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Brussels French *une fois*: Transfer-induced innovation or system-internal development?*

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In language contact studies, specific features of the contact languages are often seen to be the result of transfer (interference), but it remains difficult to disentangle the role of intra-systemic and inter-systemic factors. We propose to unravel these factors in the analysis of a feature of Brussels French which many researchers attribute to transfer from (Brussels) Dutch: the adverbial use of une fois*. We compare the use of this particle in Brussels French with its occurrence in corpora of other varieties of French, including several that have not been influenced by a Germanic substrate or adstrate. A detailed analysis of the frequency of occurrence, the functions and the distribution of the particle over different syntactic positions shows that some uses of* une fois *can be traced back to sixteenth-century French, but that there is also ample evidence for overt and covert transfer (Mougeon and Beniak, 1991) from Brussels Dutch.*

This paper aims at clarifying the way in which internal and external factors contribute to the emergence of innovations in situations of language contact. More specifically, we want to know how we can establish what the relative contribution of intra- and inter-systemic forces is in the emergence of an innovation in a language variety that has allegedly been influenced by another variety. As many authors have pointed out (Thomason and Kaufman, 1988; Chaudenson, Mougeon and Beniak, 1993; Thomason, 2001), linguistic changes often have both internal and external causes and in many cases it is virtually impossible to decide whether intra- or inter-systemic forces are responsible for a particular phenomenon. In those cases, we can do little more than establish that this is an example of "multiple causation" (Thomason and Kaufman, 1988). In this paper we hope to demonstrate that transfer[1] is a powerful explanatory concept in theories of language change and that it is possible to clarify the role of transfer in the emergence of a particular phenomenon if the issue is approached in the ways proposed in this special issue.

We will illustrate our approach by analysing a well-known property of Brussels French, the adverbial use of *une fois* (lit. "one time, once" – often untranslated), which many authors claim to be the result of transfer from Dutch, i.e. the result of language change triggered by contact with a Dutch substrate or adstrate. This adverbial particle is not simply a lexical borrowing from Dutch, because we find *une fois* in Standard French as well, as we will see below, but in Brussels French it is used in slightly different ways, and some of these uses may be traced back to contact with Dutch. While many authors point to inter-systemic factors to explain the uses of *une fois*, so far no efforts have been made to find evidence for intra-systemic explanations of the patterns found in Brussels French, and the current article aims to fill this gap. In addition, we will look at evidence from Alsatian French to see if *une fois* is used in similar ways in another variety of French that is also assumed to have been influenced by a Germanic substrate (Wolf, 1983).

In an earlier paper (Treffers-Daller, 1999) we have shown that Thomason and Kaufman's (1988) distinction between borrowing and interference through shift is very useful in explaining the outcome of language contact in Brussels. As is well known, Thomason and Kaufman (1988, p. 37) define borrowing as the "incorporation of foreign features into a group's native language: the native language is maintained but is changed by the addition of the incorporated features". Shift-induced change, on the other hand, "results from imperfect group learning during a process of language shift.[2] In Brussels, these two processes can be shown to work simultaneously in that (Brussels) Dutch contains many loanwords from French (and some structural features of French), while at the same

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[1] In this contribution, we use the notion TRANSFER rather than INTERFERENCE to describe the process of inter-systemic influence. The notion transfer is used more widely than interference, for example in SLA, and has fewer negative connotations. Wherever other authors use the term interference we will use that term when discussing their work.

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[2] In 2001 Thomason revises the model slightly in that she points out that the crucial factor is not whether or not shift takes place, but whether or not there is imperfect learning by a group of people.

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time Brussels French is heavily marked by phonological and syntactic features that may have resulted from contact with Dutch. It is generally assumed that the high frequency of *une fois* in Brussels French is an example of the way in which Dutch has influenced French.

Interference through shift can be a very subtle, almost invisible process. As Thomason and Kaufman (1988, p. 115) have pointed out, in this kind of contact-induced change, lexical material is not necessarily imported into the target language: "morphosyntactic interference through shift more often makes use of reinterpreted and/or restructured TL morphemes". In the case of *une fois*, the process could be even subtler than that. It is theoretically possible that there are no differences between the meaning or the use of this adverb in Brussels French and in Standard French: the influence of Dutch could be visible only in the enhanced frequency of use of *une fois* in Brussels French.

The subtlety of the process is particularly well expressed in Mougeon and Beniak's (1991) distinction between overt and covert transfer (see also Mougeon, Nadasdi and Rehner, this issue and Jones, this issue). If we find qualitative differences in the way *une fois* is used in Brussels French and the way it is used in Standard French, the phenomenon can be considered as an example of overt transfer. If however we find that there is only a quantitative departure from the norms of Standard French, the phenomenon is probably an example of covert transfer.

It is also interesting to try and classify *une fois* in terms of Grosjean's (2001, p. 7) distinction between dynamic interferences, i.e. "ephemeral deviations due to the influence of the other deactivated language" and static interferences. Dynamic interferences can become static interferences when they spread to other speakers of the same group or even to monolingual speakers. It is an open question whether *une fois* should be seen as a dynamic or a static interference. There can be no doubt, though, that *une fois* is listed in a wide range of sources, and none of the authors who have studied the phenomenon so far claim that it only occurs in the speech of bilinguals. The evidence that is available to date therefore seems to point to the fact that it is a static interference. Unfortunately, in the present paper, it is not possible to provide further evidence for this claim, as data from monolingual speakers of Brussels French are not currently available.

To my knowledge, no attempt has been made so far to classify *une fois* in the categories distinguished in the literature on contact-induced language change, such as Haugen's (1950) well-known typology of lexical borrowing, which is based on the distinction between importation and substitution. Importation refers to the adoption of a foreign form and/or its meaning, and may involve complete or only partial importation. Substitution refers to the process by which native sounds or morphemes are substituted for those in the donor language (Winford, 2003, p. 43). For Haugen, "every loan [is] part importation and part substitution" (Haugen, 1953, p. 388). In the case of *une fois*, it is possible that the meaning of the adverb has been imported from (Brussels) Dutch *ne keer* "lit. once", but this meaning is expressed with French morphemes. If we can show that the meaning of French *une fois* has been extended on the model of (Brussels) Dutch, it is probably best considered as an example of a loan shift.

