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The Alsatian Dialect and Identity in Early Adulthood

A Sociolinguistic Survey

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MA Programme Euroculture Declaration

I, Judith Eßer hereby declare that this thesis, entitled “The Alsatian Dialect and Identity in Early Adulthood. A Sociolinguistic Survey”, submitted as partial requirement for the MA Programme Euroculture, is my own original work and expressed in my own words. Any use made within this text of works of other authors in any form (e.g. ideas, figures, texts, tables, etc.) are properly acknowledged in the text as well as in the bibliography.

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Acknowledgements

With a heavy heart, I realised that my chapter as a student ends with the conclusion of this Master's thesis – perhaps only for the time being, perhaps forever. Yet, something new and exciting begins – I am ready!

My warmest gratitude goes to all my friends, professors and mentors who have accompanied me on this path, and who have made my time in Strasbourg, Olomouc and Karlsruhe so special. Above all, of course, thank you to my family, Mama, for your time and great help during the writing process of this thesis, Papa and Henning, for your support and advice, and for giving me the opportunity to do this Master's programme. Thanks especially to Vincent, for your patience, your encouragement and for making me laugh every day.

All of you have brought me to where I am today.

Thank you.

Judith

Abstract

The Alsatian dialect is diminishing from generation to generation. Whether this leads to loss of language, loss of identity, and feeling of belonging of young adults are the main focuses of this thesis. This research deals with the link between language and identity, and the application of this concept to the Alsatian dialect and region in France. Because of its historical, geopolitical, and linguistic developments, Alsace is a compelling case to analyse the link between language and identity. The author conducted a sociolinguistic survey targeting 18 to 25 years old adults, living in Alsace, questioning them about their knowledge of Alsatian and specifically chosen Alsatian words and expressions, along with their feeling of belonging to the region and identity. The results of the questionnaire, which received 450 replies, will be examined, and a connection to the linguistic situation in Alsace, will be drawn. A profound literature review including the essential works of Edwards, on the relationship between language and identity, Ladin, Weckmann, Trouillet, and Hoffet on the history, identity and linguistic developments in Alsace, will help to understand the past and current situation and will serve as a basis for this thesis.

Furthermore, a survey conducted by the Office pour la langue et la culture d'Alsace will be compared with the survey conducted for this thesis. The author chose to examine three self-formulated hypotheses to explain the current linguistic skill of young adults in Alsace, as well as to which extent the respondents identify with Alsatian identity. This research will present the following findings: First, the Alsatian dialect declines from generation to generation. Second, although Alsatian is spoken less within the young generation, some words and expressions are anchored in everyday language use. Third, the identification with the Alsatian identity does not decrease with the decline of the dialect.

Keywords: Dialect, Identity, Alsatian, Sociolinguistic Survey, Early Adulthood

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List of Abbreviations

OLCA	Office pour la langue et la culture d'Alsace
ECRML	The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

Introduction

This Master thesis aims at giving information on the knowledge of Alsatian and the identification with the Alsatian identity of young adults that live or lived in the region. For this purpose, a survey based on online questionnaires has been conducted. The output helped to draw a conclusion on how the number of Alsatian speakers will develop in the future. The results of the inquiry are thought-provoking since they show to some extent different outcomes to a survey that was conducted in 2012 by the Office pour la langue et la culture d'Alsace (OLCA), as well as they present the opinions of those Alsatisans aged 18 to 25 years. Because of its geopolitical and linguistic developments, Alsace is an attractive case to analyse the link between language and identity. The objective of this research is to give a thorough overview of the most important historical events, political decisions, and linguistic backgrounds, that influenced Alsace, and which had an impact on Alsatian. This thesis should not be regarded as a purely historical or sociolinguistic analysis, but rather as a detailed summary of factors which will help to answer the research questions.

The first research question that will be answered in this work is whether the Alsatian dialect is in the process of disappearing, or not. To answer this question, the results of the survey were combined with the results of the OLCA survey, which was mentioned before. The research problem that arises from the first one is, to what extent the Alsatian dialect will exist in the future. The results of the survey concerning the usage of preselected words and expressions along with the knowledge of Alsatian of the respondents will help to answer the question. The last research problem will answer the question if the young generation of Alsatisans identify with the Alsatian identity, even if they do not speak the dialect. To deal with the research problems, I converted these into three self-formulated hypotheses which will be rejected or not within the bounds of the Master thesis:

1. The Alsatian Dialect declines from generation to generation.
2. Although Alsatian is spoken less within the young generation, some words and expressions are anchored in everyday language use.
3. The identification with the Alsatian identity decreases with the decline of the dialect.

This work is structured in six chapters. The first chapter, "Sociolinguistic Framework, Historical and Geopolitical Context," will give a summary of the existing

findings and works in the field of linguistics, dialectology, and sociolinguistics. The link between language and identity will be explained in order for the reader to understand the fundament of this thesis. I will then give a detailed overview of the historical events that happened in the region and which in turn had an impact on the linguistic situation in Alsace. The geopolitical factors form another essential part of this work, as one only understands the Alsatian identity when understanding the historical fate of the region. Some essential numbers and facts about Alsace and an accurate description of the linguistic framework will complete this chapter. In the next section, “The OLCA Survey,” the latest survey, which was published by OLCA, will be analysed, and the significant results will be presented. In a later part, some of the results of the OLCA survey will help to answer one of the research questions. A chapter on the study that was conducted for this thesis will follow. General information on the sociolinguistic survey will be given, and the results will be presented in a visual form. A short comparison between the OLCA survey and the sociolinguistic survey will as well form part of the chapter. The following section, “Hypotheses” will present the three hypotheses which have already been mentioned beforehand. With the help of the literature review as well as the results of the survey, the hypotheses will be either rejected or not rejected. Subsequent to the conclusion, I will give suggestions for further research that could be conducted on the topic, which will be followed by the bibliography and the annex, in which one will find the questionnaire.

1 Sociolinguistic Framework, Historical and Geopolitical Context

This first chapter aims at giving definitions of language and dialect. I will then move on in explaining where the link between language and identity, or dialect and identity lies. A historical analysis of the development of Alsatian and Alsatian identity throughout the years will as well form part of this section. I will end the chapter by focusing on the linguistic framework of the dialect.

1.1 Language and Dialect defined

When wanting to define a dialect, one should first explain what a language is, since a dialect is always linked to a language. In his book *Language and Identity*, Edwards summarizes the three characteristics of language by referring to the works of Edward Sapir *Language* and Charles Morris *Signs, Language and Behavior*. First, Edwards concludes that language is a “system, which implies regularity and rules of order,”¹ what the author is talking about here is grammar. Second, this system is an “arbitrary one since its particular units or elements have meaning only because of users’ agreement and convention.”² And lastly, “language is used for communicative purposes by a group of people who constitute the speech or language community.”³ Edwards adds to this that languages are different from each other as the speakers appoint different connotations to “sounds and symbols.”⁴ Furthermore, he states that languages have important functions in the preservation of group distinctiveness, culture, and tradition. This already leads us into the direction of explaining the link between language and identity, which will be analysed in the next subchapter. The previously mentioned scholars see language as a form to communicate one’s thoughts and ideas. But there are others, as discussed in Jespersen’s work, that share the opinion, that language is a means to disguise one’s beliefs and intentions, as it is Talleyrand’s suggestion, or to hide a lack of ideas, as in the opinion of Kierkegaard.⁵

André Weckmann wrote in his work, what we understand by the word language, is often influenced by the situation. He shares Edwards view, that language is a system which serves in expressing one’s thoughts and which is shared by a group of individuals. He then moves on by explaining the different functions of language. In his observation, he attributes five functions to the notion of language. First, the common or standard

¹ Edwards, John. *Language and Identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 53.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Jespersen, Otto. *Mankind, Nation and Individual*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1946.

language, which does not show geographic differences, and which is normed by grammar and dictionaries. Usually, this is the language we learn in school. Second, the national language, which is the common or standard language, and which serves as the official language of a country. In the case of France, it is French, and in the case of, for example, Belgium, it is Dutch, French, and German. Third, the vehicular language, which is spoken by people of different countries, although they do not share the same mother tongue. As an example, Weckmann gives the case of French, which is the vehicular language in several African countries, like Senegal and Ivory Coast. Fourth, the native language, which is the language that we learn from our parents and/or from those around us since birth. It can be the common language as well as a dialect. Lastly, the vernacular language, which is a language bound to a region or a country. It is usually native and exists rather in oral than in written form. A vernacular language can be a dialect or a regional language.⁶

Moving on to defining dialect. Weckmann starts his definition of what a dialect is with the statement that a dialect is as a language, too. According to him, a dialect is spoken by a group of people in a certain region. The number of people speaking the vernacular is generally more restricted. It is in this context that some speak of a minority language or a language of minorities. In comparison to the standard language, a dialect is in many cases limited to oral communication and is not ruled by grammar, which means that it can evolve freely. Every dialect is linked to a standard language. For example, in the German language space, the common language was formed from the already existing dialectal base, a dialect is therefore not a standard language which is poorly pronounced.⁷ In the case of Alsatian, one can find numerous books on the dialect's grammar, as for example the book *Wie steht's : lexiques alsacien et français, variantes dialectales, grammaire : toute la richesse et la diversité des parlers alsaciens* written by Raymond Matzen. But in the Alsatian situation, the grammar was not taught in school as the dialect was ignored by the educational authorities, which will be explained in bounds of this work. Due to this fact, Alsatian speakers are often unaware of which grammatical rules they apply unconsciously.⁸

⁶ Weckmann, André, and Théodore Rieger. "Brève Histoire Linguistique de l'Alsace." *Langue et Cultrues Régionales*, December 2011, 3rd ed.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Woehrling, Jean-Marie, "Re: Mémoire." [Email]. May 29, 2019.

Weckmann stresses that the term dialect should be used with caution, as one usually groups most speakers under this term that share the majority of linguistic characteristics. But within this group, speakers of one community may pronounce some words differently. Not every community speaks the same way as the neighbouring community. This accounts for Alsatian as well.⁹

Edwards also gives an exact definition of what a dialect is. According to him, a dialect is a “variety of a language that differs from others along three dimensions: vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.”¹⁰ He adds, as Weckmann also mentioned, that speakers of a dialect may not speak identically, but that speakers of different communities can still understand each other. The author also refers to the work of Petyt who concluded, that if two people who do not share the same language characteristics but do share the same written language, “they may be said to speak different dialects.”¹¹ Another scholar who must be mentioned in this context is Max Weinrich, who said that a “language is a dialect that has an army and navy.”¹² As we investigated before, dialects in the German linguistic field preceded the standard language. Furthermore, a dialect is not bound to any grammar and therefore, develops freely. But this sentence also implies nationality. Edwards introduces here the example of Norwegian and Danish speakers who understand each other well, but because they are living in different states, the two languages are supposed to be separated from one another.¹³

In 1985, former rector of the Académie de Strasbourg, Pierre Deyon, defined Alsatian as a regional language in saying, that it is composed of Alsatian dialects of which German is the written form.¹⁴ And Gardner-Chloros adds to this, that the term “Alsatian” comprises the different dialects spoken in the region.¹⁵ Löffler draws in his analysis a clear-cut distinction between standard language and dialect. According to him, a dialect

⁹ Weckmann and Rieger 2011, 21-22.

¹⁰ Edwards 2009, 63.

¹¹ Ibid, 64.

¹² Ibid. Apparently, Weinrich reported in 1945, that he was not the author of this sentence, and that he had heard it from an audience member in 1944.

¹³ Ibid. Applying Weinrich’s sentence to the geopolitical history of Alsace would go beyond the scope of this Masterthesis, and will therefore not be further analysed.

¹⁴ Finck, Adrien, Frédéric Hartweg, Raymond Matzen, and Marthe Philipp. "Une politique linguistique pour l'Alsace." Strasbourg: Culture et Bilinguisme d'Alsace et de Moselle; Office pour la Langue & la Culture d'Alsace, 2005. « Il n'existe en effet qu'une seule définition scientifiquement correcte de la langue régionale en Alsace, ce sont les dialectes alsaciens dont l'expression écrite est l'allemand. » (Deyon, Pierre. 1985)

¹⁵ Gardner-Chloros, Penelope. Language Selection and Switching in Strasbourg. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991, 5.

is a subsystem S' of a standard language S.¹⁶ Geminn concludes from that, that a dialect is a version which does only deviate from the common language up to a certain degree so that mutual understanding is still ensured.¹⁷ Another criterion that Löffler mentions is the “Defekt-Hypothese,” the defect hypothesis, which implies, that dialects are not equipped with grammar or rules, which in turn makes it almost impossible to create new words. The author adds that the difference between common language and dialect does not necessarily lie in its possibilities but rather in the fact, that the standard language is used more frequently.¹⁸ French is the language of public life, and Alsatian is the language that is rather used in private life, and only in situations in which the interlocutor speaks Alsatian, too.

After having seen different characteristics and definitions of language and dialect, I will use the definition of Sowinski, which was cited in Ladin's book. In the bounds of this thesis, I will refer to Alsatian as a dialect or regional language:

A Dialect is a way of speaking which precedes the written language, which is locally bound, which focuses on oral communication and above all, which includes the natural, everyday areas of life. It is spoken by a large, home-bound group of people in certain speech situations according to its own language norms developed in the course of history through neighbourly dialect and standard language influences.¹⁹

To conclude, language is a system that serves to share (or hide) one's thoughts in an oral or written way with those people that share the same language as ours. Languages can serve different functions, a communicative function, and a symbolic function. Sometimes, one language is used to fulfil these functions, and occasionally different languages perform different functions. One of the main differences between a dialect and a language is that a dialect is not ruled by grammar. Furthermore, a dialect is spoken in a particular region and is mostly used for oral than for written communication. Dialects preceded the German language, and the Alsatian dialects, which are spoken less and less, form part of the German linguistic space.

¹⁶ Löffler, Heinrich. *Probleme der Dialektologie: Eine Einführung*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1990, 4.

¹⁷ Geminn, Tanja-Alexandra. *Der elsässische Dialekt im 21. Jahrhundert*. Master Thesis, Trier: GRIN Verlag, 2003, 29.

¹⁸ Ladin, Wolfgang. *Der Elsässische Dialekt - Museumsreif?* Strasbourg, Obernai: Imprimerie Gyss, 1982, 75.

¹⁹ Sowinski, Bernhard. *Die Mundart im Unterricht*, 1967, cited in Ladin, Wolfgang. *Der Elsässische Dialekt - Museumsreif?* Strasbourg, Obernai: Imprimerie Gyss, 1982, 76.

1.2 Language and Identity

This subchapter will focus on the link between language and identity from historical perspective until today. Amongst others, I will be referencing the works of Edwards and Llamas and Watt, as well as *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Identity*. All of these books serve as excellent sources and summarize the most important findings and topics on the matter. Due to a lack of sources on dialect and identity, most of the sources that I will be using in the chapter focus on a link between language and identity.

According to John E. Joseph, the historical linkage between language and identity cannot be isolated from present-day matters. He argues that the fundament of our identity is our understanding “about the past: about heritage and ancestry, and about belonging to a people, a place, a set of beliefs and a way of life.”²⁰ We learn about all these things through language, and we will pass it on to the next generation through language. Joseph moves on by giving an overview from the past to present day relation between language and identity. He starts with a thought that also Aristotle supported. He, Aristotle, argued, that there was no link at all between a language and the “nature of the people who speak it.”²¹ Later, Epicurus shared his ideas, that the “language a people speaks plays a crucial role in making them a people.”²² He argued that only by different body shape and/or ethnicity, people’s language differed in word choice and ways of pronunciation. Throughout time until today, Epicurus’ thought survived and has been amended or reinterpreted in different ways. These ideas made its way until the 19th century when linguistics became a discipline, an academic field. The first idea would be considered as the “Enlightenment conception of a language as a system of rational signs” and the second one as the “Romantic conception of language as a Weltanschauung, a deep, spiritual version of the universe that embodies the essence of a particular notion or race.”²³ Another approach that would fall under the Enlightenment conception of language would be the “Jacobin approach,”²⁴ which was applied in France, especially during the French Revolution. The main thought behind this approach is to connect people from different backgrounds and geographical regions by a common language.²⁵ A Romantic approach,

²⁰ Joseph, John E. in Preece, Siân, ed. *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Identity*. New York: Routledge, 2016, 19.

²¹ *Ibid*, 20.

²² *Ibid*.

²³ *Ibid*, 21.

²⁴ *Ibid*.

²⁵ *Ibid*.

which contrasts the Jacobin one, started in Germany in the second half of the 19th century. Joseph cites here from the work of Sériot who wrote, that for “German romantics, the language was the essence of the nation, while for French revolutionaries, it was a means to achieve national unity.”²⁶ I will focus on this point again when writing about the history of Alsace.

