell), two North Americans (Murphy and Sonntag), and one Portuguese (Marques Balsa). This opportuneness is accentuated by the difficulties that seem to pervade scholarly exchanges between social science researchers from the different linguistic communities in Belgium, as noted by the political scientist, Xavier Mabile (1990: 218).

In addition to the contributions of foreign experts, at the request of the General Editor, we have also included reviews of two recent Belgian publications appearing in a language other than English.

It has already been 20 years since Fishman (1972: 436) put forth the following hypothetical case, which still provides the rationalization for the type of research presented in this current issue:

A Belgian government functionary arrives home after stopping off at his club for a drink. He generally speaks standard French in his office, standard Dutch at his club and a distinct local variant of Flemish at home ... Nevertheless, it is not difficult to find occasions at the office in which he speaks or is spoken to in one or another variety of Flemish. There are also occasions at the club when he speaks or is addressed in French; finally, there are occasions at home when he communicates in standard Dutch or even in French.

This example might just as well be taken from the private sector. In the