In order to clarify the role of transfer in the occurrence of *une fois*, we need to answer a number of questions regarding the frequency of usage of this adverb and the contexts in which it occurs. First of all, we need to make a quantitative analysis to find out whether *une fois* is typical for Brussels French only or whether it can be found in other varieties of French too. Any differences in the frequency of usage of *une fois* in varieties that are influenced by a Germanic substrate or adstrate and those that have not undergone such influence are of particular importance here. In addition, we will study seventeenth-century French, to investigate to what extent *une fois* is found in Standard French from older, literary sources. If this can be shown to be the case, the use of *une fois* could be explained as an archaism, and explanation solely based on transfer is then unlikely to be correct. This is not an improbable scenario because there are many such archaisms in Brussels French and Belgian French (Baetens Beardsmore, 1971). Finally, we will also be contrasting spoken and written corpora to investigate whether or not *une fois* is confined to spoken French.

Secondly, if *une fois* is used more widely, the question is whether it is found more often in data from bilinguals than in data from monolinguals: explanations based on transfer become more plausible if this is the case. It would have been interesting to establish whether *une fois* is more frequent in the speech of balanced bilinguals or Dutch-dominant bilinguals, as this could be another indication that transfer is a plausible source of this phenomenon (Chaudenson et al., 1993). On the basis of the current data set (156,660 Brussels Dutch words and 40,488 Brussels French words), it does not appear to be possible to reach any conclusions on this point. As the data set consists of free conversations, French and Dutch are used in very different proportions by the informants, and the likelihood of occurrence of *une fois* is directly dependent on the number of French words uttered by the informants. Many Dutch-dominant bilinguals chose to speak mainly Brussels Dutch with the researcher, and we would need to have more French data from these informants if we wanted to reach any conclusions regarding the relationship between language dominance and the frequency of *une fois*.

Thirdly, we want to know in what syntactic constructions *une fois* occurs in the different varieties. On the one hand, the analysis will focus on a comparison of the syntactic constructions in which *une fois* and its Dutch counterparts *eens* or *ne keer* or the Alsatian translation

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equivalent *emol* (St.German (*ein*)*mal*) are found. If these are similar, transfer becomes more likely. On the other hand, we will look at qualitative differences in the patterns in which *une fois* is used in different varieties of French. If the patterns found in Brussels French are similar to those in Brussels Dutch but different from those found in varieties not influenced by a Germanic substrate, this will be a strong indication that transfer is a likely cause. Finally we will compare the structures to those found in older varieties of Standard French, to establish whether any patterns found in Brussels French represent archaic structures that were once used more generally in French.

In this paper we hope to answer these questions by comparing four corpora of different varieties of French. The corpora involved are my own Brussels French/Brussels Dutch corpus (approximately 200,000 words, of which 40,000 French words); Gardner-Chloros' (1991) Alsatian/French corpus (17,304 Alsatian words, 6,9412 French words), Beeching's corpus of Standard French[3] (155,000 words) and data from Frantext, a database of 114.7 million French words, mainly from literary sources dating from 1600 to 2000, available on the Internet.[4] We will include an analysis of seventeenth-century French from this database to investigate whether there is any evidence of language change in the use of *une fois* over the past four centuries.[5]

In this contribution we will first give an overview of the descriptions that can be found of this phenomenon in the literature on Brussels French (section 1), then we will briefly summarise the syntactic positions in which adverbs can be found in Standard French (section 2). After that, the frequency of *une fois* (section 3) and its syntactic position in different varieties of French will be discussed (section 4). The final conclusion is presented in section 5.

1. *Une fois* in Brussels French

Several authors discuss the use and the meaning of *une fois* in Brussels French (Baetens Beardsmore, 1971; Hanse, Doppagne and Bourgeois-Gielen, 1971; De Vriendt, 1985; Massion, 1987; Francard, 1990), and point to differences between Brussels French and Standard French in the way this adverb is deployed.

In examples such as (1)–(3), *une fois* can refer to an indefinite point in time in either the past or the future. As we will see below, in Standard French, *une fois* is mainly used to refer to the past, and it is less common to use *une fois* in sentences where the time reference is future.

(1) Mais il donne des cours parce que moi je il
but he gives DET classes because me I he
m' a *une fois* dit, . . .
me has one time said
"But he teaches, because he told me once . . . "
(Corpus JTD,[6] tape 8, p. 23, p. 36, Marieke)

(2) On mangera ici, si ton mari peut *une fois* venir
we eat+FUT here if your husband can one time come
"We will eat here, if your husband can make it."
(Corpus JTD, tape 63, Antoinet)

(3) Quand tu as *une fois* le temps
if you have one time the time
"If you have time."
(Corpus JTD, tape 90, p. 20, Charles)

It is difficult to give a precise meaning of *une fois*, particularly in those cases where it is an expletive which functions as a marker of the intended illocutionary act, such as a request, an invitation or a suggestion (De Vriendt, 1985, p. 206), as in (4). In any case, it is important to note that it does not mean "one single time" (Francard, 1990), which would be *une seule fois* in French.

(4) Jeune homme, viens *une fois* ici
young man come one time here
"Come here (please), young man."
(Corpus JTD, Charles, tape 41, p. 9)

In these cases, *une fois* appears to reduce the illocutionary force of the imperative, and thus may be seen as a politeness device. *Le Petit Robert* (ed. 1987) compares the usage of *une fois* to Standard French *donc* "so" in constructions such as (4), and according to Baetens Beardsmore (1971) *un peu* "a little bit" fulfils a similar role in popular French. The temporal value of the particle is completely lost here, as we can see in (4): the speaker wants the addressee (i.e. the young man) to come and see him at the moment of speaking, not at an indefinite moment in the future. It is in this usage that the meaning of the particle is most clearly different from *une fois* in Standard French, and native speakers of Standard French may find it difficult to interpret.