Joseph focuses, in his book *Language and Identity. National, Ethnic, Religious* on the various functions of language and considers identity as one of the major purposes along with communication and representation. He furthermore points out that the connection between language and identity must be understood and investigated from two points of view. First, that language shapes identity, and second, that identity shapes language. He thereby refers to the book of Anderson *Imagined Communities* in which the author focuses mainly on the way “national languages shape national identities.”²⁷ Joseph moves on in making an important statement which I will quote here: “[I]f people’s use of language is reduced analytically to how meaning is formed and represented in sound, or communicated from one person to another (...), something vital has been abstracted away: the people themselves. (...) Their identity inheres in their voice, spoken, written or signed.”²⁸

In *The Routledge Handbook on Language and Identity*, Joseph names the most important scholars in the field and summarises their findings. Some of them, like Sapir and Kierkegaard, have already been mentioned previously. According to Joseph, one of the most important books on the topic of social identity theory was written by Henry Tajfel. He gave an on the point definition of social identity, which is “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership.”²⁹ Joseph concludes, that with this definition, Tajfel touched upon innovative points, for example, that social identity belongs to a singular person and that the awareness and emotional importance of that person to belong to a social group is vital. Joseph then states more up to date works in which identity is said to be established and not something that is inherent. Erving Goffman wrote in his doctoral research, that

²⁶ Sériot (2014) cited in John E. Joseph. Preece, ed, 2016, 21.

²⁷ Joseph, John E. *Language and Identity. National, Ethnic, Religious*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, 13.

²⁸ Ibid, 21.

²⁹ Joseph, John E. in Preece, Siân, ed. *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Identity*. New York: Routledge, 2016, 23.

identity is something fluent, that changes from situation to situation and that it develops depending on the environment we live in.³⁰

Llamas and Watt say in the introduction of the book *Language and Identities*, that language not “only reflects who we are but in some sense, it is who we are, and its use defines us both directly and indirectly.”³¹ The authors describe the direct use of language as a means to define a person on the grounds of her or his looks, ethnicity, manners, or attitudes. The indirect use of language is defined as serving as the source for our “judgment of who people are on the way they speak.”³² They continue by mentioning some of the most important studies that have been undertaken in the field. For example, Labov conducted a study on Martha’s Vineyard, investigating the dialect version of English that is spoken on the island. The Vineyarders unconsciously created a distinction between them and the tourists by speaking in their dialect, thereby ensuring a sense of belonging.³³ Llamas and Watt also mention the book *Acts of Identity. Creole-based approaches to language and ethnicity*, which was written by LePage and Tabouret-Keller. In their book, the co-authors developed a model to investigate how “ethnicity is constructed in discourse.”³⁴

Edwards continues his analysis by introducing the division of the communicative and symbolic functions of language. He writes that people would distinguish between a language that serves for the instrumental purpose, and a language as an “emblem of groupness, a symbol, a psychosocial rallying-point.”³⁵ In some speech communities, the language which is used for the instrumental purpose serves as well for the symbolic one. In the book, *Linguistic Minorities, Policies, and Pluralism*, Edwards focuses on the topic in more detail. As an example, he mentions British people who speak English. For them, English has a communicative as well as a symbolic purpose. It is the language which is used in all common areas of life, and it is furthermore the language that is used to pass on traditions and to communicate culture. Edwards also introduces the example of Ireland. Throughout history, shifts in the communicative language occurred in Ireland from Irish to English from the 16th century onwards. According to Edwards, until and throughout

³⁰ Ibid, 23-24.

³¹ Llamas, Carmen, and Dominic Watt eds. *Language and Identities*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010, 1.

³² Ibid.

³³ Joseph, John E. in Preece, Siân, ed. *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Identity*. New York: Routledge, 2016, 22.

³⁴ Joseph, John E. *Language and Identity. National, Ethnic, Religious*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, 79.

³⁵ Edwards 2009, 55.

the 19th century, Irish lost its influence, and English became the “language of status and power.”³⁶ Amongst other reasons, it was also due to the school system, that English became the strong language, as it was the one taught in school. By the end of the 19th century, the Gaelic League was founded with the aim to promote Irish in spoken communication. It was, to some extent, successful, as it reintroduced Irish in educational institutions like schools and universities. But the aspired shift in spoken language did not occur. Edwards concludes that one of the main reasons for the quick language shift in Ireland was that the people were accepting it. There was large cooperation and acknowledgement by the people, which made the transition from Irish to English so quick and “successful.” The author concludes the consequences of the Irish case, which are generally applicable, in four points. First, it can be seen as an example situation in which the scope, power, and influence of a language changed throughout the centuries. Second, “language revival efforts can be seen as artificial when they operate in the face of historical realities.”³⁷ Edwards explains this as follows. For a shift in language or a revival of a language, it is not enough to focus on culture or tradition, because these do not take a significant position in the everyday life of every person. Third, for a language to survive, this language has to touch upon many different areas of life. And lastly, and perhaps most importantly for this thesis, Edwards concludes, that “it seems clear that there is (...) a strong Irish identity which does not involve the Irish language in a communicative sense.”³⁸ In the case of Ireland, Irish has a symbolic value. The author makes an important remark here. “[I]f we accept, that (a) there is an Irish national identity, and (b) the vast majority neither speak Irish nor seem particularly interested in doing so, then it follows that identity does not depend upon language alone.”³⁹ He also mentions the distinction between communicative and symbolic functions of a language, which I have touched upon earlier. In 1975, a survey was conducted in Ireland, concluding, that most participants “endorsed the value of Irish as a part of identity while, at the same time, felt pessimistic about its future as a medium of communication.”⁴⁰

To summarise, the relationship between language and identity was explained, as identity is transmitted by communication. It can be concluded, that identity and language

³⁶ Edwards, John ed. *Linguistic Minorities, Policies and Pluralism*. Nova Scotia: Academic Press, 1984, 285.

³⁷ Edwards, ed. 1984, 288

³⁸ *Ibid*, 289.

³⁹ *Ibid*.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 284-290.

are so strongly connected, because through language we share beliefs, values, historical facts, traditions and much more; all of which forms part of our identity. But one should keep in mind that language cannot be regarded as the only part of identity, as the latter can live on although the use of a dialect or regional language decreases.

1.3 Facts and Numbers about Alsace

Map 1: Alsace⁴¹



Since 2014, effective since 2016, Alsace, which has no regional authority, belongs to the Grand Est region in the east of France that borders with Belgium, Luxemburg, Switzerland, and Germany. The two countries, France and Germany, are separated by the river Rhine. As presented in Map 1, Alsace is divided into two departments, Bas-Rhin in the north, with approximately 1.1 million inhabitants and Haut-Rhin in the south, with about 755,000 inhabitants. The biggest city and the prefecture in the Bas-Rhin are Strasbourg, which counts over 270,000 inhabitants in the city and approximately 477,000 inhabitants, including the greater Strasbourg area.⁴² Strasbourg is the seat of the Council of Europe, the European Court of Human Rights and the European Parliament. Furthermore, the city counts one of the highest numbers of students in France, with almost 51,000 students studying at the University of Strasbourg.⁴³

The number of people speaking Alsatian declines from one generation to the next. This circumstance will be further analysed in the following (sub)chapter. In order to give the reader a first overview, Table 2 shows the development of the percentage of Alsatian speakers from 1900 until 2012.

Table 1: Alsatian speakers in Alsace from 1900 until 2012⁴⁴

Year	2012	2001	1997	1946	1900
%age of the population	43%	61%	63%	91%	95%

⁴¹ Dormir en alsace. carte alsace rhin. n.d. <http://www.thur-doller.fr/carte-alsace-rhin/> (accessed May 05, 2019).

⁴² Landeskunde. *Das Elsass in Zahlen*. 2017. <http://www.landeskunde-online.de/rhein/elsass/schluesseldaten.htm> (accessed May 05, 2019)

⁴³ Université de Strasbourg. *Université - Nous connaissons*. n.d. https://www.unistra.fr/index.php?id=universite&utm_source=unistra_fr&utm_medium=unistra_fr_homepage (accessed May 05, 2019).

⁴⁴ EDInstitut. *Etude réalisée par EDInstitut sur la base de 801 personnes résidant en Alsace interrogés par téléphone selon la méthode des quotas entre le 1er et le 9 mars 2012*. Survey, Alsace: Office pour la Langue et la Culture d'Alsace, 2012, 10.

1.4 Historical Background and Languages of Alsace

Before starting to analyse the language policies as well as their consequences, and the linguistic framework in Alsace, I will first focus on how languages and dialects developed in the region, and the geopolitical context. Weckmann and Rieger (2011), along with Ladin and Trouillet, give a very detailed description of what happened in the region throughout history. Their analyses will be used as the primary sources for this subchapter.⁴⁵

Table 2: Geopolitical Framework in the Alsace Region⁴⁶

	Time periods	Approximate duration	Political sphere	State framework
1	1 st cent. BC – 5 th cent. AD	550 years	Roman (Celtic and Germanic)	Roman structures
2	5 th cent. – 10 th cent.	500 years	Germanic	Merovingian kingdoms Carolingian empire
3	10 th cent. – 17 th cent.	700 years	Germanic/German	Holy Roman Empire
4	17 th cent. – 1870	200 years	French	France (monarchy, republic)
5	1870 – 1918	48 years	German	German Empire
6	1918 – 1940	22 years	French	France (republic)
7	1940 – 1945	4.5 years	German	Third Reich
8	1945 – today	for 60 years	French	France (republic)

1.4.1 3rd Century BC – 5th Century AD

From the 3rd century BC until the 5th century AD, Alsace had already experienced two important communication changes. The Celts lived in the region and spread their language, the Celtic. About 200 years after them, the Teutons arrived in Alsace. About half a century later, the Romans succeeded to integrate the region into their empire. Language-wise, the official language changed to Latin. Geminn refers here to the book of Dentinger in which the author writes, that Latin was the language of written communication, and that in certain regions varieties of Celtic, Germanic, and Latin co-existed. The Alemanni settled in Alsace in the year 406, after a successful invasion, which marked the beginning of the spread of the Germanic dialect.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ See Weckmann and Rieger 2011, 7-20. See also: Geminn 2003, 7-25, and Trouillet 1997, 73-150, for the whole subchapter.

⁴⁶ Bothorel-Witz, Arlette, Anemone Geiger-Jaillet, and Dominique Huck. *l'Alsace et ses Langues. Éléments de description d'une situation sociolinguistique en zone frontalière*. Sub-theme working group report of the Interreg III C project: Change on Borders, Bolzano: EUR.AC Research, 2008, 8.

⁴⁷ Geminn 2003, 7.

1.4.2 5th Century – 10th Century

By the end of the 5th century, Alsace was made part of the Merovingian kingdom, after the battle between the Alemanni and the Franks. According to Weckmann, this also had linguistic consequences, since the Franconian was introduced in the region and shaped the dialect spoken in the region.⁴⁸ Ladin writes that this period already shaped the approximate linguistic border as we know it today. By the year 800, Alsace fully lies within the realms of the empire of Charlemagne. He, Ladin, then mentions the “*Serments de Strasbourg*,”⁴⁹ the *Oaths of Strasbourg* (842), which was the first bilingual document that proved, that those communities that settled west of the Vosges (a range of low mountains) belonged to a different linguistic community than those, that settled east of the Vosges.⁵⁰

1.4.3 10th Century – 17th Century and the French Revolution

During the third time period that is mentioned in Table 2, Alsace formed part of the Holy Roman Empire under Otto the Great and was thereby fully integrated into the German cultural and linguistic space.⁵¹ Ladin points out that Alsace experienced its first heyday in culture and science during the Renaissance. He refers to the work of Dentinger, saying that some of the best German-speaking poets and intellectuals lived in Strasbourg at that time including Luther, Brant, Murner, and others.⁵² Strasbourg and Sélestat were known cities, thanks to the many internationally oriented translators, preachers, reformists as well as publishers and not to forget the art of printing, or typography. Through literature and poetry, the dialect spread as written and oral language. Moreover, the linguistic variant spread thanks to trade, since the business was easier if partners and traders spoke the same language.⁵³ After more than 100 years, the linguistic and geopolitical situation was about to change in the region. Subsequently, to the Thirty Years

⁴⁸ Weckmann and Rieger 2011, 8.

⁴⁹ The Oaths of Strasbourg: “After Charlemagne's death (814), the conflicts related to the division of the Carolingian empire began. His grandsons, Charles the Bald and Louis the German, concluded a treaty of non-belligerency and promised each other not to ally themselves with their brother Lothar, heir to imperial dignity. In reality, they sealed an alliance against their brother Lothair and it was in Strasbourg, on 14 February 842, that they wrote down what would later be called the *Oaths of Strasbourg*, which are considered as proof of the linguistic separation of the two peoples. Indeed, to be understood by Charles' soldiers, Louis took the oath in the Romanesque language; vice versa, Charles took the oath in the Germanic language.” Weckmann and Rieger, 2011, 10. My translation.

⁵⁰ Ladin 1982, 41.

⁵¹ Dentinger, Jean. *Elsass*. Zürich: Silva-Verlag, 1987.

⁵² Dentinger also mentions Reinmar von Hagenau and Gottfried von Straßburg who lived in Alsace around the year 1200. Furthermore, the first bible in German language was printed in Strasbourg in 1466, 68 years before Luther's bible. See Dentinger 1968, 20 et seq.

⁵³ Ladin 1982, 43.

War (1618 – 1648), the Alsatian territories were separated from the Holy Roman Empire and attached to France, as was laid down in the *Peace of Westphalia* in 1649. Geminn summarises, that during the years after the *Peace of Westphalia* was signed, Alsace, or “Province allemande” as it was called during that time enjoyed a lower tax burden than the rest of France. Not to mention, that traders did not have to pay customs on businesses that were realized between France and Germany. Although the official language of administration and justice was changed to French, and although many French businessmen and officials settled in the region, Alsatian remained the language of communication in most areas of life. Trouillet mentions furthermore, that for King Louis XIV, a linguistic unity was, of course, important, but much more vital was the religious unity, the Catholicisation of the country.⁵⁴ The author explains that during this period until the French Revolution Alsace was geographically integrated into France, but language-wise, the Alsatians were not forbidden to speak their dialect.⁵⁵ He concludes that in Alsace, the dialects remained a part of the local culture. Lévy summarised the linguistic situation in the region as follows: “The immigrants (French) spoke French and ignored German; the popular masses spoke German (i.e., dialects) and ignored French; the aristocracy and the upper bourgeoisie spoke French, but still knew German; the middle bourgeoisie spoke German but already knew French.”⁵⁶

During the French Revolution (1789-1799), the cultural, as well as the linguistic particularities of Alsace were not well seen, and the assimilation policy of that time was supposed to set an end to the particularity of the region. Bertrand Barère, a politician and member of the National Convention during the French Revolution, said in 1794, that the language of a free people should be one and the same. Trouillet writes that for Barère German was the language of federalism and blasphemy. But to reach the goal and to spread the ideology of the revolution, a common language was required. For Talleyrand, a member of the legislative assembly, a language unity was vital for a united state. As a result of this wish for unity, all elements that threatened this plan were to be eliminated. French became the symbol of patriotism. For the first time, Alsatian was directly influenced by politics. As an example, in Alsace, French Jacobins took the place of those speaking the dialect. Trouillet adds that the region, especially the farmers, was open to

⁵⁴ Trouillet, Bernard. *Das Elsaß - Grenzland in Europa. Sprachen und Identitäten im Wandel*. Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1997, 75.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 76.

