

The task of research team 4.3 is to investigate multilingualism in European history and more specifically the selection process of the languages currently used in Europe for different purposes. In working paper 1, we gave an outline of the theoretical framework our investigation is based on. In this working paper we want to give an example for how we intend to investigate the dynamics of language selection.

It is our assumption that language users ('actors') or groups of language users all over Europe were guided in their choice of language varieties by the language ideology or ideologies of their time. Across history, there were, we assert, two main tendencies to be observed within language ideology: a trend towards the unification of language varieties and a trend towards more diversity across and within languages.

What we try to do in this working paper is to give an account of the interaction of these two trends as a background for language selection by individual speakers or groups of speakers. One focus is on the Renaissance as the origin of a major unification trend and the possible influence of this trend on the selection of a language for scientific writings. A second focus is on unifying and diversifying forces in the language history of Belgium.