Baetens Beardsmore (1971, p. 247) considers the use of *une fois* as one of the most typical characteristics of Brussels French, and points to the fact that it is used by all those who want to make fun of this variety. Massion (1987) also states that this characteristic of Brussels French is the one that is best known outside the frontiers of Belgium. According to Baetens Beardsmore it corresponds to *un jour* "lit. one day" in French, when it

[3] The varieties of French spoken in this corpus were recorded in the Lot, le Minervois, Paris and Brittany. It is unlikely that the speakers in this corpus had been influenced by Dutch or German (K. Beeching, p. c.). More details about the corpus can be found in Beeching (2002).

[4] The URL of Frantext is <http://www.atilf.fr/_ns/atilf.htm>.

[5] The 17th century was chosen because we wanted to go back in time as far as possible, and older data are not well represented in the database.

[6] This corpus was collected between 1985 and 1991. It consists of transcription of spontaneous conversations with French–Dutch bilinguals from Brussels. There are 156,660 Dutch words in the corpus and 40,488 French words. A detailed description of the corpus can be found in Treffers-Daller (1994).

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is used with a future tense. In these contexts, alternative possible corresponding phrases in Standard French are *à un moment donné* "at a certain point" or *un de ces jours* "sometime".

Most authors explain the occurrence of *une fois* on the basis of influence from Dutch *eens* or *een keer* "lit. one time, once", or phonological variants of these, but no further arguments are given for the alleged influence from Dutch on this point. The available literature is not very explicit either about the structures in which *une fois* occurs, with the exception of Baetens Beardsmore (1971) and De Vriendt (1985), nor are comparisons made with other varieties of French. It is however precisely through a comparison of syntactic patterns, and a comparison of the frequency of this adverb in different varieties of French that arguments in favour or against explanations based on transfer can be found (Chaudenson et al., 1990; Jones, this issue; Mougeon et al., this issue).

It may be important to note at this point that *une fois* generally occurs in unstressed positions and that the vowel of the determiner *une* is often reduced to schwa. This makes it more likely that *une fois* is a lexicalised unit of some kind and should not be seen as a syntactic phrase in these sentences.

2. Sentence adverbs and VP adverbs in standard French

Adverbs[7] are often considered to be an elusive category, because they appear in many different positions in the sentence, contrary to arguments such as subjects or objects that display a much less free distribution. Laenzlinger (1998, p. 37) shows that there are four main positions in which adverbs can appear in French: sentence-initially, pre-verbally (in compound tenses), post-verbally (in simple tenses or compound tenses) or in sentence-final position, as in (5). In addition, there is an intonationally marked position between the subject and the verb, where some adverbs that are used parenthetically can be inserted, but this usage is less common.

(5) (Souvent,) Jean (,souvent,) a (souvent) embrassé
(often) John (,often,) has (often) kissed
(souvent) Marie (souvent)
(often) Mary (often)

It is clear that not all adverbs can appear in all positions, and the meaning of adverbs can differ depending on the position they occupy. Some adverbs, such as *souvent* "often" and *probablement* "probably", can occur in all four positions mentioned above, as well as in the intonationally marked position between the subject and the auxiliary, but others, such as *bien* "well" or *mal* "badly", have a much more limited distribution. It is not possible to review the literature on this topic in this context in any detail, but for the present purposes it is important to point out that most authors distinguish between sentence adverbs such as *heureusement* "fortunately", which modify the sentence, as in (6), and VP-adverbs such as *entièrement* "entirely" that function as modifiers of the VP, as in (7).

(6) *Heureusement*, il est arrivé à l' heure
fortunately he is arrived on the time
"Fortunately, he arrived on time."
(Laenzlinger, 1998, p. 43)

(7) Jean a (entièrement) lu (entièrement)
Jean has (entirely) read (entirely)
le livre (entièrement)
the book (entirely)
"Jean read the book entirely."
(Laenzlinger, 1998, p. 51)

Syntactically, sentence adverbs differ from VP-adverbs in that the former can occupy the first position in the sentence, while the latter are confined to the VP domain by definition, even if they have sentential scope (Laenzlinger, 1998, p. 51), as in (8).

(8) *Entièrement, Jean a lu le livre
entirely Jean has read the book
"Jean read the book entirely."
(Laenzlinger, 1998, p. 51)

The distinction between sentence adverbs and VP adverbs is relevant for the current study, because the varieties under study differ from each other in the extent to which they use the sentence-initial position and the pre-verbal position for *une fois* (see below for more details).

As *une fois* appears to be a temporal adverb, we will now turn to analyses of temporal adverbs. In standard French the pre-verbal position is not normally accessible for adverbs with nominal properties like *hier* "yesterday", *demain* "tomorrow", *ici* "here" or *là-bas* "there", but a temporal true adverb like *récemment* "recently" is allowed in this position (Laenzlinger, 1998, p. 48), as in (9).

(9) Jean a *hier/*ici/récemment lu
Jean has yesterday/here/recently read
le livre de Chomsky
the book of Chomsky
"Jean (recently) read Chomsky's book yesterday/here/recently."

The nominal properties of *hier/ici* are shown by their ability to function as noun complements, as in (10).

[7] I will use the term adverb rather than adverbial to refer to *une fois* even though it is technically speaking a word group consisting of a determiner and a noun. *Une fois* is a frozen expression which happens not to be written together. Some combinations with *fois* (*parfois* "sometimes" and *quelquefois* "sometimes") are written together, whereas others, such as *des fois* "sometimes" are not.

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(10) Le journal d'hier/d'ici
the paper of yesterday/of today
"Yesterday's/today's paper."

For the same reason, Jones (1996) shows that *plusieurs fois* "several times" and PPs with a temporal function such as *pendant un an* "for one year" cannot occupy the pre-verbal position, but need to appear at the end of the sentence; see (11) and (12).

(11) *Pierre a *plusieurs fois/pendant un*
Pierre has several times/for one
an pris ce train[8]
year taken this train
"Pierre took this train several times/for one year."
(Jones, 1996, p. 344)

(12) Pierre a pris ce train *plusieurs fois/pendant un an*

Cinque (1999, p. 87) comes to the same conclusion, but also points out that the only temporal adverbs admitted in pre-verbal position are the purely deictic ones: *allora* "then", *ora* "now" and perhaps *un tempo*, *una volta* "once". While he does not explain whether the analysis for Italian is valid for French, we assume that this is the case, given the following examples:

(13) Il est *maintenant* arrivé
he is now arrived
"He has now arrived."
(14) Il est *alors* arrivé
He is then arrived
"He arrived then."