⁵⁶ Lévy, Paul. *Histoire linguistique d'Alsace et de Lorraine*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1929, 345.

change and looked forward to an end of poverty, but the Revolution had hit the region without pardon. Only those speaking French were seen as supporters of the common good. Dialects were seen as dangerous relics of the “Ancien Régime” that endangered unity. Furthermore, Alsatian was the language of the enemy. This top-down approach was also applied in the education sector, starting with primary schools. In order to reach the aim to change the linguistic and cultural situation in Alsace drastically, French-speaking teachers were supposed to move to Alsace in order to educate the youth in the “langue du roi” besides the ideologies of the Revolution. This happened only with limited success because of a lack of teachers that were willing to move to Alsace, and of those teachers living in the region, only a small fraction was able to speak and teach French. More measures were taken to spread French and to eradicate the dialect, for example, schools for girls, were founded since one was to assume, that the language that was learned in school was the language that would be spoken at home, and which would, in turn, be passed on to the next generation. But the next conflict in the region was not far away, and as Trouillet writes, nothing had fundamentally changed after the Revolution as well as the Napoleonic era. Reasons for this were amongst others that priests did not want to hold the church service in a language that the people did not understand, the same was true for religious education in school.⁵⁷

The French Revolution may not have had the desired impact on the linguistic situation in Alsace, but it had an impact on the feeling of belonging to the French state. During the years of the Revolution, the sense of national identity and community reached out to the Alsatians. Furthermore, French was now known to be the language to communicate French culture, additionally to advanced humanistic and universal values. “Thus, it [the Revolution] laid the seed of new ideas in Alsatian minds about the role of nation and state, about the border-crossing mission of culture and thus also about the relativization of one's own native culture.”⁵⁸

1.4.4 1790s – 1870

From the end of the French Revolution until 1870, the Frenchisation of Alsace was still a goal that was planned to be reached through the schools and churches. But especially the protestant church refused to switch to French since German was the language of Luther and French was the language of laicity and Enlightenment. Trouillet concludes that the schools were the places where the state tried to propagate French as

⁵⁷ Trouillet 1997, 77-81

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 81.

the national language extensively.⁵⁹ Lévy writes the following: “[T]he German language, still the absolute master of habits, remained the only popular language.”⁶⁰ Weckmann, also analysed, that from 1800 until 1870, the French language only slowly gained ground, especially in the middle class, but most Alsatians did not have a profound knowledge of the national language.⁶¹

1.4.5 1870 until the End of the First World War

The Franco-Prussian War from 1870 to 1871 was, according to Trouillet, not only a “war between two nations, but also a war between two cultures and two languages.”⁶² Ladin states that the “nationalism of the 19th century brought an era of linguistic intolerance.”⁶³ With the *Treaty of Frankfurt*, which was signed in May 1871, Alsace and Lorraine⁶⁴ were integrated into the German Empire, without taking into consideration the opinion of the people. The author criticises that during this time, the wishes of Alsatians were not taken into regard. By the end of 1871, the political status of Alsace and Lorraine as “Reichsland” was initiated. As presented in Table 2. Alsace will belong to the German Empire for almost 50 years. Trouillet writes that the main question of the war was if the linguistic boundaries are one with the political boundaries. “While the Germans emphasized that the commonality of language characterises the nation, the French saw the characteristic of the nationality principle not in the language, but in the commitment to the homeland.”⁶⁵ The linguistic consequences were that the written language was German, and the dialects were used for oral communication. According to Weckmann, French was no longer the language of public life but still holds a small space in the press.⁶⁶

From 1870 until 1918 the language policy targeting Alsatians that spoke German or the dialect was different from the language policy of the French speakers in Alsace and most parts of Lorraine. Trouillet informs us that in 1871/72, German was used for administrative and juridical matters in those areas where people spoke Alsatian. Furthermore, in schools, the French lessons were brought to an end. Three years later, German was also introduced in the French-speaking areas. At the beginning of the 20th

⁵⁹ Ibid, 82.

⁶⁰ Lévy 1929, 114.

⁶¹ Weckmann and Rieger 2011, 15.

⁶² Trouillet 1997, 85.

⁶³ Ladin 1982, 45.

⁶⁴ Lorraine is a region that is situated east of Alsace. Two of the four departments of Lorraine, Vosges and Moselle, which will be mentioned within the bounds of the thesis, border directly with the two departments of Alsace, Bas-Rhin and Haute-Rhin, see Map 1, page 11.

⁶⁵ Trouillet 1997, 86.

⁶⁶ Weckmann and Rieger 2011, 15.

century, in 1911, a regional parliament was set up in Alsace, and the region received a semi-autonomous status. Alsatians and Lorrainers stressed to treat cultural topics in the regional parliament, in order to preserve the dialect. As already mentioned before, German was the language of instruction, but the transition from Alsatian to standard German did not go as smooth as wished, because the communicative language of everyday life was the dialect. Even more difficult was it in the French-speaking areas. Here, the language of instruction stayed French, and German was taught five hours a week.⁶⁷ Trouillet summarises the years between the Franco-Prussian War and the First World War as follows: “This (...) phase of Alsatian history is marked by national-cultural contrasts, imbalance, and inner dichotomy, especially since Alsace-Lorraine remained Reichsland and never got beyond the state's stopgap authority of annexation.”⁶⁸

1.4.6 1918 – 1945

After the First World War, in 1918, the people from Alsace and Lorraine welcomed the French troops back in the regions. The inhabitants had kept France in good memory over the years of separation. French was quickly reintroduced as the national language, which had as a result, that public offices and courts had been bilingual. Moreover, German law had to be integrated into French law.⁶⁹ The author remarks that especially the Frenchisation in school was not welcomed by the Alsatian speaking population, which was at that time, 90%.⁷⁰ But one of the main goals of French politics was a change in national education, meaning to ban German from the curriculum. In 1926, prime minister Poincaré visited schools in Alsace and concluded, that lessons in Alsace and Lorraine should be bilingual, also to respect the tradition. One year later, the *Poincaré-Pfister-Reform*⁷¹ came into existence which had as a result, that German classes entered the curriculum again from the second grade onwards, and Religion was taught in German, as well. But the reform had been abolished after World War II. Ladin writes, that although the Alsatians and Lorrainers were looking forward to becoming “rightful” Frenchmen, they were not all the way in line with Paris’ politics.⁷² “It was the egalitarian

⁶⁷ Trouillet 1997, 91-92.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 106.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 110.

⁷⁰ Ladin 1982, 47-49.

⁷¹ Pfister was the director of the Académie de Strasbourg.

⁷² Ladin 1982, 47-49.

tendency of Jacobin centralism, which left no room for regional autonomy in its inseparable republic, that led to the so-called Alsatian malaise.”⁷³

From 1940 onwards, Alsace and Lorraine were occupied by Nazi Germany. The language policies were much stricter during that time than during the time of the Second German Empire. Trouillet writes that the time was characterised by an “insensitive and uncompromising Germanisation policy and the suppression of regional particularism.”⁷⁴ Furthermore, the author mentions, that standard German should not only become the language of public life but also of private life, “Alsatian people, you can now speak your mother tongue freely and authentically again.”⁷⁵ French was banned from all areas of life, also from school.⁷⁶ Names of streets and places had been changed, first and family names that were or sounded French had to be changed into a German version, and Alsatian names were changed to their German equivalents. Names of shops were not allowed to be French as well as the names or ingredients of the goods they sold. French books had been collected in libraries and book shops and, in some cases, had been burned.⁷⁷ Weckmann summarises the linguistic situation from 1940 to 1945 as a “typical diglossia situation: The vast majority of the population spoke fluent dialect and relatively little standard German, which was nevertheless compulsory for school children, a minority, generally not of Alsatian origin, used standard German, especially in official situations.”⁷⁸

1.4.7 1945 until Today

After the collective trauma of the Nazi occupation and the heightened confusion between language and national belonging, it is even easier than in 1918 to convince a number of Alsatians and Mosellans that German - "Nazi language," "Auschwitz language" - must be eliminated and with it its local dialectal forms. This was the beginning of a "linguistic cleansing" that resulted in the prohibition and punishment of the use of dialect in schools, and thus of the children's mother tongue.⁷⁹

From the end of the Second World War onwards, the situation in Alsace changed drastically. As already quoted above, Alsatian and German experienced a break due to

⁷³ Allemann 1962 in Ladin 1982, 47. The “malaise alsacien” can be defined by the problematic of reintegrating Alsace into France, which posed numerous diplomatic, psychological, economic, social, religious, cultural, political and administrative challenges.

⁷⁴ Trouillet 1997, 121.

⁷⁵ Kettenacker in Trouillet 1997, 122.

⁷⁶ Trouillet 1997, 127-128.

⁷⁷ Philipps, Eugène. *Les luttes linguistiques en Alsace jusqu'en 1945*. Strasbourg: Impr. de la Société d'édition de la Basse-Alsace, 1975, 226-229.

⁷⁸ Tabouret-Keller in Weckmann 2011, 15.

⁷⁹ *Land un Sproch*. "Répression linguistique, It's a long way... . Brève histoire du refoulement de la germanophonie alsacienne et mosellane, dialectes et allemand littéraire." 2001: 22.

the regime of Nazi Germany. French, as the reintroduced national language, was on top of the priority list. Trouillet writes that the population of Alsace was ready and keen on accepting French. He names several reasons why the work of the French assimilation policy was so “fruitful” at that time. First, the elite classes, as well as the administration, were ready to put the decisions of the state into practice. Second, other classes were ready to use the Frenchisation as a means to improve their social standing – “c’est chic de parler français.” Third, the status of the church was left unaffected by the state. And lastly, the schools were willing to accept the order to build up the national entity, including a “state-centred value system.”⁸⁰

In 1951, the *Loi Deixonne* was agreed upon. This law was passed, to promote the teaching and studying of regional languages and dialects in those regions in which they are spoken. According to Gardner-Chloros, teachers who wished to teach a regional language or dialect could “make a special request to do so” in order to be “authorised to spend one hour per week on teaching the local language and literature.”⁸¹ The precondition for the teaching was of course, that pupils and their parents agreed, and that the teachers were qualified to teach the regional language. According to the author, the perhaps most outstanding issue about this law was, that it did not apply to all regional languages, because Alsatian, Corsican, and Flemish were dialects that came from national tongues other than French, namely German, Italian, and Dutch.⁸²

By 1952, German was reintroduced on a voluntary basis in the two last school years of secondary school (later the three final years), for two hours per week, in the Alsatian speaking communities. Trouillet writes that by the end of the 1950s, more voices were raised that asked for a higher number of German classes in school, especially one that was of better quality and, most of all, obligatory.⁸³ The author adds that during that time, substitute teachers, a significant number of them from the Baden region in Germany, taught German in those cases where pupils were willing to learn the language. But this measure was not successful. And concerning French, seven years after the end of the war, French was still a foreign language for the bigger part of the population in Alsace.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Trouillet 1997, 129.

⁸¹ Gardner-Chloros 1991, 14. In 1975, the *Loi Deixonne* was replaced by the *Loi Haby*. Due to this law, regional languages (Basque, Breton, Catalan, Occitan and later also Corsican) now finally got their official recognition as regional languages of France that were taught in school. Alsatian was not mentioned in the *Loi Haby*.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Trouillet 1997, 133-134.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 132.

Verdoot mentions that thanks to a decree of the Académie de Strasbourg from 1959, the situation in Alsace improved. For example, German classes had to be taught by permanent teachers and not by substitute teachers, and furthermore, a voluntary final examination was introduced. These measures enhanced the linguistic situation but cannot be seen as ground-breaking improvements, as progress was made rather slow.⁸⁵

In 1969, the *Holderith Reform*⁸⁶ presented the first change in language learning in high school, that had an important impact. German lessons were adjusted to the “linguistic location of Alsace.”⁸⁷ Ladin summarises it as the possibility or chance, that Alsatian speaking children were now able to develop their German skills and French-speaking children had the possibility to learn German in their own speed. By 1972, the second *Holderith Reform* was introduced with the aim, to teach German during the two last years of primary school. The first reform was accepted rather easily, thanks to the good results in the high schools. The second reform, on the other hand, was regarded with a certain degree of hesitance.⁸⁸

The first term of President François Mitterrand, which began in 1981, marked an era of decentralisation and regionalisation. The decentralisation law of March 1982, and especially Article 59⁸⁹ of that law, appoints competencies to the Conseil Régional concerning the preservation of regional identities. In Alsace, Pierre Deyon, who was already mentioned before, as well as Alain Savary, education minister at that time, tried to put the theory into practice. Both sent out separate letters, referring to the decentralisation act of Mitterrand in the education sector. In the following years, several requests were sent to President Mitterrand to ensure the teaching of German and regional culture from primary school until graduation. People were longing for more cultural and linguistic autonomy.⁹⁰ The school subject “Langue et culture régionale” was introduced in 1982. Moreover, German and English were (re)introduced into the curriculum, and the

⁸⁵ Verdoot, Albert. *Zweisprachige Nachbarn. Die deutschen Hochsprach- und Mundartgruppen in Ost-Belgien, dem Elsaß, Ost-Lothringen und Luxembourg*. Stuttgart: Braumüller, 1968, 83-84.

⁸⁶ Georges Holderith (1912-1978) was a French Germanist and high-ranking official.

⁸⁷ Ladin 1982, 196.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ “Le conseil régional règle par ses délibérations les affaires de la région. Il a compétence pour promouvoir le développement économique, social, sanitaire, culturel et scientifique de la région et l'aménagement de son territoire et pour assurer la préservation de son identité, dans le respect de l'intégrité, de l'autonomie et des attributions des départements et des communes.” Legifrance. Loi n° 82-213 du 2 mars 1982 relative aux droits et libertés des communes, des départements et des régions - Article 59 . n.d. https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexteArticle.do;jsessionid=FB0EAD9AEF27B1F02731B2CD988058F9.tplgfr23s_2?idArticle=LEGIARTI000006338495&cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006068736&dateTexte=20190506 (accessed May 01, 2019).

⁹⁰ Trouillet 1997, 141-143.

Académie de Strasbourg established the “Certificat Régionale d’Allemand,” which was handed out as a German language certificate. Although these measures sounded like an actual improvement, it was still complicated to put them fully into practice due to a lack of teachers capable of teaching German, and Alsatian and local culture. Another reason was that only limited changes concerning the national school system were possible.⁹¹

In 1991, the initiative *ABCM Zweisprachigkeit* (Bilingualism) was founded. The schools, that form part of this network, are managed by the *Association pour le Bilinguisme en Classe dès la Maternelle, ABCM Zweisprachigkeit*. The institution speaks of itself as a “pioneer of bilingual education in Alsace and Moselle.” Currently, 11 schools with more than 1200 students aged 3 to 11 are part of the network. According to its website, *ABCM Zweisprachigkeit* has played an important role in the development of bilingual public education in Alsace.⁹²

In 1992, *The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* (ECRML) was adopted by the Council of Europe and entered into force in 1998. Its aim is to “protect and promote regional and minority languages and to enable speakers to use them both in private and public life.”⁹³ The charter, which is directed towards the languages and not the people who speak them, is the first treaty worldwide, that deals with the preservation and promotion of regional and minority language. This, of course, would have been a great improvement for the region of Alsace and its dialect. But some months before the ECRML was ready for signature from the member states, France amended its Article 2 of the Constitution stating, that the language of the nation is French, and in turn refused to sign. According to Agresti, “France was endeavouring to defend its national language (...) at a time where Europe was tackling the issue of protecting its” regional and minority languages.⁹⁴ France signed the charter in May 1999 as a result of three ministerial reports in favour of the charter, but then denied to ratify it in June of the same year because “in granting special rights to ‘groups’ of speakers of regional or minority languages (...) [the charter] infringes the Constitutional principles of the indivisibility of the Republic, equality before the law and the unicity of the French people.”⁹⁵

⁹¹ See Harnisch 1996 and Born/Dickgiesser 1989 in Geminn 2003,25.

⁹² ABCM Zweisprachigkeit . *A.B.C.M. Zweisprachigkeit - Accueil*. n.d. <http://www.abcmzwei.eu/abcm-zweisprachigkeit/> (accessed May 01, 2019).

⁹³ de Varennes, Fernand, Robert Dunbar, Jean-Marie Woehrling, and et al. *The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the principle of non-discrimination*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 2008.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 183.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 184.

By 2013, regional authorities in Alsace and Moselle requested the ratification and application of the ECRML. Thereby referring to the many obligations that can be fulfilled by local and regional organizations in order to protect and promote Alsatian. The cultural center Culture et Bilinguisme d'Alsace et de Moselle, which was founded in 1968, set up in cooperation with other Alsatian organisations and with the help of specialists, the *Charter of Regional Authorities of Alsace and Moselle for the Promotion of the Regional Language* which only includes the obligations stated in the ECRML that target regional communities.⁹⁶ Points include, for example, the application of the regional language in public life, and to promote and simplify cross border cooperation between regional or local authorities. This charter was sent to regional authorities of Alsace and Moselle, and in February 2014, the city of Saverne followed by Mulhouse, chose to implement parts of the charter.⁹⁷ By the end of October 2015, the Senate set an end to the debates on the ECRML and ended its ratification process. Until today, the Charter has been signed and ratified by 25 states.⁹⁸

As a wrap-up, the historical and geopolitical analysis showed that Alsace had been a place of interest, but also a place of combat throughout the centuries. These geopolitical changes were accompanied by various language policies being imposed on the region and its people. Since the end of the 19th century, the duality of Alsatian as oral means and German as written means of communication gained a particular dimension. From the mid-19th century onwards, the French authorities wanted to treat Alsatian as a language distinct from German. Throughout the German period after 1870, Alsatian and German were regarded as one and the same language. During the following French periods, the language claims concerned the teaching and use of High German in the public place. No claim to Alsatian as such existed before the 1960s. After the Second World War, the language policies were stricter towards standard German than Alsatian. "It is therefore essentially the product of French language policy that has led to the opposition of dialects to German: a claim concerning dialects is tolerated; a claim of German remains considered politically problematic."⁹⁹

⁹⁶ *Land un Sproch*. "Les collectivités territoriales peuvent adhérer à la Charte européenne des langues régionales ou minoritaires." December 16, 2013.

⁹⁷ *Land un Sproch*. "La Charte européenne des langues régionales. De l'assemblée nationale à l'action locale: Les nouveaux développements." March 15, 2014.

⁹⁸ Council of Europe. *Chart of signatures and ratifications of Treaty 148*. n.d. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/148/signatures> (accessed May 05, 2019).

⁹⁹ Woehrling, Jean-Marie, "Re: Mémoire." [Email]. May 29, 2019

1.5 Linguistic Framework

This subchapter will give the reader key information about the subdivision of High German, of which the dialects spoken in Alsace form part.

Figure 1: Belonging and Subdivision¹⁰⁰

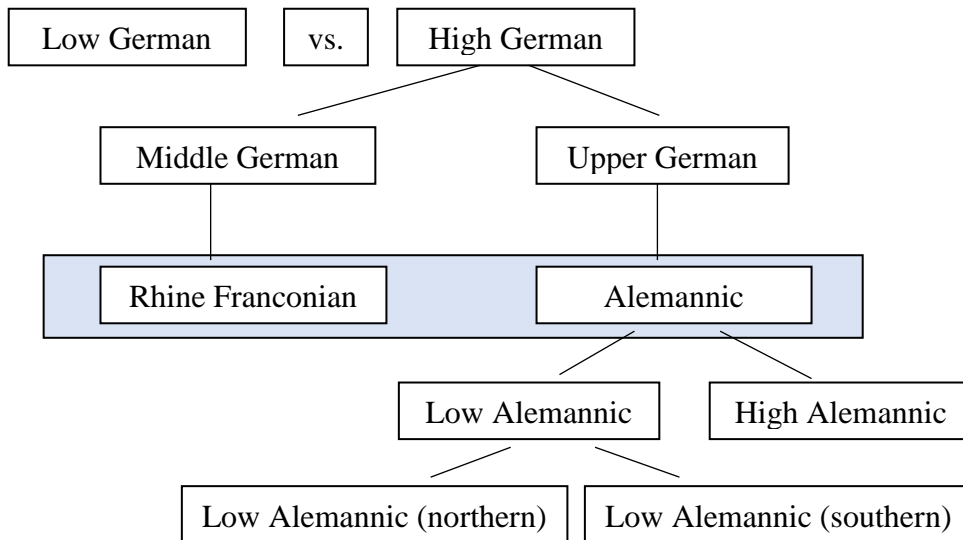


Figure 1 demonstrates the different subdivisions of High German. The blue highlighted part shows the two dialectal families that which one can find in Alsace. The Rhine Franconian and Alemannic. According to Huck, also the southern Rhine Franconian can be added to the list. The Author further describes, that the German dialectal space is usually subdivided into two groups: The Low German, which is spoken in the northern part, and the High German, which is spoken in the middle and southern region. High German is itself subdivided into two subgroups, which is Middle German, which as the name indicates is spoken in the central part of the dialectal space, and Upper German, which is spoken in the southern region.¹⁰¹ A significant area of Alsace is situated at the western end of Upper German, where the Alemannic dialect is spoken. The norther-western part of Alsace is located in the Middle German sphere, where the Rhine Franconian dialect is spoken. Huck points out that the political borders are not the same as the linguistic borders in this case. The dialectal families present in Alsace thus border with Switzerland for the High Alemannic, with the region of Baden in Germany, for the Low Alemannic, and with Lorraine, for the Rhine Franconian. The Vosges mountains build the western border of the dialectal families. Huck mentions two other characteristics, namely “heterogeneity in the dialectal space (a combination of macro-

¹⁰⁰ Philipp and Weider, 2002 in Bothorel-Witz, Arlette, Anemone Geiger-Jaillet, and Dominique Huck, 2008, 9-10.

¹⁰¹ Please take a look at the map of the dialectal space in the Annex.

variations and micro-variations),” and secondly the “continuum in space (linguistic changes are generally gradual).”¹⁰² The author points out that these classifications may have changed over the second half of the 20th century, as well as through influences of modernity. He concludes that the term “Alsatian” refers to all dialects spoken in the region and is “more a political-cultural reading of the dialectal space than an observable dialectal reality.”¹⁰³

To conclude, the two dialectal families of Rhine Franconian and Alemannic, which are subdivisions of High German are spoken in Alsace. The linguistic area of the Alsatian dialects border with Switzerland in the south-east, the Baden region in Germany in the east, and the Vosges in the west.

1.6 Alsatian Culture and Identity

All the historical and geopolitical aspects that have been mentioned on the previous pages are essential factors that shaped the Alsatian identity and culture. These times have affected at least those Alsatians that were born in the region, and that spent many years of their life living there.

Klein describes the creation of an identity as a result of the “dual process which consists in identifying and differentiating oneself, isolating and integrating oneself, (...) asserting oneself and internalising the other, wanting to be this and not that.”¹⁰⁴ He summarises that there is no “identity without a feeling of otherness or belonging. The first distinguishes and the second unites.”¹⁰⁵ The author defines the Alsatian identity as a collective identity. According to him, the Alsatians share and intertwine their personal values and identities and thereby create a collective dimension. Another point that Klein makes is, that identity feeling is linked to emotions; these are usually referred to as self-esteem. As stated in his book, self-esteem increases as recognition grows, and evaluation of third parties improve. As a result, he writes, that if the Alsatians would be successful in creating a “culture of recognition and multi-literacy,” the Alsatian self-esteem would be improved.¹⁰⁶ The fact that Alsace almost never had a territorial authority is, according to Klein compensated by the longing for local democracy.¹⁰⁷ The region also experienced demographic changes, as many people left Alsace, especially before, during, or after the

¹⁰² Bothorel-Witz, Arlette, Anemone Geiger-Jaillet, and Dominique Huck, 2008, 10.

¹⁰³ Ibid 9-10.

¹⁰⁴ Klein, Pierre. *Das Elsass verstehen: zwischen Normalisierung und Utopie*. Fegersheim: Éditions Allewil Verlag, 2014, 137.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 139-140.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 174. Alsace had its own territorial authority from 640-740, and from 1354-1648.

World Wars. He summarises the population of Alsace as a “family of many different members,” that experienced “nationalism, a dictatorship, and totalitarianism in all its forms, as well as attempts of linguistic extermination and cultural condemnation” which leaves Alsace imbalanced.¹⁰⁸

Perhaps one of the most detailed books of the 20th century dealing with the Alsatian identity is *Psychanalyse de l'Alsace* by Frédéric Hoffet from 1951. This source can perhaps not fully be taken as a reference to analyse the Alsatian identity of today, but one will still see a development of the identity in the analysis of Hoffet, compared to the analysis of Lienhard, which I will mention later in this subchapter. The second chapter of Hoffet's book is subdivided into four subchapters, which I will analyse in the following. First, “the great fear of Alsace to be what it is, and its flight from duality.”¹⁰⁹ This subchapter deals with the central question of what happened to the Alsatian identity during the time of being attached to another country, meaning either France or Germany. According to Hoffet, French or Germans did not see the Alsatian identity as a whole but recognised only either the French or German facets. Hoffet describes the Alsatians as being fearful and suspicious when it comes to living their own identity because some values would be too French for the Germans or too German for the French. The duality of the Alsatians was not recognised by the changing governments, which explains, why the Alsatians were afraid to commit to their own identity, writes Hoffet. The author says furthermore that the Alsatians would do their best to become good French or Germans, depending on which country Alsace belonged to at the time. There would still be situations in which the Alsatians would be reminded to be different from their fellow countrymen. “It is the great fear of the Alsatian in front of his duality, his great fear of being what he is.”¹¹⁰ As a consequence, many Alsatians left the region before the Second World War, 20,000 of them were evacuated to the south of France, and some never returned. After 1945, the Alsatians created taboo topics in order to flee from the duality. For example, talking about the Alsatian accent or family members that come from or lived in Germany.¹¹¹

The next subchapter deals with the “complex of inferiority and superiority.”¹¹² The inferiority complex manifests itself in the knowledge of French. Which means that

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 178.

¹⁰⁹ Hoffet, Frédéric. *Psychanalyse de l'Alsace*. Colmar: Editions Alsatia, 1951, 87.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 91.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 85-94.

¹¹² Ibid, 94.

the less good an Alsatian spoke French, the higher was his or her inferiority complex. Hoffet writes that the superiority complex manifests itself in criticising either the French or the Germans. The Alsatians are judging the French on the basis of the German part of their duality and are judging the Germans on the basis of the French part of their duality.¹¹³

Subchapter three circles around the “Alsatian character and the psychology of the adopted child.”¹¹⁴ Hoffet describes the Alsatian character as “shying, sensitive, resentful, stubborn.” Additionally, he writes about the Alsatian as someone that “likes to hide, and when he finally expresses himself, we witness an explosion. There is something unpleasant about its very qualities. (...) He is so humble and so proud, so trusting as a child and so arrogant. His silences, which alternate with sincerity, leave you confused.”¹¹⁵ Hoffet compares the Alsatian character with that of an adopted child. He focused here on the importance of knowing one’s roots and where one comes from in order to form part of a family, or in the case of Alsace, state. He writes that as an adopted child would show a lot of love to his parents – the Alsatians would show a lot of patriotism for France. Other comparisons that Hoffet draws are, that if the adopted child has an argument with the parents, he or she will try to find the biological parents. In the case of Alsace, the Alsatians would long for more political autonomy when facing complications with the French government. Hoffet writes about the “Alsatian susceptibility.” What the author means is, that every remark towards an Alsatian is interpreted as an accusation towards the German part of the Alsatian duality. “Like the adopted child, the Alsatian is extremely susceptible. The most benevolent of critics, the most benign of reproaches will risk appearing to him as an allusion to his Germanic origins.”¹¹⁶ Furthermore, Hoffet claims that as a spoiled child, Alsace was given a lot. To mention two examples, during the time of being annexed by Germany, the city of Strasbourg developed and grew, and after the First World War, the French built the Port du Rhin, the harbour at the Rhine, which influenced the economic situation of the city in a positive way.¹¹⁷

The last subchapter is dedicated to “Alsatian wisdom,” which Hoffet defines as the “transcendence of the Alsatian duality.”¹¹⁸ What the scholar wants to say is that the

¹¹³ Ibid, 101-103,

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 104.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 107.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 104-109.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 110.

Alsations chose the best of their German and French duality. The Alsatian benevolence, indulgence, and scepticism towards Germans and French derived from the feeling of not fully belonging to either of them and thereby being able to keep a sympathy and neutral opinion towards both.¹¹⁹

Moving on to Lienhard, who wrote a more recent book about the Alsatian identity. In the introduction to his book *Spannungsfelder einer Identität: Die Elsässer*,¹²⁰ he writes, that groups or individuals living in a certain region, often long for the establishment of an own identity. This can be because of “political authorities or societal and cultural challenges” and the fact, that these groups or individuals want to make their voices heard, in order to achieve political changes or to “justify decisions, that influence institutions or lifestyle.”¹²¹ Lienhard points out that describing an identity is a challenge because one does not deal with objects, but with living subjects. He also writes, that identity should be regarded as something that is not fix, but rather as something that develops and changes over time. The author sheds light on this topic from different angles, which will be analysed in this subchapter.¹²²

Three chapters of his book are dedicated to the relationship between religion and identity. He mentions two surveys from 1998¹²³ and 2007,¹²⁴ according to which religion is important to most Alsations in defining their identity, which stands in contrast to people living in other parts of France. One can find many different religions in the region. The most recent survey shows, that of the 4,794 people questioned, 58% are Catholic, 17% are Protestant which presents a high share in comparison to the 2% of Protestants in the rest of France, 4% are Jewish, and 3% are Muslim, although the last number is thought to be too low. Lienhard writes, that the results of the two surveys present, that religion forms part of the Alsatian identity, as approximately 90% of the participants 2007 claimed to be religious. Moreover, the fact that Catholic and especially Protestant priests studied in Germany, which was less “hostile” vis-à-vis religion, is an important influence. Another detail that must be mentioned in this regard is that religion in Alsace is not fully restricted to private life. Lienhard furthermore appoints a certain degree of devoutness to

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 109-113.

¹²⁰ *Spannungsfelder einer Identität: Die Elsässer*, translates as: Tensions of an Identity: The Alsations.

¹²¹ Lienhard, Marc. *Spannungsfelder einer Identität: Die Elsässer*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2013, 15.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Survey of 6th and 8th of October conducted by DNA/IDL/ISERCO.DNA. 800 participants.

¹²⁴ Survey of 3rd and 4th of January 2007 conducted by IFOP. 4794 participants.

the religious people in the region.¹²⁵ As already mentioned previously, the attempt to separate church and state was not successful in Alsace.

Religion is visible in the Alsatian public space. According to Lienhard, the Cathedral of Strasbourg is one of the most important religious sites, as well as a central symbol of the region. Religion in the public space “contributes to social cohesion and helps to overcome the loneliness of many individuals by providing opportunities for community living.”¹²⁶ The author mentions the link between cult and culture. Many churches or religious sites serve as a site for concerts or other events. As the subchapter on the history of Alsace showed, Alsatian and German, always enjoyed a special status in the church. Until today, some church services are held in German, and a hymnbook is used, which is shared with churches of the Baden region.¹²⁷ In this regard, Lienhard also mentions a study from 2010, conducted by Jean-Marie Woehrling, which shows, that during the 19th and 20th century, the religious identity replaced the regional identity. The reasons Woehrling gives for this circumstance are that the local identity was highly influenced by Germany.

The language, the temperament, the spirituality, and the Alsatian religious sensitivity reminded too strongly of the German (...) characteristics. In view of the extremely problematic nature of regional identity, the confessional factor itself (...) has become the central determinant of Alsatian identity. (...) The power of religious commitment explains the weakness of regional/national demands (...). The Alsatians were more concerned with maintaining a Catholic than a regional society.¹²⁸

But according to Lienhard, the instrumentalization of the church from 1870 onwards, either by Germany or by France hindered the influence and support of the priests and pastors regarding the regional identity. This can be seen especially by the fact, that the state had a say in the appointment of bishops or church inspectors.¹²⁹

Other identifying attributes are shared by the Alsatians with other regions of France, or with their German neighbours. It must be pointed out that the following characteristics cannot be appointed to every Alsatian. Lienhard starts by mentioning the importance of music in the region. He writes that Alsace counts around 800 choirs with 42,000 singers. Additionally, the music schools count approximately 3,600 students, and one can find plenty of music association in the region. Moreover, Alsace numbers about

¹²⁵ Lienhard 2013, 103-106.

¹²⁶ Ibid, 121.

¹²⁷ Ibid, 123.

¹²⁸ See Woehrling, Jean-Marie 2010, in Lienhard 2013, 124.

¹²⁹ Lienhard 2013, 125-126.

1,200 organs, and one can find a bell in every church. Another feature is spending time in the nature surrounding the cities and villages. Lienhard speaks of “Wanderlust,” a German expression for the joy of taking a hike. Especially the Vosges are a favourite destination. The “Vogesen-Club,” a hiking club which was founded during the German Reich counted 33,500 members in 2010. French influences can be found in the local cuisine – baguette is eaten almost with every meal, and people value French cheese. Of course, traditional dishes like Tarte Flambée or Flammekueche, Choucroute, Pout-au-feu, Kougelhopf, and not to mention the regional wine, remain popular. Further central peculiarities are, for example, the importance of (sport) associations, the affinity for the land and nature, as well as environmental protection and remembrance of the wars through memorial sights.¹³⁰

Lienhard also mentions the discrepancies of the identity question. One of them concerns the difference between the generations. He writes that the difference between the age groups in Alsace is perhaps more profound, because of linguistic differences. “In general, seniors speak dialect most often. Most of their grandchildren only speak French. Despite all family ties, two different types of identity emerge.”¹³¹

Ladin and Trouillet who were already mentioned earlier in the historical analysis, also write about factors that influenced and shaped the Alsatian identity. According to Ladin, from the Franco-Prussian war onwards, and due to the frequent linguistic changes, an “Alsatian complex” developed. Meant by this is the psychological consequence of the particular situation in the region. “To speak a German language without being a German, to be a Frenchman without wanting to give up one's mother tongue.”¹³² Trouillet writes that at the beginning of the 1940s the cultural sector, amongst others was targeted by the Germanisation. He gives examples of theatres that were obliged to perform less Alsatian plays, or that from that time on, people would have to listen to “Lieder der Nation,” songs of the nation.¹³³

To end this analysis, I want to refer to the work of Weckmann who dedicated one chapter of his investigation to Alsatian culture and wrote as a first definition of regional culture, that the “regional culture is both intellectual and people-centred. It is the expression of the personality of a regional community and constitutes the heritage from

¹³⁰ Ibid, 128-131.

¹³¹ Ibid, 147.

¹³² Ladin 1982, 46.

¹³³ Trouillet 1997, 122.

which this community draws its moral and intellectual resources.”¹³⁴ Weckmann furthermore states, that language is an integral part of a culture, which means that each linguistic community owns a specific culture.