Unfortunately Cinque does not discuss any further the distribution of Italian *un tempo*, *una volta* "once" – the translation equivalents of *une fois*.

While *une fois* cannot function as a noun complement (see (15)) it does have some nominal properties. *Une fois* can function as the subject of a sentence in sentences such as (16) and a fixed expression such as (17), it can be pluralised (cf. *des fois* "a few times"), and has a number of projection properties that are normally only associated with NPs. It can be expanded with an adjective to form the DP *une seule fois* "one single time" or the phrase *une fois de plus* "once more".

(15) *Le journal d' *une fois*
the paper of one time
"The paper of once."
(16) *Une* (*seule*) *fois* ne suffit pas
one single time not suffice not
"Once is not enough."

[8] Judgements of native speakers differ here. Some speakers accept *plusieurs fois* between the auxiliary and the past participle.

(17) *Une fois* n'est pas coutume
one time not is not habit
"Once in a while does no harm."

On the basis of the above, we might expect that it would be difficult for *une fois* to appear in pre-verbal position, and in section 4 we will see whether this prediction is borne out for the different varieties under discussion.

3. *Une fois* in different varieties of French: A quantitative approach

Below I will compare the Brussels corpus with data from Alsace (Gardner-Chloros, 1991), Beeching's corpus of spoken French and data from written sources that can be found in Frantext, an electronic corpus of mainly literary French. For the purpose of the present analysis, I have limited the search in the first instance to the most recent period that is available in Frantext, that is the period between 1970–2000. This period of thirty years roughly overlaps with the period in which the data were collected in Brussels and Strasbourg. In order to establish whether any changes have occurred in the course of the history, I have subsequently also investigated the occurrence of *une fois* in a thirty year period at the beginning of the 17th century (from 1600–1630) in the same database.

As the present study focuses the use of *une fois* as used on its own, I have excluded from the searches any combinations of *une fois* with other adverbs, prepositions or prepositional phrases, such as *encore une fois* "once more", *une fois de plus* "once more", *pour une fois* "for once", *une fois par an* "once a year", and variations of the adverb, such as *des fois* "sometimes" or *quelquefois* "sometimes". Not considered in this article are sentences in which *une fois* is used as a conjunction with or without *que*, as in (18), and sentences where the context clearly indicates that *une fois* is used in contrast with *deux fois* "twice", for example, and appears to mean "one single time".

(18) *une fois* (qu'il était) parti, il s'aperçut . . .
one time that he was left he REFL discovered
"Once he had left, he discovered . . . "

Finally we have excluded from the analysis fixed expressions such as *il était une fois* "once upon a time" and *une fois n'est pas coutume* "once (in a while) does no harm".

As is shown in Table 1, the quantitative analysis demonstrates that *une fois* is not confined to Brussels French, as it occurs in all other varieties of French that we have investigated. It is also clear, however, that *une fois* is far more frequent in the Brussels data and in the Alsatian data than in the Standard French data sets. Even though the Alsatian data are relatively limited, *une fois* also appears to be much more frequent in Alsatian French

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Table 1. *Frequency of adverbial uses of* une fois *in four corpora.*

Corpus	Corpus size (number of words)	Absolute frequency of *une fois*	Relative frequency of *une fois* (per 1000 words)
Brussels French	40,000	35	0.88
Alsatian French (Gardner-Chloros, 1991)	6,900	2	0.29
Standard spoken French (Beeching, 2002)	155,000	5	0.032
Standard written French Frantext (1970–2000)	14,940,795	133	0.009
Standard written French Frantext (1600–1630)	6,113,715	75	0.012

than in Standard French. More examples of *une fois* would probably be found in Alsatian French if more data were available (but see below for examples from the literature).

Table 1 also shows that *une fois* is not limited to spoken French, but it appears to be more frequent in spoken language than in literary sources. It is used in a wide range of literary texts from the last thirty years of the twentieth century, and it is also attested in the 16th and 17th centuries. The oldest example in Frantext is found in an anonymous text from 1511 (Sottie des sots ecclésiastiques qui jouent leurs bénéfices):

(19) Mort bieu, s'*une fois* je t'actrappe
death well if one time I you catch
Encore vouldroy jë estre Dieu
still would I be God
"For sure, if at some point I catch you
I would really like to be God."
(Anonymous, 1511. Frantext)

On the basis of the frequency data, we can conclude that *une fois* is not only found in varieties of French that have been influenced by a Germanic substrate, but it is more frequent in these than in varieties that have not undergone this influence.

It would have been very useful to compare the data with written sources of Brussels French from previous centuries as well, but French was not widely spoken in Brussels before the nineteenth century. Brussels is situated North of the linguistic frontier, in Flemish territory, and it is therefore originally a Dutch-speaking city, as many researchers have emphasised. Until the middle of the eighteenth century it was still almost homogeneously Dutch-speaking, except for a small French-speaking elite (Van Velthoven, 1987, p. 21). Language shift to French ('Frenchification') did not begin in earnest until after Belgium became independent in 1830. According to the first official language census of 1846 the percentage of the population that used French most frequently was much higher in Brussels (37 percent) than in Gent (5 percent) or in Antwerp (1.9 percent). Still, the Brussels figures are probably exaggerated, because in the census figures of 1866, the figure for speakers of French drops again to 20 percent (Treffers-Daller, 1994, p. 15; see Gubin, 1978 for more details and for the difficulties related to the interpretation of these statistics). In any case, French that was spoken in Brussels before independence or shortly after independence, in the nineteenth century, is likely to have been influenced by (local varieties of) Dutch, because Dutch was the dominant language in the city prior to and for a long time after independence. Therefore historical sources from Brussels cannot give us further information about the properties of the local French variety prior to the start of language contact.

There is some indication that *une fois* is less frequent in the French varieties in Wallonia than in Brussels (Francard, p. c.). In a collection of samples of regional varieties of French spoken in Belgium (Francard, 1990) we find *une fois* in the dialogue from Brussels, but not in any of the other dialogues which illustrate varieties spoken in Wallonia, and *une fois* is not mentioned in Remacle's (1956) detailed study of Walloon as spoken in La Gleize. Even though Walloon has certainly been influenced by Germanic substrates and adstrates (Massion, 1987), it is probably true that Walloon is less marked by the influence of Germanic varieties than Brussels French.

While the quantitative data support the idea that transfer is probably one of the factors that can explain the frequency of *une fois* in Brussels French and Alsatian French, it is also clear that *une fois* cannot solely be attributed to transfer, because there is evidence of its usage in varieties that have not been influenced by Germanic languages. More information regarding the contexts in which it occurs can help unravel the likelihood of Dutch influence on the usage of *une fois*.

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Table 2. *The positions of* une fois *in different varieties of French (percentages in parentheses).*

	A	B	C	D	E	Total
Brussels French	0	18 (51)	13 (37)	3 (8.6)	1 (2.9)	35
Standard spoken French (Beeching)	3 (60)	0	1 (20)	1 (20)	0	5
Frantext 1970–2000	59 (44.4)	5 (3.8)	47 (35.3)	17 (12.8)	5 (3.8)	133
Frantext 1600–1630	17 (22.7)	13 (17.3)	32 (42.7)	12 (16)	1 (1.3)	75

A: Sentence-initial position.
B: Between Vf and Vinf (between auxiliary and past participle, between *aller* and infinitive or between modal and infinitive).
C: After main verb, before any phrasal or sentential complements or satellites.
D: Sentence-final position, after any complements or satellites (if present).
E: Elsewhere (in impersonal constructions, as in (26) below or between subject and auxiliary as in (39) below).

4. The position of *une fois* and its translation equivalents

In this section we will study the position of *une fois* and its translation equivalents in Brussels Dutch and Alsatian in a variety of sources. I will assume that there is evidence for transfer if the following three conditions are met:

1. if the position(s) of *une fois* in Brussels French differ clearly from the position(s) of this adverb in Standard spoken French or Standard written French (i.e. varieties that are not influenced by a Germanic substrate or adstrate);
2. if the position(s) of *une fois* in Brussels French correspond to those positions in the sentence where its translation equivalents can be found in Brussels Dutch and Alsatian;
3. if the position(s) of *une fois* in Brussels French differ clearly from the position(s) in which it is found in older varieties of French that have not been influenced by a Germanic substrate or adstrate.

A full overview of the positions of *une fois* in different varieties is given in Table 2.

4.1. Une fois *in Brussels French*

As many authors have pointed out, *une fois* is commonly inserted in Belgian jokes, to add to the flavour, alongside other allegedly typical characteristics of Belgian French, such as *allez* "lit. go, well". A search on the Internet immediately reveals that the authors of these jokes do not know Brussels French, because they tend to insert *une fois* into positions at the left periphery of the sentence, as in (20) and (21), both from the same Internet source.[9]

(20) Allez *une fois*, tu m'en racontes hein?
ALLEZ one time you me about+it tell don't you
"Well, you are making a joke, aren't you?"

(21) Et pourquoi *une fois*, il y a des pierres,
and why one time there are DET stones
il n' y a qu' à marcher dessus!
it not there has that to walk on
"But why, there are stones, we only to need to walk on those!"

As we have seen in Table 2, *une fois* is often found in the left periphery of the sentence in Standard French data – a variety the authors of the jokes are probably more familiar with – but in Brussels French the situation is different.

It is clear from the data we collected in Brussels that *une fois* does not occur in the first position in the sentence (see Table 2), but it does occupy the three other main positions distinguished above. We find it most frequently in pre-verbal position, with compound tenses, as in (22) and (23) or post-verbally, with simple or complex tenses, before any complements and satellites, as in (24) and (25).

(22) J' ai *une fois* lu ça
I have one time read that
"I read that (at some point)."
(Corpus JTD, tape 41, Charles, p. 2)

(23) Jean tu vas *une fois* ouvrir
John you go one time open
"John, open (the door) please."
(Corpus JTD, tape 41, Charles, p. 32)

(24) Comme ça il voit *une fois* sa maman
like that he sees one time his mum
"That way he sees his mum for once."
(Corpus JTD, tape 63, Antoinet, p. 40)

(25) A moi, elle l' a dit *une fois* elle-même
to me she it has said one time herself
"She told me at some point herself."
(Corpus JTD, tape 8, Marieke, p. 40)

[9] Source <http://www.blagues.net/cat.asp?cat=193&start=1> (accessed 5 May 2004).

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In seven out of 35 cases, *une fois* co-occurs with a verb in the imperative, as in (4) above. In those cases, *une fois* functions as a politeness device, which somehow softens the request (see Beeching, 2002, for similar analyses of other pragmatic particles in Standard French). It can also have this function in sentences that express an obligation or an exhortation, often in combination with "falloir" or "devoir", as in (26).

(26) Il faut *une fois* que madame va là-bas[10]
it must one time that madam goes there
"Madam should go there as well."
(Corpus JTD, Fabiola, tape 25b, p. 2)

Une fois does not appear in the intonationally marked position between the subject and the auxiliary, of which there are a few examples in the literary corpus (see below).

(27) ?Comme ça, Pierre, *une fois*, voit sa maman
like that Pierre one time sees his mum
"That way Pierre sees his mum for once."

If there are any pronouns in the sentence, *une fois* does not separate them from the verb onto which they cliticise, as (28) until (30) show.

(28) *Elle me l' *une fois* a dit elle-même
she me it one time has said herself
"She told me that herself once."

(29) Dis Jean tes pantoufles tu peux *une fois*
say John your slippers you can one time
te **les** changer
you them change
"But John you should really get another pair of slippers."
(Corpus JTD, Antoinette, tape 26, p. 24)

(30) *Dis Jean tes pantoufles tu peux **te** **les**
say John your slippers you can you them
une fois changer
one time change
"But John you should really get another pair of slippers."

Une fois also appears sentence-finally, but there are no cases in the corpus where it is extraposed to the right hand side of complements or satellites, even though this does not seem impossible. It is more usual to put *une fois* before adverbs such as *ici* than after such adverbs.