Alsatian culture is the cultural reality experienced in Alsace in all the linguistic, artistic, and psychological dimensions that this province presents. It is an expression of both French and German culture on the same territory. As a result, it is intended to be a reunion, not an exclusion. It is the Alsatian way of assimilating the two cultures and promoting their osmosis. It is a sublimation of the contractions born from this side-by-side.¹³⁵

Weckmann makes a critical remark in saying, that Alsatian culture can of course, not only be summarised by speaking the dialect or by participating in regional traditions. It includes all kinds of intellectual expression in Alsatian, French, and German.¹³⁶ According to his assumption, the Alsatian culture is the “culture of "living together," of tolerance, of respect for differences. It is both rooted and open to the world. In this respect, it is a culture of the future.”¹³⁷

Unsteady times left their mark on the Alsatian culture and identity, which developed over time. Alsatian culture comprises traditions, religion, arts, literature, music, characteristics, and cuisine, that is produced and experienced by Alsatians in French, German, and Alsatian. It seems impossible to define the Alsatian identity in one sentence. “Undoubtedly, there is an Alsatian identity. Tangible and strong, it has been constituted by a rich common history, marked by a vibrant regional language and shaped by unique landscapes and lifestyles.”¹³⁸

¹³⁴ Weckmann and Rieger 2011, 6.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 7.

¹³⁸ Lienhard, Marc. *Histoire & aléas de l'identité Alsacienne*. Strasbourg: La Nuée Bleue, 2011, blurb.

2 The OLCA Survey

In the following, I will present the most important findings of the OLCA survey. It is vital to know about the essential facts, and results of the study since some of the information will help to answer two of the hypotheses.

In April 2012, OLCA published a survey on the Alsatian dialect that had been conducted by EDinstitut. The main objectives of the study were, to find out about the practice level of Alsatian, to understand how the dialect is passed on, to find out what perception the participants have of the dialect, as well as to get information on the legitimacy of different actors that are involved in the process of promoting Alsatian.¹³⁹ From 1st to 9th of March 2012, 801 persons aged 18 and older living in Alsace were contacted via telephone and asked to reply to a set of questions. The age distribution of the respondents was nearly even although those aged 18 to 29 represent the smallest group with 20%. Next, I will give an overview of the most relevant results of the survey.

The first main finding of the study shows that less than half of the respondents (43%) claim to speak Alsatian fluently. Furthermore, it shows that the percentage of people speaking the dialect increases with age. 3% of the 3 to 17 years aged, as indicated by their parents, and 12% of the 18 to 29 years old, speak Alsatian. In comparison, 74% of those aged 60 years and older are speakers of the dialect. Concerning the learning of Alsatian, 89% indicated, that they learned the dialect from their parents. “The decrease in dialect learning is primarily due to the parents. Indeed, while nearly 9 out of 10 dialectophones have learned Alsatian with their parents, only 56% of them will, in turn, pass it on to their children.”¹⁴⁰ Also, the survey showed that the possibility of learning Alsatian at home is almost three times higher if both parents speak the dialect. In family situations where one partner does not understand Alsatian, the dialect was less likely to be passed on.

Another striking result of the survey is that around 90% of the respondents think that if the dialect disappears, the region will lose its identity. I will come back to this fact when analysing the hypotheses. When asked what the respondents first think about when someone talks to them about Alsace, 59% replied to be thinking of Alsatian cuisine, wine and beer, followed by 30% that think of the architectural heritage, and 27% that think of

¹³⁹ EDinstitut. *Etude réalisée par EDinstitut sur la base de 801 personnes résidant en Alsace interrogés par téléphone selon la méthode des quotas entre le 1er et le 9 mars 2012*. Survey, Alsace: Office pour la Langue et la Culture d'Alsace, 2012, 4.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 11.

the Alsatian dialect.¹⁴¹ Although 84% said that Alsatian helps in learning other languages and that it is also useful for the professional life, 65% predicted, that the young generations will not speak the dialect anymore. “In the face of the decline of Alsatian, the actions to be taken to promote it must first and foremost reach young people by giving a place to the dialect in the school environment (38%) or encouraging transmission between generations (8%).”¹⁴² Actors that are thought to be the most important when wanting to preserve the dialect are, cultural associations (91%), the Alsations themselves speaking the dialect or wanting to learn it (88%), and the schools (87%).¹⁴³ The speaking of the dialect in everyday life can also be mentioned in this regard. The results of the survey also provide information on the question with whom the respondents speak Alsatian. Over 90% indicate that they speak the dialect with their grandparents, and 79% and 81% claim to communicate in Alsatian with their mother or father, respectively. “Among the dialectophones, only 34% declare that they use Alsatian systematically; that is to say about 200,000 people over 18 years of age in Alsace.”¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, when asked in which situations the respondents speak Alsatian, only 15% claimed to speak Alsatian with administrative staff.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 42.

¹⁴² Ibid, 12.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 33.

3 General Information about the Sociolinguistic Survey

This chapter will give essential information about the survey that was conducted for this Master thesis. Additionally, I will provide information on the different parts of the questionnaire. At the end of the chapter, I am going to mention the limits of the results of the survey.

3.1 Basis of the Questionnaire

In 2017, Mathieu Avanzi published his *Atlas du français de nos régions*. His book was, in a way, the basis for the questionnaire and furthermore gave inspiration to this Master thesis. Avanzi conducted surveys via the internet and thereby collected information on words and expressions, which are used and spoken in certain regions all over France, Switzerland, and Belgium. Thanks to the author's focusing on Alsace amongst other areas, I found a fundament in his work for my questionnaire. His questionnaire showed, that words like "schlou(c)k," which is Alsatian for mouthful or sip, and "schloppe" which is Alsatian for "slippers" is frequently used in the region.¹⁴⁶ The results of this research represent only a small fraction of the younger population of Alsace and can therefore not be applied to the whole urban and rural area.

3.2 The Questionnaire

The anonymous questionnaire, that I created with *Google Forms* and which I conducted in French (see Annex), was comprised of four main parts. In the first one, people were asked to give general information about themselves like age, gender, place of birth, and how many years the person had spent in Alsace. The second part of the questionnaire aimed at receiving information about the knowledge of words and expressions that I took from the book by Avanzi, as I mentioned before. Participants were asked to indicate their knowledge of a particular word or phrase and were afterwards asked, to note on a scale from one to five how often he or she uses the word. One meaning never and five meaning very often. Table 3 gives an overview of the used words and expressions, including their translation in German, French, and English. Moreover, I asked about additional words and phrases and their application. The third part of the questionnaire aimed at getting information on the respondents' level of Alsatian, as well as their parents' knowledge on the dialect. Also here, the participants could choose between yes – I speak Alsatian and no – I do not speak Alsatian, and additionally a rating from one (I do not speak Alsatian) to five (I speak Alsatian fluently). This distinction of

¹⁴⁶ Avanzi, Mathieu. *Atlas du Français de nos Régions*. Malakoff: Armand Colin, 2017.

the linguistic level of proficiency was added to, for example, not only find out that they can communicate in Alsatian, but also how well they master it. This allowed better conclusions to be drawn about linguistic behaviour and use and was used for several questions throughout the questionnaire (check questionnaire in the Annex). The fourth and last part of the inquiry was dedicated to Alsatian identity along with the feeling of belonging to the region. Questions asked were, if those who answered the survey, participate in regional traditions and if yes, if they could name those. Then, I passed the question if the participants could describe what it means to them to feel Alsatian. Again, they were asked to indicate on a scale from one to five, to what degree they felt Alsatian or not. Additionally, one question dealt with Alsatian identity, and if people thought that an Alsatian identity existed, afterwards they were asked to describe this identity in their own words. The final question was if Alsace should establish a regional authority with its own status.

Table 3: Words and Expressions used for the Questionnaire

Alsatian	German	French	English
Schlou(c)k, d'r	Schluck, der	Gorgée, la	Mouthful/sip
Boire un schlou(c)k	Einen Schluck trinken (gehen)	Boire un coup	Have a drink
Schlappe/Schloppe, de	Hausschuhe, die Schlappen/Schluppen, die (colloquial)	Pantoufles, les	Slippers
Schnäcke/Schneck(e), d'	Rosinenschnecke, die	Pain aux raisins, le	Chelsea bun
Comme dit	Wie gesagt	Comme on dit	As said (before)
Wie geht's	Wie geht's?	Ça va?	How are you/What's up?

I chose to publish the link of the questionnaire in the Facebook groups of the University of Strasbourg, as I hoped to reach out to the right age group as well as I assumed that those people enrolled in the group live or lived in Alsace. The groups *Université de Strasbourg* and *Étudiants de Strasbourg* comprise approximately 49,000 and 37,000 members, respectively. I posted the link to the questionnaire for the first time on the 2nd of March and got 118 replies. The second time I posted it on the 16th of March and received 450 responses in total. In general, I was able to use almost all replies. Furthermore, to get people's attention, I asked a humorous question: "Est-ce-que vous dites plutôt « boire un verre » ou « boire un schlouck »?"

Unfortunately, some respondents gave unusable replies in saying for example, that they do not speak Alsatian but then indicated that their level of Alsatian is very good.

Those replies have not been taken into account for the particular question and evaluation. As no separate analysis has been done of the responses that came from respondents living in a city and those living in a rural area, it is not possible to apply the results to either one group, rural or urban. Moreover, the survey does not give information on the profession of the respondents. Since the questionnaire was published in the Facebook groups of the University of Strasbourg, one could presume that most of the respondents are students.

To summarise, the book of Avanzi gave inspiration and a basis for the questionnaire. The questionnaire was conducted in French, was subdivided into four parts, and distributed via Facebook. The survey is limited to the fact that most of the respondents are probably students, and they probably live in urban areas.

3.3 The Limits of Sociolinguistic Surveys

The particular limits of the sociolinguistic survey conducted for this Master thesis were already mentioned in the previous paragraphs. Boberg presents the general disadvantages or limits of sociolinguistic, written questionnaires. He refers here to Labov who wrote about the “observer’s paradox”: “the aim of linguistic research in the community must be to find out how people talk when they are not being systematically observed; yet we can only obtain these data by systematic observation.”¹⁴⁷ Boberg summarises, that “fill-in-the-blank exercises” may be used to obtain information about the respondents’ attitude towards a language or dialect, but the results do not show how the respondents “actually speak.”¹⁴⁸ This fact also holds true for this survey. As an example, the respondents may have indicated their and their parents’ knowledge of Alsatian, but we do not know if their replies match up with reality. Furthermore, the order of the questionnaire may influence how people replied. Having said all this, written surveys do have advantages as for instance, the high number of replies that are obtained in a rather short period of time.

¹⁴⁷ Labov, 1972 in Mallinson, Christine, Becky Childs, and Gerard Van Herk eds. *Data Collection in Sociolinguistics. Methods and Applications*. New York: Routledge, 2013, 133-134.

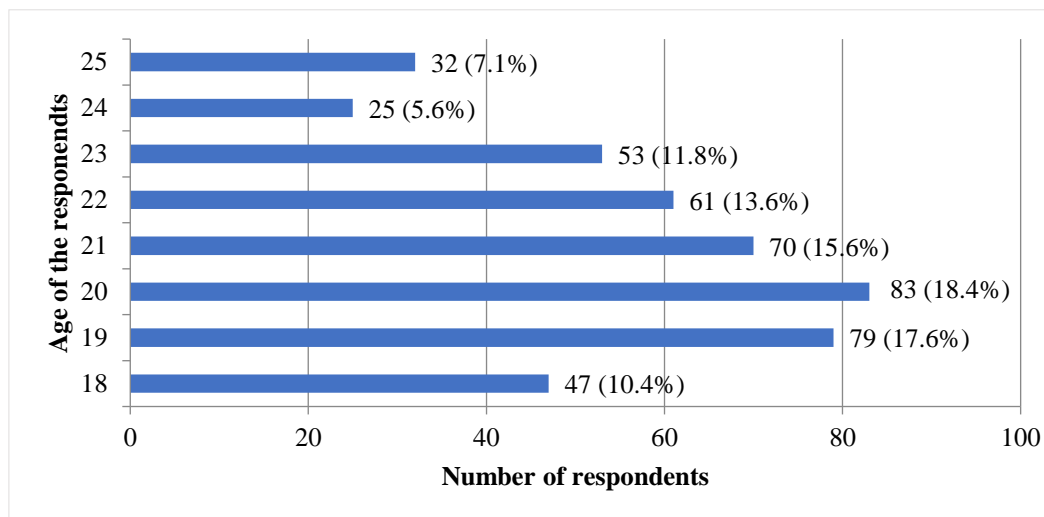
¹⁴⁸ Mallinson et al, 2013, 134.

4 Results of the Sociolinguistic Survey

This chapter will present the results of the survey in a detailed fashion. As has been stated in the previous section, 450 people have answered the questionnaires, which were distributed via Facebook. The results of the survey will be presented in the same order as the questionnaire. Although the replies were numerous, one should not jump to conclusions and interpret the results as a rule which can be applied to every young adult in Alsace.

The first four questions were aiming at receiving basic data of the respondents. Figure 2 gives an overview of the age distribution of the respondents. People were able to indicate their age from 18 to 25 years old. As the graph shows, most of the respondents are either 19, 20, or 21 years old, which represents a share of over 50%.

Figure 2: Age of Respondents



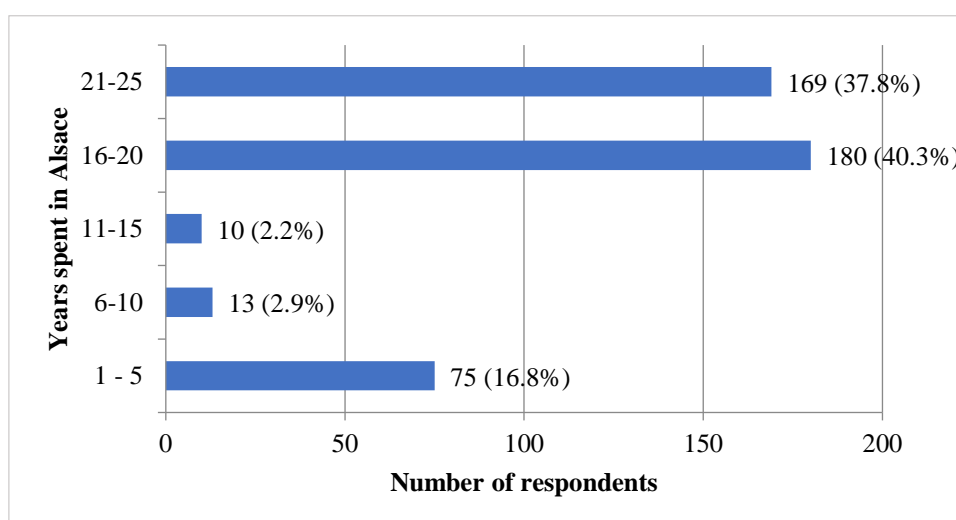
Question number two asked about the gender of the respondent. Although this question was not an obligatory question, all respondents replied to it. It turned out that a lot more women (88.7%) responded to the questionnaire in comparison to men (11.3%). Furthermore, people were asked to indicate their place of birth. 29.8% of the respondents were born in Strasbourg, 10.9% were born in Mulhouse, 8.4% in Colmar and 6.7% were born in Hagenau. The high percentage of people born in Strasbourg can perhaps be justified by the fact that the questionnaire was published in the two Facebook groups of the University of Strasbourg.

This paragraph will give some information on the three previously mentioned cities, excluding Strasbourg, since it was commented on already when giving facts about Alsace. Mulhouse is the second biggest city in Alsace and the biggest city in the Haut-Rhin with approximately 113,000 inhabitants. The town is situated closely to the borders

with Germany and Switzerland.¹⁴⁹ Some 40 kilometres north of Mulhouse lies Colmar, which is with around 70,000 inhabitants, still the third biggest city of Alsace. Colmar is very popular among tourists who want to visit “small Venice,” as parts of the historic centre of the town are called.¹⁵⁰ And lastly, Hagenau which is the fourth biggest city of the region with approximately 35,000 inhabitants. The small town is situated north of Strasbourg.¹⁵¹

Figure 3 shows the replies to question four, which dealt with the years the respondents spent in Alsace. More than 77% of the respondents indicated that they spent between 16 and 25 years of their life in the region. These numbers imply that most of the respondents were born in Alsace, that they moved here while they were young, or that they only recently left the region. The third highest number of respondents (approximately 16%) said that they had spent one to five years in Alsace. Most probably, these young adults came to Alsace for their studies.

Figure 3: Years spent in Alsace



As mentioned in the previous paragraph, most respondents spent over 16 years of their life in Alsace. Figure 4 visualizes, that only one-quarter of those who replied to the questionnaire indicated, that they were not born in the region.

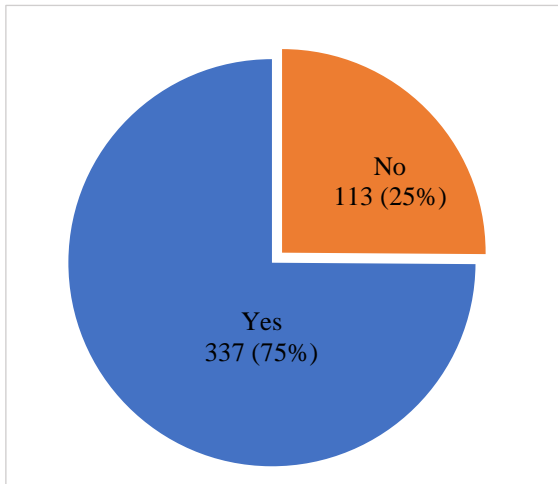
¹⁴⁹ Ville de Mulhouse. *Mulhouse face à son avenir*. n.d.

<https://www.mulhouse.fr/decouvrir/patrimoine/histoire-de-la-ville/> (accessed May 08, 2019).

¹⁵⁰ Tourisme Colmar. *Colmar in Zahlen*. n.d. <https://www.tourisme-colmar.com/de/entdecken/geschichte-kulturerbe/colmar-entdecken> (accessed May 08, 2019).

¹⁵¹ Cartes France. *Region de l'Alsace*. n.d. <http://www.cartesfrance.fr/carte-france-region/carte-region-Alsace.html> (accessed May 08, 2019).

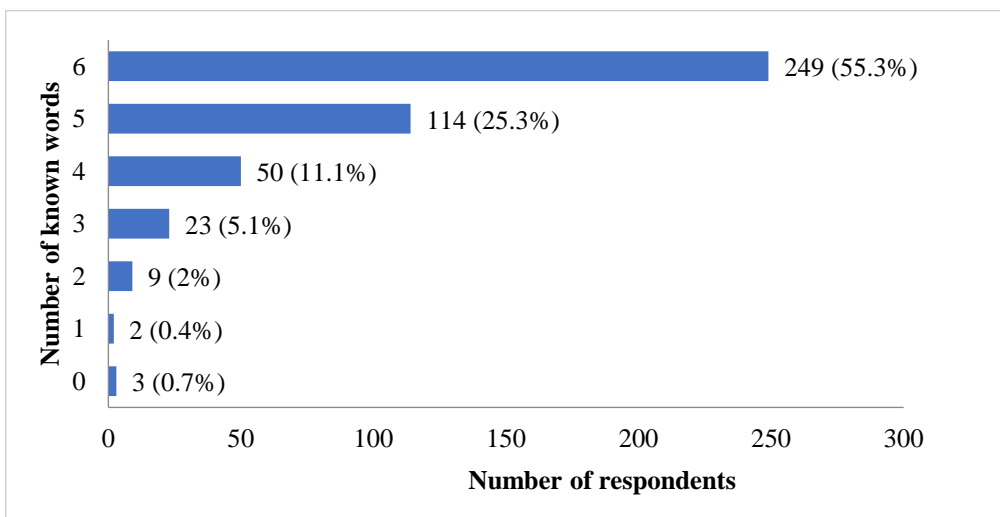
Figure 4: Born in Alsace



The following questions dealt with the knowledge of the previously selected words and expressions, which were mentioned in the preceding chapter. Figure 5 shows how many respondents know how many words and phrases. The graphic demonstrates that three respondents knew none of the given words and phrases. 11 respondents knew one or two words. The

highest number, 249 persons, knew all words and phrases. So 55% of the respondents claim to know all of the six given words and expressions. In contrast to this, only 8% say that they know three or less of the words and phrases.

Figure 5: Number of known words and expressions



In order to receive more information on how often the people who replied to the questionnaire use these words and expressions, it was possible to indicate on a scale from one to five the level of usage. One was equal to never, two was similar to rarely, three was equal to sometimes, four was identical to often, and five was equal to very often. For every word or expression, the respondents were asked to indicate how often he or she uses the word. Over 65% reported to know the word “Schl(o)u(c)k,” and even more, 92%, claim to know the expression “boire un schl(o)u(c)k.” 28.6% and 48% respectively, indicated to use the word and the phrase often or very often. The following word, “Schlappe/Schloppe” is known by 88%, and over half of the respondents say that they use this word often or very often. The next word, “Schnake/Schnek” is again known by

an essential number of respondents, 73.8%, but here, 29.3% say that they never use the word and only 19.1% indicate to use the word often or very often. The second last expression, “comme dit,” which is known by 88.9%, was noted to be used often or very often by the highest share of respondents, namely 62.9%.

Concerning the scale of usage, which is presented in Figure 6, 47% of the respondents indicated that they use the given words “often” (scale 4) and “very often” (scale 5). On the other hand, 37% use the words and expressions “rarely” (scale 2) or “never” (scale 1). The average usage of the words and expressions equals to a scale of 3, “sometimes.”

Figure 6: Scale of usage – given words

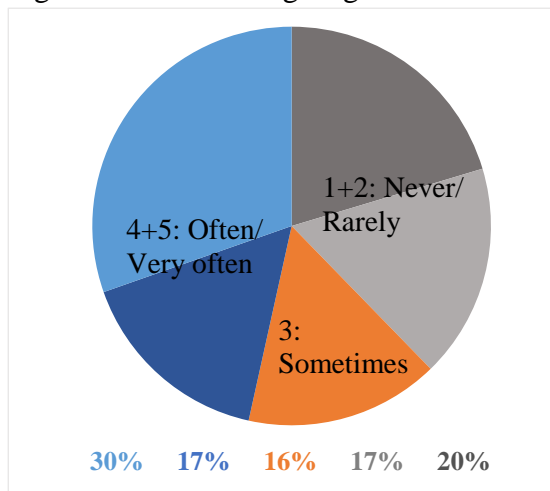
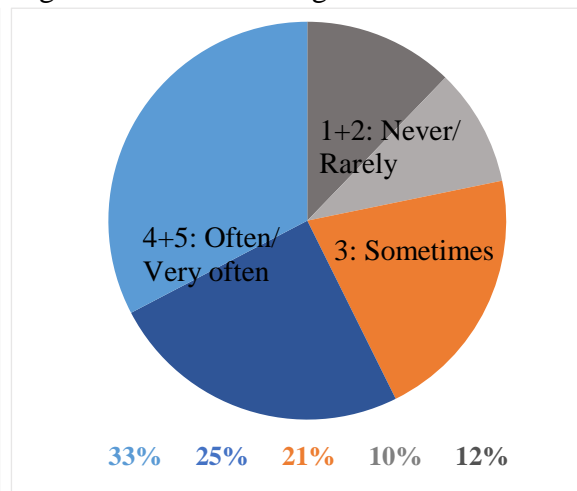


Figure 6.1: Scale of usage – additional words

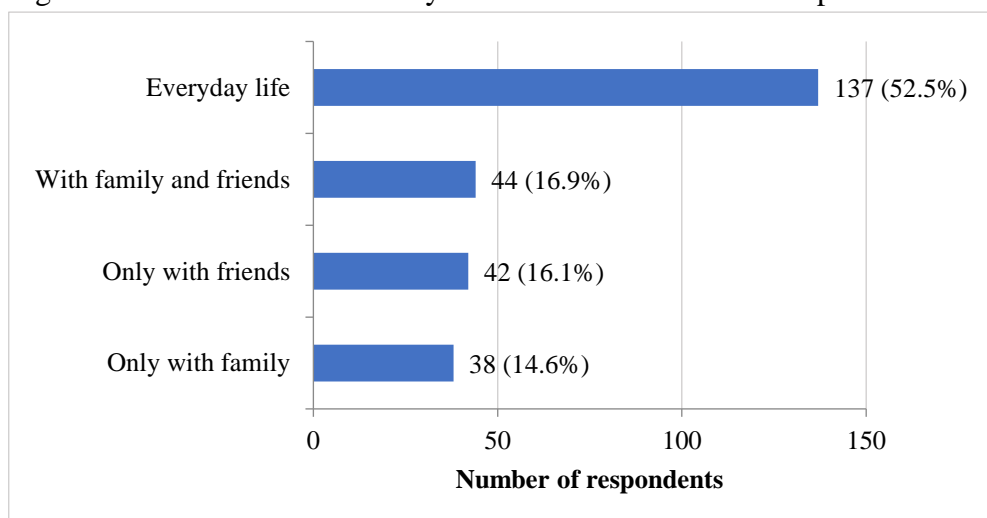


The respondents were asked to name more Alsatian words and expressions which they use in everyday life. The replies were very diverse. One of the answers that was given the most was “hopla” (62 of 450 replies). This expression can be seen as the equivalent to the French expression “allez (c'est parti)”. Although it is difficult to find a fitting English translation, “come on (let’s go)” or “here we go” might be the most suitable ones. An additional expression that was mentioned by 17 respondents was “ça tire,” which is the direct translation of the German expression “es zieht,” in English “there is a draught.” A word that was stated with a high frequency was “Foehn,” (24 of 450) which comes from the German word “Föhn” and means “hair dryer.” “Kopfertami” was also very popular amongst 23 of the respondents. This expression is used in order to communicate one’s discontent in a vulgar fashion. To mention one last example, the word “tirette” was also written 25 times. The word translates to “zipper.” Also, here, the respondents were asked to indicate how often they use the words and expressions. As presented in Figure 6.1, around 58% answered that they use the words often or very often.

These results are contradicting to the results that are presented in Figure 6 and show the dependence on the choice of the word or expression. Both results will be kept in mind as a basis to examine the second hypothesis.

To get some more data on the situations in which people speak Alsatian, and with whom, the next question, again an open question like the previous one, is summarized in Figure 7. The answers of the respondents were subdivided into four categories. 137 of the respondents use Alsatians words and expressions in everyday life. 44 people replied to be using these expressions in situations with their family and friends, and 42 and 39 respondents indicated to speak Alsatian in situations with their friends or family, respectively. Concerning the classification of the answers I proceeded in a way, that if somebody explicitly indicated to use the words and expressions only with friends and/or family members, I assigned her or his answer to the corresponding group. Answers that implied, that the respondent uses the words or expressions “tout le temps,” all the time, or “dans la vie quotidienne,” in everyday life, were placed in the group of the same title. Since it was possible to answer this question in a written form, that means without clearly making a choice of possible answers, it is challenging to draw a definite conclusion from this result. The reply for example, “tout le temps,” does not exclude the speaking situation “with family” or “with friends.” Therefore, this point will not be further investigated.

Figure 7: In which situations do you use Alsatian words and expressions?



The following four questions were dedicated to the knowledge of the Alsatian dialect. First, the respondents were asked if they could speak the dialect, and if yes, how good they would speak it. Figure 8 visualises that over 77% of the respondents do not communicate in the dialect. Of the 103 people that do speak Alsatian, only 27 of them, that means only 6% of all respondents, speak the dialect very good to fluently. This result

can be checked by taking a look at the left Figure 10. The same question was then asked to find out about the respondents' parents' knowledge of Alsatians. A little more than half of the respondents, almost 53%, claim that their parents speak Alsatian, as is presented in Figure 9. 121, meaning around 50% of the 238 parents, and 26.9% of all respondents' parents are supposed to be speaking the dialect fluently, as can be seen in the right Figure 10. As an upshot, we can say that more than 50% of all parents speak Alsatian. But only around 25% of all respondents speak the dialect. This is a reduction of nearly 50% from one generation to the next. The results coincide with the results of the OLCA study, which are further explained in the hypotheses.

Figure 8: Do you speak Alsatian?

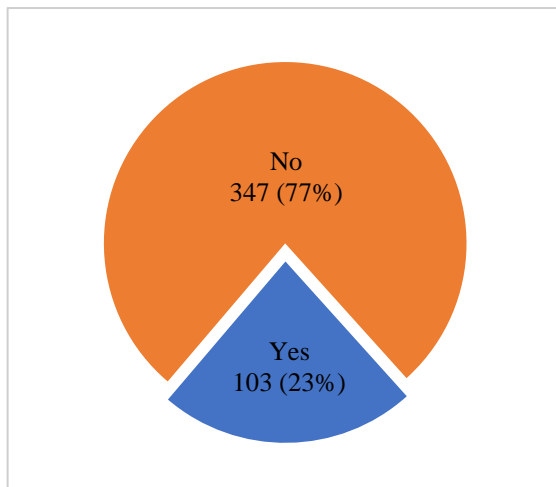


Figure 9: Do your parents speak Alsatian?

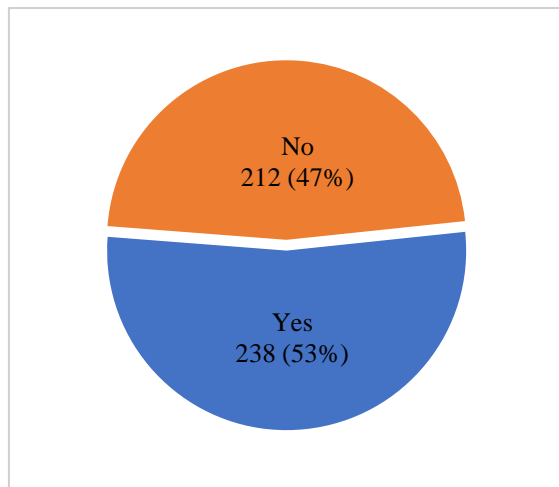
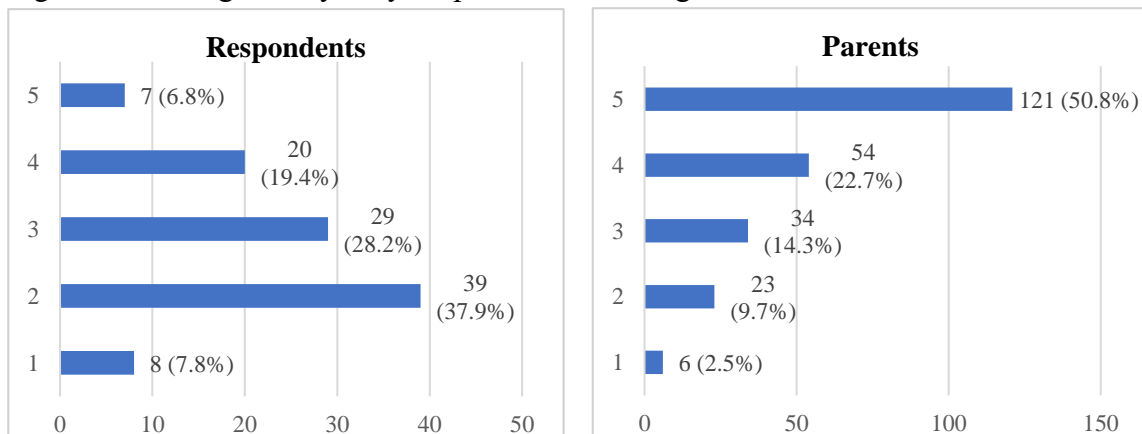
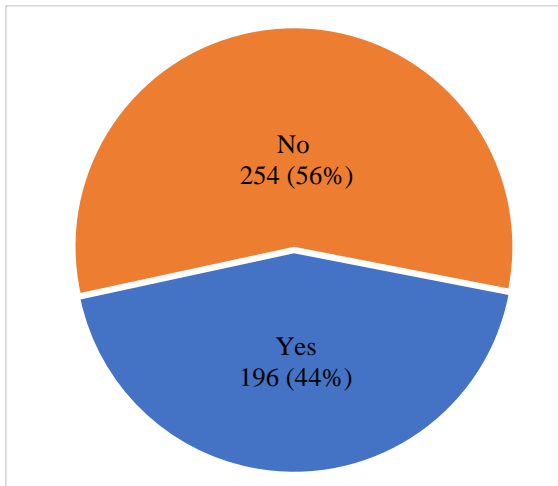


Figure 10: How good is your/your parents' knowledge of Alsatian?



The final part of the questionnaire was aiming to get information about the respondents' feeling of identification with the Alsatian identity. As we have learned in the chapter on Alsatian identity, tradition forms a part of culture and identity. That is why the following question of the survey was, whether the respondent participates in regional traditions. The replies to this question are presented in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Do you participate in regional traditions?



The results show that there is not a very strong tendency to either reply, although 56% said that they do not participate in regional tradition. Those 44% who do participate were asked to name the traditions. The answers were subdivided into different categories, namely traditions that were related to gastronomy, religion, and those events that would be classified as

cultural or secular ones.

Figure 12: In what kind of regional traditions do you participate?