(31) Viens *une fois* ici
come one time here
"Come here (please)."

(32) ?Viens ici *une fois*
come here one time
"Come here (please)."

It is particularly remarkable that there are no examples in the corpus of *une fois* in sentence-initial position, as this is the default position in Standard French (see below). In particular when combined with an imperative, as in (33), it seems impossible for *une fois* to appear in sentence-initial position in Brussels French, but it also appears unnatural to put it in the first position in declarative sentences.

(33) *?*Une fois* viens ici
one time come here

(34) ?*Une fois*, j'ai lu ça
one time I have read it

While we cannot exclude that we would find *une fois* in sentence-initial position in Brussels French if more data were available, there are no examples in our corpus where it does occur there, nor does the literature on Brussels French provide any such examples. On the basis of the data that are currently available, Brussels French *une fois* is therefore probably best considered as a VP adverb, and not as a sentence adverb.

4.2. Une fois *in modern Standard French (literary sources)*

As Table 2 shows, in Standard French (from literary sources), *une fois* can appear in all four main positions, distinguished by Laenzlinger (1998), as well as in the intonationally marked position between the subject and the auxiliary, but it is most frequently found in sentence-initial position, as in (35), or after the main verb, before any phrasal or sentential complements or satellites, as in (36).

(35) *Une fois*, j' étais dans une épicerie et
one time I was in a grocer's shop and
j'ai volé un oeuf à l' étalage
I have stolen an egg at the shop window
"One day, I was in a grocer's shop and I stole an egg from the shop window."
(A. E. Romain Gary (1975), La vie devant soi, p. 15. Source: Frantext)

(36) Il nous en régalait *une fois* sur le
he us of it gave treat one time on the
phonographe du salon . . .
gramophone of the living room
"He once treated us to some of it on the gramophone in the living room."
(M. Tournier (1977), Le vent paraclet, p. 33. Source: Frantext)

[10] The speaker does not use the subjunctive in this sentence. The use of the nominative instead of the subjunctive is a well-known characteristic of non-standard French, including Brussels French (Baetens Beardsmore, 1971).

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The fact that *une fois* appears most frequently in sentence-initial position, indicates that it can be used as a sentence adverb in literary French (as well as in modern spoken French, as explained below). In this respect, the position of *une fois* in modern, literary sources clearly differs from the position of this adverb in Brussels French. It can, however, be used in sentence-final position, in pre-verbal position, and in the intonationally marked position between the subject and the verb, as (37)–(39) illustrate.

(37) Je veux voir la maison *une fois*
I want see the house one time
"I would like to see the house for once."
(Gisèle Bienne (1986), Le Silence de la ferme, p. 169. Source: Frantext)

(38) On ne peut oublier Mademoiselle lorsqu' on
one not can forget Miss when one
l' a *une fois* rencontrée
her has one time met
"It is not possible to forget Miss once you have met her."
(Françoise Chandernagor (1981), L'allée du roi, p. 146. Source: Frantext)

(39) Un maître d' études, *une fois*, avait ordonné:
a tutor of studies one time had ordered
– Schreiber, vous ne faites rien
Schreiber you not do nothing
"Once a homework tutor had ordered: 'Schreiber, you are not doing anything.'"
(Boris Schreiber (1996), Un silence d'environ une demi-heure, p. 25. Source: Frantext)

In most cases, *une fois* is used to refer to the past, but in three out of 133 examples the time reference is future, as in (40).

(40) Je lui dis que de ma mère *une fois* je
I him/her told that of my mother one time I
me séparerai, que même pour ma mère
me will separate that even for my mother
une fois je n' aurai plus d' amour
one time I not will have more of love
"I told him/her that I would leave my mother one day and that I wouldn't even love my mother anymore."
(Marguerite Duras (1984), L'Amant, p. 58. Source: Frantext)

This is important, because it shows that Brussels French usage of *une fois* to refer to the future does not constitute a qualitative departure from Standard French, but that this usage is much more common in Brussels French: more than half of the examples in the Brussels French corpus are sentences in which *une fois* is used to refer to the (immediate) future, either in the context of verbs in the future tense, or in the context of verbs in the imperative.

As *une fois* is relatively infrequent in modern French literature, in particular in pre-verbal position, we did not expect to find many examples of *une fois* in this position in older, literary sources. It was therefore quite surprising to find that it is relatively frequent in pre-verbal position in the 17th century (see Table 2). The earliest example found dates from 1560, as in (41).

(41) Car sans doute il accomplira ce
for without doubt he will accomplish that
qu' il a *une fois* promis
what he has one time promised
"For he will no doubt accomplish what he promised (once)."
(J. Calvin (1560) Institution de la religion chrestienne: livre premier, p. 41. Source: Frantext)

This is important for the current study, because it is potentially an indication that the high frequency *une fois* in pre-verbal position in Brussels French is a relic of structures that have become less frequent in modern French in the course of the centuries, but have remained alive in Brussels French.

There is however one important qualitative difference between the Brussels French data and French data that have not been influenced by a Germanic source. In none of the data from written sources (modern French or older varieties) does *une fois* co-occur with an imperative, which happens in seven out of 35 cases in Brussels French. As we will see below, *une fois* also co-occurs with an imperative in Alsatian French, and we have one such example from Swiss French.

4.3. Une fois *in spoken Standard French*

Table 2 shows that *une fois* is not very frequent in Beeching's corpus of standard spoken French. In three of the five examples found, *une fois* is located at the left periphery of the (embedded) sentence, just after the (subordinate) conjunction, but before the subject and often even before any preposed adverbial phrases. This position corresponds to the position in which it occurs most frequently in literary sources.

(42) Parce qu' *une fois* avec des gaz d'échappements,
because one time with ART gas leaks
ils voulaient suspendre la la circulation
they wanted suspend the the traffic
routière
road
"Because at some point when there were gas leaks, they wanted to divert the road traffic."
(Corpus Beeching, conversation 1, line 916, speaker C)

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(43) . . . donc je sais pas que serait leur
so I know not what would be their
réponse mais *une fois* de temps en temps je
answer but one time from time to time I
pense qu' ils accepteraient mais toujours
think that they would accept but always
euh non, ils seraient pas d' accord
eh no they would not of agreement
"So I don't know what their answer would be but once, from time to time I think they would accept, but they would not always accept."
(Corpus Beeching, conversation 39, lines 141/2, speaker D)

(44) Et je voudrais vous dire qu' *une fois*
and I would like you tell that one time
papa avait oublié de mettre le réveil
dad had forgotten to set the alarm clock
"And I would like to tell you that dad had forgotten to set the alarm."
(Corpus Beeching, conversation 50, lines 22/23, speaker C)

In two cases we find it in the VP. In (45) it is extraposed and occurs in sentence-final position, after the prepositional phrase *avec une amie* "with a friend" (but before the adverb *alors* "then"), whereas in (46) it occurs post-verbally, before the prepositional phrase *sur le foyer* "at the youth club".

(45) Il y avait du monde et puis alors cela a
there was ART people and then then that has
été avec une amie *une fois* alors mais
been with a friend one time then but
"There were some people and then I was with a friend then."
(Corpus Beeching, conversation 92, lines 157/8, speaker B)

(46) Il venait ici *une fois* sur le foyer
he came here one time to the club
là-bas
over there
"And there was, he once came to the club over there."
(Corpus Beeching, conversation 35, lines 179/180, speaker B)

It is important to note here that there are no cases of *une fois* in pre-verbal position, though we did find one example of *des fois* in this position:

(47) Mais qui veulent *des fois* retrouver comme
but who want ART times find again like
les Anglais leur thé à cinq heures
the English their tea at five o'clock
"But they want sometimes their tea at 5 pm like English people."
(Corpus Beeching, conversation 67, lines 72/3, speaker B)

Finally, it is interesting to note that there are no examples in the corpus in which *une fois* is used to refer to the future.

4.4. Une fois *in Alsatian French*

We will now turn to the Alsatian data from Gardner-Chloros. As we only have two examples with *une fois* in Alsatian French, any conclusions regarding the distribution of this adverb have to remain tentative. However, it is clear that the two examples found demonstrate a usage that is different from that of Standard French, but similar to that of Brussels French. *Une fois* does not occur in sentence-initial position but in pre-verbal, (48), or post-verbal position, (49).

(48) Tu es jolie comme ça avec le noeud
you are pretty like that with the knot
maman, faudrait *une fois* le faire, hein
mum should one time it do ok
maman, tu trouves pas?
mum you think not
"You are pretty like that, with the knot mum, you should do this at some point, don't you think?"
(Corpus G-C, conversation B, p. VII, Annie)

(49) Bon, on ira *une fois*, on fait jamais
well one will go one time one does never
rien
nothing
"We will go at some point, we never do anything."
(Corpus G-C, conversation B, p. XIX, Agnes

Wolf (1983) confirms that the usage of *une fois* is typical for Alsatian French, but does not discuss the position of this adverb in Alsatian French. In most of the 22 example sentences Wolf presents, *une fois* occurs in sentences that contain an imperative, and *une fois* is placed in post-verbal position, as in (50), but there are a few examples of *une fois* in the position between Vf and Vinf, as in (51) and (52), and one example of *une fois* in sentence-final position, after the PP *à la maison* "at home", as in (53), which we did not find in Brussels.

(50) Essaie *une fois*
try one time
"Just try." (Wolf, 1983, p. 96)

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(51) Je veux *une fois* voir (St.French: Je verrai")
I want one time see
"I'll think about it." (Wolf, 1983, p. 96)

(52) Il est *une fois* parti
he is one time left
"One day, he left." (Wolf, 1983, p. 96)

(53) Il faudra venir nous voir à la maison
it should come us see at the house
une fois[11]
one time
"One day, you should come and visit us at our house." (Wolf, 1983, p. 96)

Wolf points to the similarities with Belgian French/Brussels French and also presents an example of French as spoken in Fribourg in 1864, as in (54). In this example, *une fois* co-occurs with an imperative, which is also attested for Alsatian French and Brussels French, but not for any varieties of French that have not been influenced by Germanic varieties.

(54) Dites- moi *une fois* ce qu' il en est
tell me one time that what it about it is
"Tell me at some point what came of it."
(Wolf, 1983, p. 97)

Finally, it is interesting to note that in many of the Alsatian examples *une fois* is used to refer to the (immediate) future, as in the Brussels French examples.

4.5. Ne keer *in Brussels Dutch*

As many authors have pointed out, some uses of *une fois* probably originate in (Brussels) Dutch *ne keer* "lit. once", which corresponds to Standard Dutch *eens* or the phonologically reduced form *es*. In Dutch, this adverb can be used to formulate polite requests using the imperative form.

(55) Geef dat boek *eens*/*ne keer*
give that book one time
"Give that book to me."

(56) Kom *eens*/*ne keer* hier
come one time here
"Come here."

The distribution of *ne keer* provides us with very interesting evidence, as it shows that *une fois* and *ne keer* have a lot in common in terms of their distribution in the sentence. In sentences with simple tenses it always occurs post-verbally, before any complements or satellites, as in (57). In total, there are 33 examples of this kind.

(57) Ik zei *ne keer* tegen mijn broer. . .
I said one time to my brother
"I said to my brother. . . "
(Corpus JTD, Marieke, tape 8: 4)

Only in those sentences containing pronominal objects do we see that *ne keer* follows the object, as in (58).

(58) Schrijft dat *ne keer* op
write that one time up
"Write that down."
(Corpus JTD, Antoinet, tape 63: 4)

In compound tenses, *ne keer* is found pre-verbally, between the auxiliary and the main verb (38 cases in total). Because Dutch is an SOV language, objects and satellites are also found on the left of the main verb. When the object is a pronoun such as *dat* "that" in (59), *ne keer* occurs after the object, but in other cases it precedes the object, as in (60).