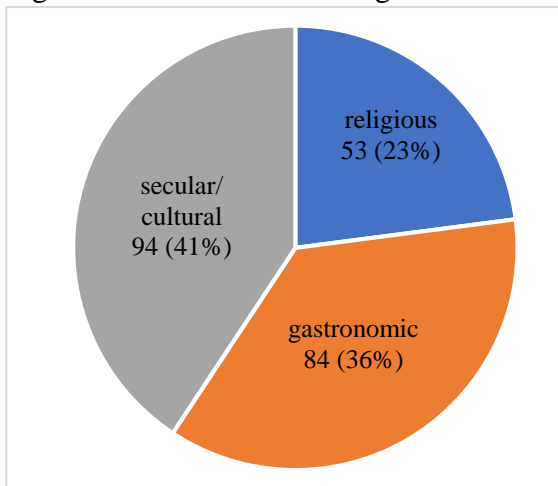


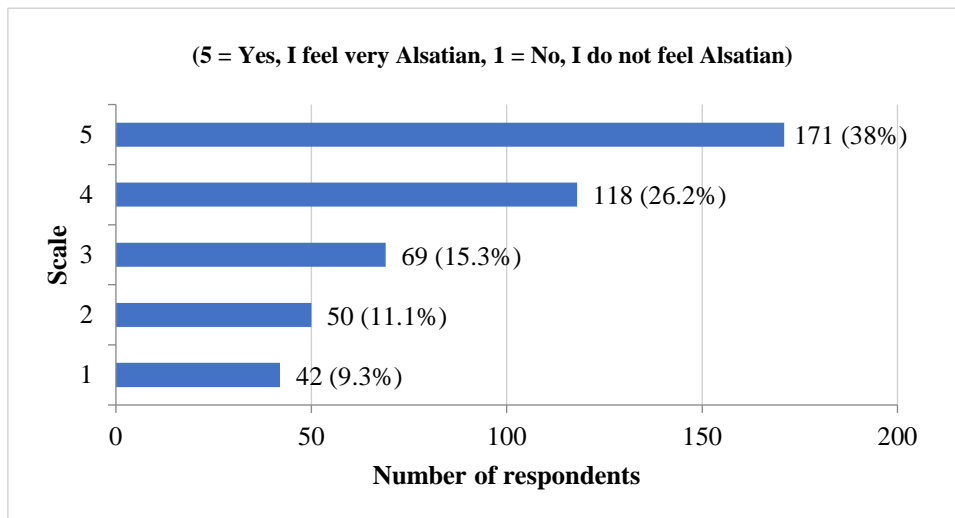
Figure 12 represents the group of traditions, the respondents' associated with Alsace. Unfortunately, 17% of the respondents who said that they participate in regional traditions did not indicate those.

As is shown in the Figure, the most significant number of replies concern cultural and non-religious traditions, with 41%. Traditions that were mentioned by

four respondents are, for example, to practice folkloric Alsatian dance, or to go to the Christmas market as was mentioned by 28 respondents. Christmas markets are of course not only in Strasbourg or Colmar but also in the surrounding villages and smaller cities of the region. Ten of the respondents also mentioned the local Carnival in this regard. 36% of the replies have to do with gastronomy and/or Alsatian cuisine. Examples that were given here were: local wine and beer festivals (23 replies) as well as other gastronomic festivals like "fête de la choucroute" (sauerkraut festival) or "fête du Munster" (Munster cheese festival), which were stated in five replies. Other 29 respondents named furthermore the "Bredele" which are typical Alsatian cookies. The last category included religious traditions, which made up 23% of the answers. Examples are to celebrate Easter or St. Nicholas, mentioned in 38 replies. We can conclude that most of the respondents usually associate Alsatian tradition with cultural and secular events and typical culinary festivities.

The following questions were asked in a more direct manner. Question number 15 asked about what it means for the respondent to feel Alsatian. A selection of these answers can be found under Hypothesis 3 as well as in the Annex. The following Figure 13 shows the replies to the question, to what extent the respondents feel Alsatian. Here it was again possible to choose on a scale between one, no, I do not feel Alsatian, and five, Yes, I feel very Alsatian. Out of all the respondents, 64% chose a four or a five to indicate to what degree he or she feels Alsatian. Under Hypothesis 3, the replies to this question will be further analysed.

Figure 13: To what degree do you feel Alsatian?



Also, the subsequent question showed an evident tendency. In question number 17, the people replying to the questionnaire were asked if they think that an Alsatian identity exists. Figure 14 represents the results. 80% believe that an Alsatian identity exists in comparison to 20% who do not think so. The respondents were asked to define the Alsatian identity. Most of the respondents (32 of 358 who identify with Alsatian identity) specifically mentioned the history of the region that shaped the identity, followed by the Alsatian dialect which according to 17 of 358, makes up for a significant part of the Alsatian identity.

Next, Figure 15 will be explained. 54% of all respondents would identify themselves with the Alsatian identity, while 28% said the opposite. For some answers, it was not possible to clearly distinguish between a yes or a no. These answers were categorised as “unspecified.” To give some examples of the “unspecified” replies, 14 people wrote, “un peu” (a little), “oui et non” (yes and no) was stated by 6 people, and “plus ou moins” (more or less) and “moyennement” (moderately) by 16 respondents.

Figure 14:
Do you think an Alsatian identity exists?

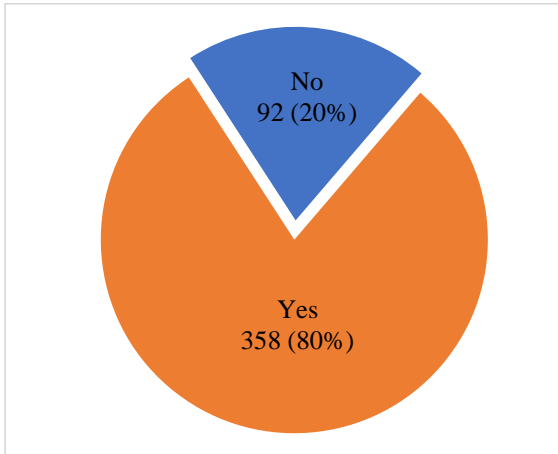
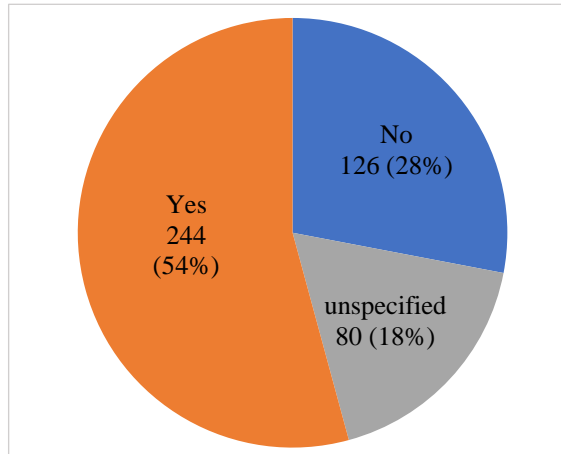
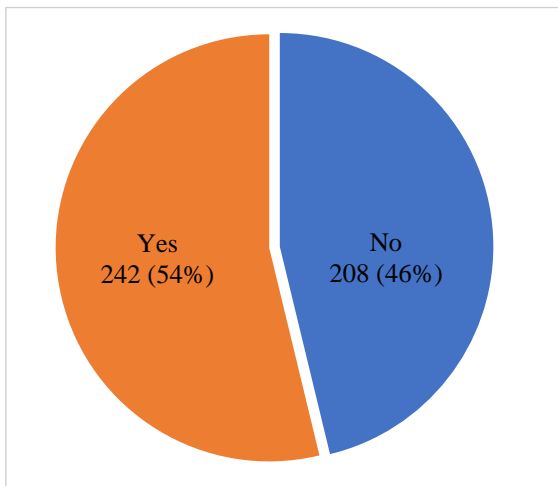


Figure 15:
Do you identify with this identity?



The last question of the survey was, whether Alsace should create a regional authority with its own status. Figure 16 represents the results which show that 54% of the respondents think that Alsace should be a regional authority, and 46% think otherwise. This result represents that even though fewer young adults speak Alsatian (Figure 8), more than half of the respondents think, that Alsace should constitute a regional authority with its own status.

Figure 16: Should Alsace be a regional authority with its own status?



4.1 The Sociolinguistic Survey in Comparison with the OLCA Survey

Having presented all the results of the sociolinguistic survey, I will shortly describe the main differences between this survey and the OLCA survey and their outcomes. One of the main differences between the two surveys concerns the respondents. The OLCA survey focused on all age groups, while the study conducted for this Master thesis focused precisely on young adults aged 18 to 25 years. Another difference is that we know about the interviewees' profession. We can only assume that a large amount of the respondents is or were students. Another significant difference is that this survey asked about the knowledge of a selection of words and expressions as well as the overall Alsatian skill. It is very interesting to see that the OLCA survey showed a different outcome when it comes to the link between the Alsatian dialect and the identity. The third Hypothesis will analyse the different results.

5 Hypotheses

To begin, I will transform the research questions, which were mentioned in the introduction of this thesis into hypotheses. The previously examined literature focusing on the link between language and identity, besides the historical, socio-political, and linguistic background of the region, will help to analyse the following hypotheses and state the rejection probability.

1. Looking at a young population, is the Alsatian dialect in the process of disappearing, or not?

The Alsatian Dialect declines from generation to generation.

2. To what extent will the dialect still exist in the future?

Although Alsatian is spoken less within the young generation, some words and expressions are anchored in everyday language use.

3. Does the usage of the dialect have an impact on the feeling of belonging to the Alsatian identity?

The identification with the Alsatian identity decreases with the decline of the dialect.

5.1 First Hypothesis

To reject, or not reject this hypothesis, I looked at the knowledge of Alsatian, the respondents, and their parents have, see Figure 8 and 9 below. Furthermore, I took a closer look, at the ranking, the respondents gave their own Alsatian skills, as well as their parents, as is shown by Figure 10, see below. Of the 450 people who answered the questionnaire, 103 say that they speak Alsatian, and 347 say they do not. Of those speaking the dialect, 47 claim to have a bad until basic knowledge of Alsatian. That means that 56 of 450 young adults have an average until fluent knowledge of Alsatian, which presents 12.4% of all respondents. Comparing this now to the parents' Alsatian skill, 238 of the respondents claimed that their parents speak the dialect, and 212 said, that they do not. Of those who are supposed to speak the dialect, 29 speak it bad until basic, and 209 have an average until a fluent level, which presents 46.4% of the parents of all 450 respondents.

As an upshot, we can say that within the generation of the parents, a significant number still speaks the dialect but does not successfully pass it on to the next generation. Putting the share of those young adults speaking the dialect (103) in relation to the dialect speaking parents (238) – not taking into account the knowledge of Alsatian – one comes to the result, that 43.3% of the parents pass their Alsatian skills on to the next generation.

That means that less than half of the parents pass on the dialect, thereby also dividing the chance to further transmit the dialect to the generations to come. The upshot of this is that today every fourth to fifth (22.9%) young adult speaks Alsatian, and because of the results of the survey it could be expected, that in the coming years, only every tenth young adult speaks the dialect at last to an average degree.

This last prognosis is validated through the following result of the *Etude sur le dialecte alsacien* survey published by OLCA. “The decrease in dialect learning is primarily due to parents. Indeed, while nearly 9 out of 10 dialectophones have learned Alsatian with their parents, only 56% of them pass it on to their children.”¹⁵² Moreover, only 30% of the respondents to the OLCA survey think that the next generation will be able to speak Alsatian.¹⁵³ Additionally, chapter one, and especially the geopolitical and historical analysis showed, that over the years Alsatian was displaced from public life into the private and family life. When looking at today’s young adults, Alsatian is no longer a language of communication, although some words and phrases are used by a significant number of respondents, as will be shown by the analysis of the next hypothesis.

In conclusion, I will not reject this hypothesis because the Alsatian dialect will decline from generation to generation due to the fact that it is not successfully passed on → not rejected.

Figure 8: Do you speak Alsatian?

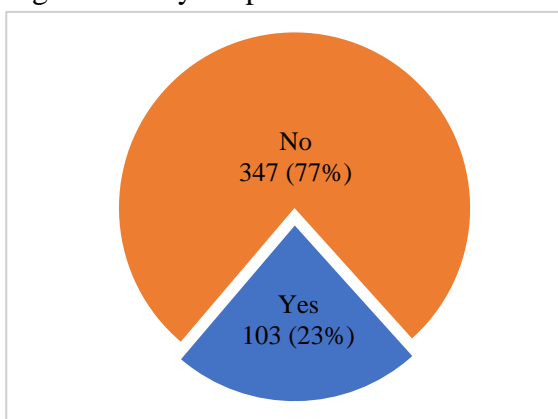
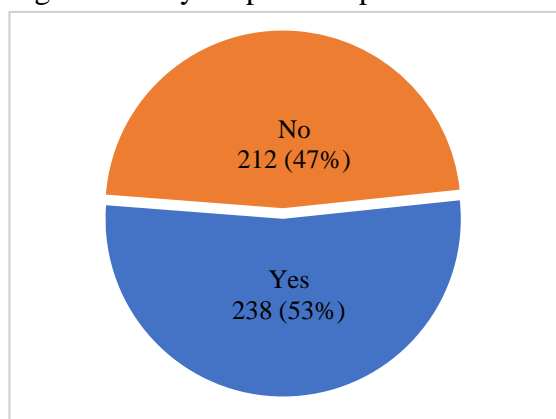


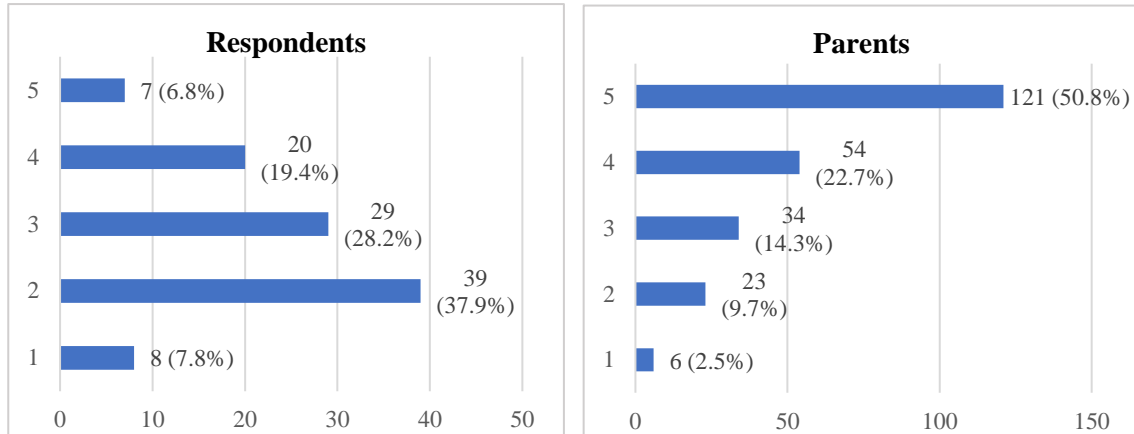
Figure 9: Do your parents speak Alsatian?



¹⁵² EDinstitut. *Etude réalisée par EDinstitut sur la base de 801 personnes résidant en Alsace interrogés par téléphone selon la méthode des quotas entre le 1er et le 9 mars 2012*. Survey, Alsace: Office pour la Langue et la Culture d'Alsace, 2012, 11.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 50.

Figure 10: How good is your / your parents' knowledge of Alsatian?



5.2 Second Hypothesis

For the second hypothesis, I will take a closer look at the number of people who do not speak Alsatian (see Figure 8) and relate it to the number of words and expressions they know, given in the questionnaire. Six words and phrases were given in the survey, and respondents were asked to indicate their level of usage of every word or phrase. Of the 347 who stated not to speak Alsatian, 260 know at least five words and expressions, which represents 75% (see Figure 17), and 310 know at least four words and phrases, which represents 89%. Concerning the frequency, the respondents use the given words and phrases on average “sometimes.” So, a relatively large amount of those not speaking Alsatian knows and uses the words and expressions. Furthermore, 298 of the 347, that is more than 86% state additional words in the questionnaire, that they know and use in everyday life. That means that Alsatian will still exist in the future, but will probably be used in a limited way, namely by using only specific words and expressions.

To conclude, I will not reject this hypothesis, because the convincing results of the questionnaire show, that although Alsatian is spoken less within the young generation, some words and expressions are anchored in everyday language use → not rejected.

Figure 8: Do you speak Alsatian?

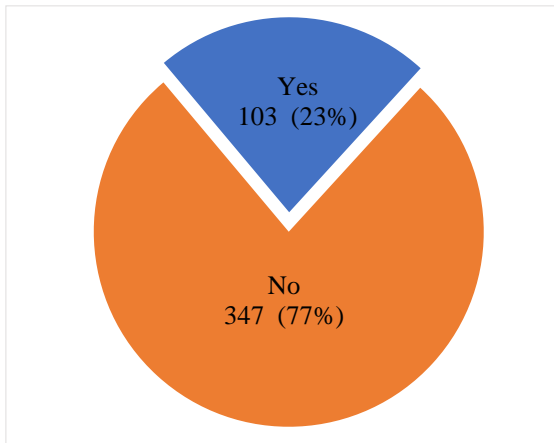
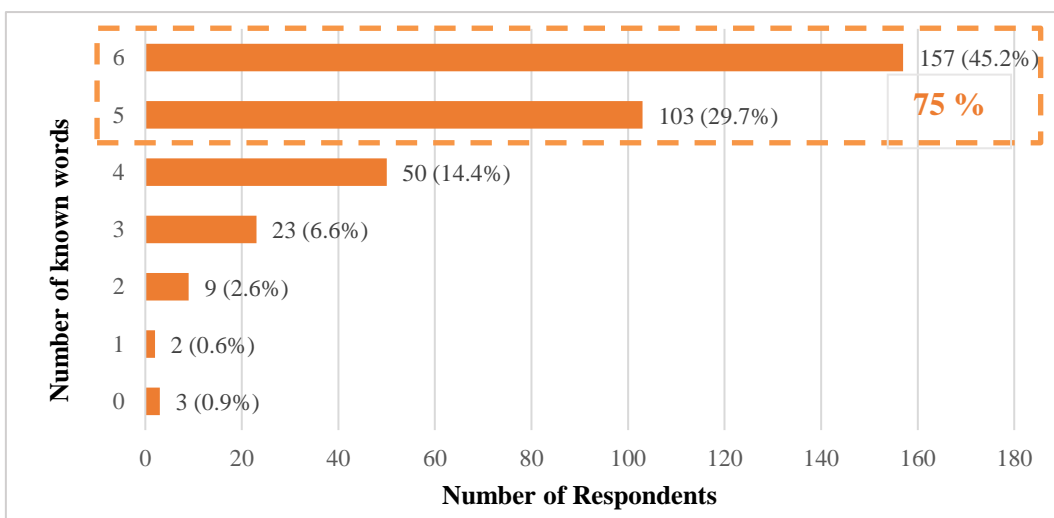


Figure 17: Knowledge of words/expressions of those respondents not speaking Alsatian



5.3 Third Hypothesis

A source of information for this hypothesis is again the OLCA survey, which I have referred to before. According to the results of this survey, the Alsatian dialect is the third most important characteristic of the region, with the culinary culture being the most important one, and the architectural heritage ranking second important.¹⁵⁴ Additionally, the OLCA survey focused on the opinion of the respondents concerning the disappearance of Alsatian. Here, 73% said that they share the idea, that if the dialect disappears, Alsace loses its identity.¹⁵⁵ These results are contradicting the results I received from my survey. In the following, the results I got will present why.

In order to reject or not reject the third hypothesis, I looked at the replies of the respondents who do not speak Alsatian (see Figure 8 below). Then, I analysed to what

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 42.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 44.

degree they identify themselves with the Alsatian identity (see Figure 18 below). As already mentioned, of the total number of people responding to the questionnaire, 347 do not speak the dialect. But of these 347, 206 declare to identify with the Alsatian identity. This sums up to approximately 60%.

That shows that the unfavourable prognosis of the OLCA survey cannot be supported when looking at the just given results of my investigation. Because most of the respondents who do not speak the dialect, feel attached to the Alsatian identity. To point this out, I chose some replies of people who identify with the Alsatian identity, even though they do not speak the dialect.

What does it mean for you to feel Alsatian? / Please try to describe the Alsatian identity.

- Be proud of your region and know at your fingertips the hidden corners of Alsace. (...) Have a good Franco-German culture but also a sense of friendship and family. Always be open to others, be suspicious at the first approach, and then open your heart without hesitation, and always be frank and helpful. (...).¹⁵⁶
- It's in the heart! It is often when we leave that we realize that we love Strasbourg, that our little Alsatian houses are pretty, that we miss some of the festivities, the mentality of the people, etc... (...).
- Sense of belonging to a community, region, tradition.
- Consider regional traditions as your own, be attached to the region (architecture, cuisine...).

These answers and the results of the survey show that young Alsatians did not lose the feeling of identity but cannot clearly communicate what the defining elements are. Alsatian, or what is left of it is not more than an “accessory”¹⁵⁷ in the process of identifying oneself with the Alsatian identity.

To conclude, I will reject this last hypothesis, because looking at the quantitative as well as qualitative results of the questionnaire, the Alsatian identity is not only comprised of the dialect. As the above-mentioned numbers and written replies show, other features, as tradition, local festivities, openness, and friendship and family values are essential, as is, of course, Alsatian gastronomy. Therefore, one can sum up, that

¹⁵⁶ This first reply does almost exactly confirm what has been written by Hoffet in 1951 about the character of the Alsatians.

¹⁵⁷ Woehrling, Jean-Marie, "Re: Mémoire." [Email]. May 29, 2019.

looking at young adults, the identification with the Alsatian identity does not decrease with the decline of the dialect → rejected.

Figure 8: Do you speak Alsatian?

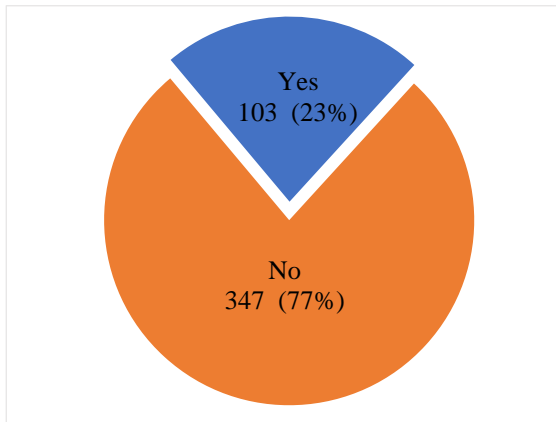
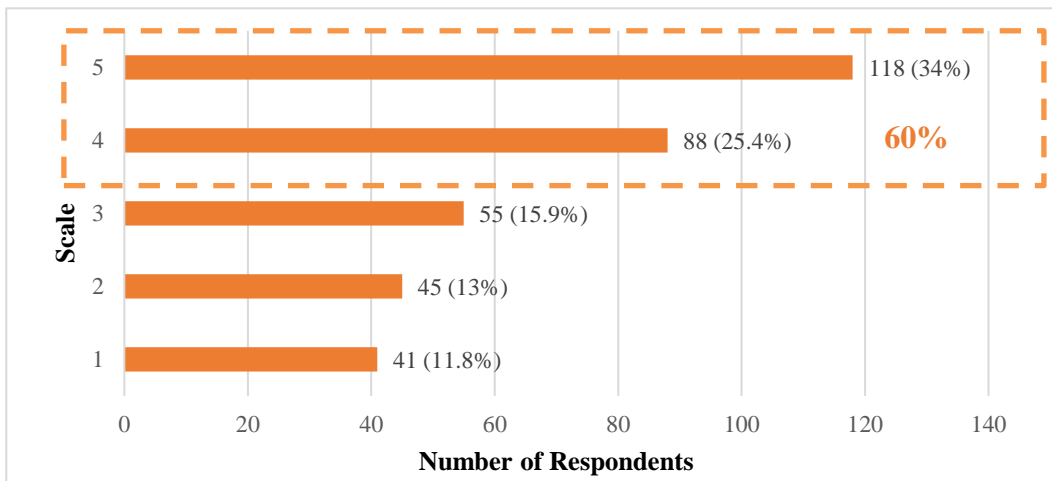


Figure 18: On a scale from 1 to 5 (5 = I feel very Alsatian, 1 = I do not), to what degree do you feel Alsatian? Replies of those not speaking Alsatian.



6 Conclusion

With the literature review and the analysis of the survey, it was possible, to answer the three research questions and to reject or not reject the hypotheses. It turns out, that looking at a young generation, the Alsatian dialect is in the process of disappearing. This is mainly because the dialect is not successfully passed on to children by their parents, which will probably lead to an impoverishment of the Alsatian dialect. Furthermore, it can be seen as a result of a language policy that, over many years, had displaced Alsatian, as well as German from everyday life. The OLCA survey and the survey conducted for this Master thesis show that Alsatian is almost exclusively spoken within the personal surroundings of family and friends.

Nevertheless, despite the unfavourable figures, the future should be approached more optimistically. Some Alsatian words and expressions are anchored in the everyday language of young adults. One can conclude from that, that Alsatian will be spoken in the future, but in limited terms, namely by incorporating Alsatian words and expressions into the everyday language, which is French for the most part of the Alsatians. The symbolic function of Alsatian might be found in the words and phrases used by young adults.

Another result of the OLCA survey showed that a large number of the respondents think, if the dialect disappears, Alsace loses its identity. The reasons for that seem understandable and have been explained in the bounds of this paper. Through language, values, history, beliefs, culture, and many more factors are passed on and understood. But it does not seem to be the case, that speaking the dialect and feeling attached to the Alsatian culture and identity go hand in hand, at least not for the young generation. The survey, and especially the written replies of the respondents showed, that although a significant number of them does not speak Alsatian, they do feel Alsatian.

It will be interesting to work on the case of Alsace in the future, perhaps in the form of a comparative study of the Alsatian case and the Irish case, which was mentioned on page nine of this work. Moreover, a survey, including more specific questions in order to make a comparison between rural and urban population, along with a higher emphasis on other professions, could give more insight and lead to further results. Another interesting point would be to find out, if due to the historical particularities of Alsace, the dialect has a different identity function – meaning the dialect as an expression of identity – than other dialects spoken in other regions, without (or with less of) these frequent socio-political and linguistic changes.

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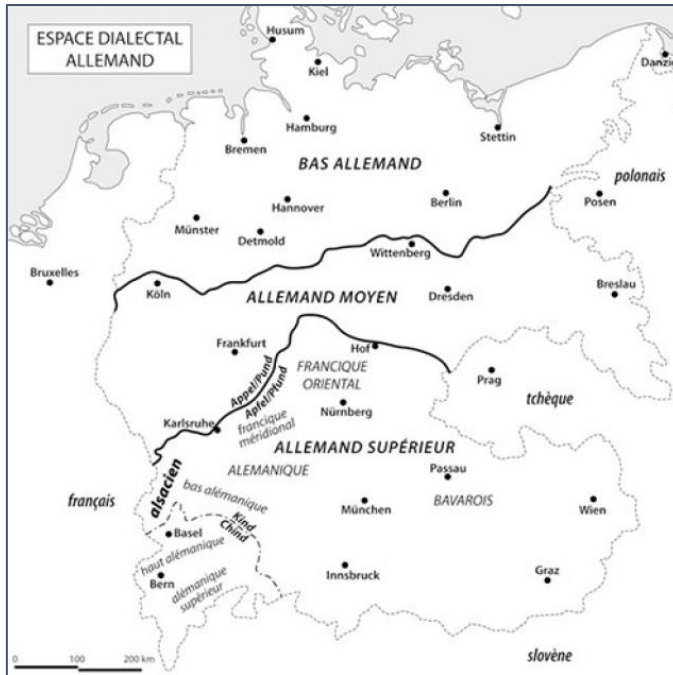
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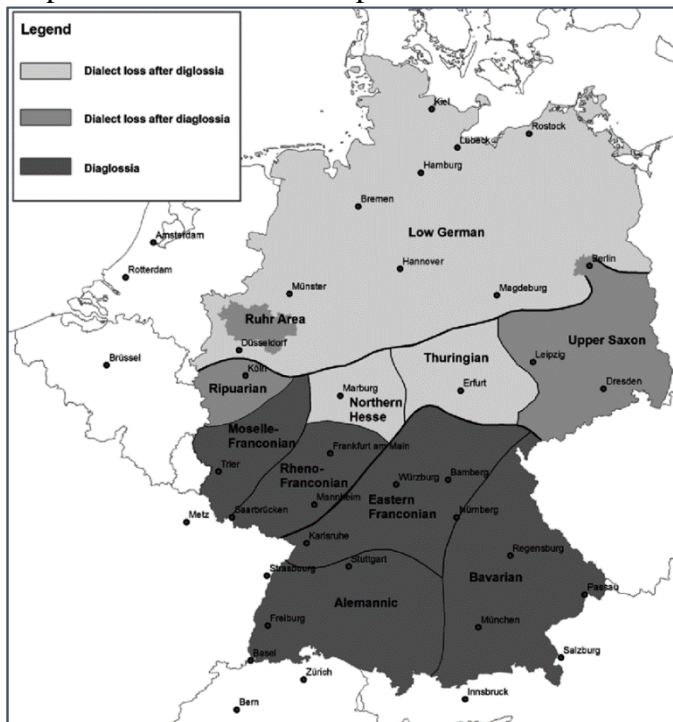
Annex

The German Dialectal Space

Map 2: German Dialectal Space 1¹⁵⁸



Map 3: German Dialectal Space 2¹⁵⁹



¹⁵⁸ Erhart, Pascale. "Les effets de la frontière sur les pratiques linguistiques dans le Rhin supérieur." *Les Cahiers du GEPE*, 2018, 9 ed., 2.

¹⁵⁹ *Language variation and (de-) standardization processes in Germany.* n.d. https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Generalised-map-of-dialect-standard-constellations-of-todays-Germany_fig2_251570966 (accessed May 03, 2019).

The Questionnaire

Usage des mots et sentiment d'identité des jeunes adultes en Alsace

* required

1. Age *

- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23
- 24
- 25

2. Sexe

- F
- M

3. Lieu de naissance *

4. Combien d'années de votre vie avez-vous passé en Alsace ? *

Connaissance des mots alsaciens

5. Connaissez-vous les mots et expressions suivants (oui/non) ? Si oui : Sur une échelle de 1 à 5 (5 = très souvent, 1 = jamais), à quelle fréquence utilisez-vous ces mots et expressions ?

5.1. d'r Schl(o)u(c)k *

- Oui
- Non
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

5.2. Boire un schl(o)u(c)k *

- Oui
- Non
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

5.3. Schlappe/Schloppe *



- Oui
- Non
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

5.4. d' Schnake/Schnek *



- Oui
- Non
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

5.5. Comme dit *

- Oui
- Non
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

5.6. Wie geht's *

- Oui
- Non
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

6. Connaissez-vous d'autres mots alsaciens ou expressions régionales que vous utilisez dans la vie quotidienne quand vous parlez français ? S'il vous plaît, notez-les. *

7. Sur une échelle de 1 à 5 (5 = très souvent, 1 = jamais), à quelle fréquence utilisez-vous ces mots et expressions ? *

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

8. Dans quelles situations utilisez-vous ces mots et expressions ? *

Le dialecte

9. Parlez-vous alsacien ? *

- Oui
- Non

10. Si oui : Sur une échelle de 1 à 5 (5 = couramment, 1 = pas du tout), quelle est votre maîtrise de l'alsacien ?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

11. Vos parents parlent-ils alsacien ? *

- Oui
- Non

12. Si oui : Sur une échelle de 1 à 5 (5 = couramment, 1 = pas du tout), comment vos parents parlent-ils alsacien ?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

L'identité alsacienne / Se sentir alsacien*ne

13. Participez-vous aux traditions régionales ? *

- Oui
- Non

14. Si oui, veuillez les nommer.

15. Pour vous, que signifie se "sentir" alsacien*ne ? *

16. Sur une échelle de 1 à 5 (5=Oui, je me sens très alsacien*ne, 1=Non, je ne me sens pas alsacien*ne), dans quelle mesure vous sentez-vous Alsacien ? *

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

17. Pensez-vous qu'il existe une identité alsacienne ? *

- Oui
- Non

18. Si oui, veuillez essayer de la décrire.

19. Vous identifiez-vous à cette identité ? *

20. L'Alsace doit-elle constituer une collectivité territoriale avec un statut propre ? *

- Oui
- Non

Merci beaucoup de vos réponses !

Selection of Qualitative Answers

Note: Some replies have been shortened. Spelling mistakes have been corrected.

- L'identité alsacienne c'est attacher de l'importance à sa région et essayer d'en faire perdurer les traditions. Personnellement mon grand regret c'est de ne pas parler alsacien.
- Nous sommes rattachés à notre histoire commune, par des valeurs ou la gastronomie par exemple.
- Être fière de sa région et savoir sur le bout des doigts les coins et recoins de l'Alsace. (...) Avoir une bonne culture franco-allemande mais aussi un sens de l'amitié et de la famille. Être toujours ouvert aux autres, être méfiant au premier abord puis ouvrir son cœur sans retours et être toujours franc et serviable. (...).
- C'est dans le cœur ! C'est souvent quand on part qu'on se rend compte qu'on aime Strasbourg, que nos petites maisons alsaciennes sont jolies, que certaines fêtes nous manquent, la mentalité des gens etc. (...).
- Sentiment d'appartenance à une communauté, région, tradition.
- Considérer les traditions régionales comme les siennes, être attaché à la région (architecture, cuisine, ...).
- Une identité à mi-chemin entre les cultures allemande et française, ce qui en fait sa singularité.
- Une identité définie par une certaine indépendance vis-à-vis du reste de la France, un attachement aux traditions régionales. Un Alsacien est souvent un bon vivant, propre (...), hospitalier mais dont la confiance ne s'acquiert qu'avec un peu de temps, attaché à la paix européenne.
- On m'a déjà dit que l'alsace est très accueillante, l'Alsace c'est aussi les maisons colorées, les traditions de l'histoire, et une certaine cohésion.