(59) Laat hem dat *ne keer* horen
let him that one time hear
"Let him hear that."
(Corpus JTD, Patrick, tape 54: 9)

(60) En we kunnen *ne keer* iet crapulous
and we can one time something vulgar
zeggen
say
"And we can say something vulgar (sometimes)."
(Corpus JTD, Madeleine, tape 80: 29)

For our purposes, it is important to see that *ne keer* is not found in sentence-initial position at all. There are however a few examples of sentences containing the stressed particle *iene keer* "one single time" and this particle does occur at the beginning of the sentence. The difference between the two particles is shown in (61) which contains both *iene keer* and *ne keer*, with the former being stressed and meaning "one single time" and the latter being unstressed and meaning "at some point".

(61) *Iene keer* hebben die vanzeleven *ne keer*,
one time have they of their life one time
dat ik weet, naar Frankrijk geweest
that I know to France been
"They went to France just once, at some point, as far as I know."
(Corpus JTD, Catherine, tape 7:31)

It is also interesting to see that *ne keer* co-occurs with an imperative in eighteen out of 71 sentences, and that it can be used to refer to the past as well as to the future. Thus, in the overwhelming majority of the cases the structures in which *ne keer* those in which *une fois* appear are strikingly similar.

[11] The author added *un jour dans l'avenir* "one day in the future" to explain the meaning of *une fois*.

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4.6. Emol *in Alsatian*

In the corpus of Gardner-Chloros, the Alsatian adverb *emol* "St.German (*ein*)*mal*; "lit. one time" appears in the same positions as *ne keer* in Brussels Dutch, as in (62)–(64).

(62) Regarde parrain, parrain kumm *emol*
watch godfather godfather come one time
"Watch godfather, godfather come."
(Corpus G-C, conversation C, p. I, Claude)

(63) Ich will eich au *emol* serviere
I want you also one time serve
"I want to serve you too."
(Corpus G-C, conversation D, p. XVIII, Meijer)

(64) Nochhär will i *emol* e Sprung in d' Robertsau gehn
afterwards want I one time a jump in the Robertsau go
"Afterwards I'd like to go for a walk in the Robertsau wood."
(Corpus G-C, conversation A, p. V, MmeBeck)

Wolf (1983) explains the use of *une fois* in Alsatian French by referring to *emol* in German. In the sentences he presents, there are no examples of *emol* in sentence-initial position. Thus, on the basis of the data that are currently available, we can draw the conclusion that the positions of *ne keer* and *emol* are strikingly similar.

5. Conclusion: Internal developments or transfer?

The evidence we have discussed so far, on the one hand, strongly supports an explanation based on transfer from Germanic substrates or adstrates. *Une fois* is not only far more frequent in varieties of French that are influenced by a Germanic substrate/adstrate, but it also appears more often in those positions in which one finds the Germanic translation equivalents. On the other hand, it is clear that *une fois* cannot be explained on the basis of transfer only. It does occur in declarative sentences in texts as early as the 16th century, in those positions in which we find it in Brussels French nowadays. Therefore the usage of *une fois* in Brussels French and Alsatian French can partly be explained as an archaic usage which has become less popular in Standard French, but has been preserved in Brussels French and Alsatian French, possibly through the support of Germanic varieties that surround it, in which this usage is common. Thus, for declarative sentences, internal and external causes have probably both contributed to the current situation. This is therefore likely to be an example of what Thomason and Kaufman (1988) have called multiple causation.

The examples in which *une fois* is being used as a politeness marker, in sentences where the adverb co-occurs with an imperative, form a separate case. This usage is unknown in varieties of French that have not been influenced by a Germanic substrate or adstrate, i.e. modern spoken and written French, and literary French from the 16th and 17th centuries. It is highly significant that we find *une fois* being used as a politeness marker in two other varieties of French for which there is evidence of substantial influence from Germanic substrates or adstrates: Alsatian French and French from Fribourg. As there is no evidence that *une fois* was used in this way in the 16th or the 17th century, it is unlikely that this usage represents a relic of earlier times. This use of *une fois* is clear case of transfer-induced innovation in Brussels French, and probably also in Alsatian French and Fribourg French. As we have suggested in section 2, using Haugen's typology, we can see *une fois* in this context as an example of a loan shift: a specific pragmatic function of the Dutch adverb *ne keer* (reduction of illocutionary force of a request) has been imported into Brussels French, without any substitution of sounds or morphemes. Thus, we can see this particular use of *une fois* as a case of what Kasper (1992, p. 209) has called pragmalinguistic transfer: "the process whereby the illocutionary force or politeness value assigned to particular linguistic material in L1 influences learners' perception and production of form–function mappings in L2".

It remains theoretically possible of course that separate internal developments have led to the same results in Brussels, Strasbourg and Fribourg, but this is highly unlikely. Explaining the facts as resulting from transfer from a Germanic substrate or adstrate makes it possible to give a unified account of phenomena across three language contact situations which involve contact between a Germanic an a Romance language. This explanation is simpler and thus probably better, as one should not increase beyond what is necessary the number of entities required to explain anything (Occam's razor).

In section 2, we asked the question whether the use of *une fois* in Brussels French should be seen as an example of covert or overt transfer. The former would apply if there are only quantitative differences between the use of *une fois* in different corpora, and the latter if the use of *une fois* represents a qualitative departure from monolingual norms (Mougeon et al., this issue). As we have seen above, there is ample evidence for quantitative differences: *une fois* is found much more frequently in data from Brussels and Alsace than in Standard French data, and there are clear differences in the distribution of *une fois* over the four main positions in which adverbs can be found. In Brussels French *une fois* does not occupy the first position in the sentence (see Table 2), but it does occupy the three other main positions distinguished above. It occurs most frequently in pre-verbal position, with compound tenses, or post-verbally, with simple or complex tenses, before any complements and satellites.

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These positions correspond exactly to the positions in which *ne keer* and *emol* are found in Dutch and Alsatian sentences. Finally, *une fois* refers to the future much more often in the Brussels and the Strasbourg data than in the Standard French data. Thus, there is clear evidence for covert inter-systemic transfer.

The use of *une fois* as a politeness marker in sentences with an imperative verb is different. This use of *une fois* represents a qualitative departure from the norms of Standard French, as we have no evidence of similar uses in any of the corpora of varieties of French that have not been influenced by a Germanic substrate. Therefore this use of *une fois* is probably best seen as an example of overt inter-systemic transfer.

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