

Speakers of German in Kitchener-Waterloo: Assimilation and Shift

Mathias Schulze and Lori Heffner, *University of Waterloo*

Today, about one quarter of the inhabitants of Waterloo Region are of German or Austrian ethnic origin (*1998 Region of Waterloo Statistical Profile*). Many more can claim Austrian, German or Swiss descent for their family. Place names bear witness to German-speaking immigrants to Canada who founded villages and towns in the area starting about 200 years ago. At the turn of the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, the first immigrants from Pennsylvania brought their language and their religion to Upper Canada. The area along the Grand River, the place where we find the cities of Kitchener and Waterloo today, was bought by the so-called *German Company*. “The German Company’s sixty-thousand-acre purchase established a Pennsylvania Mennonite colony in Upper Canada which contrasted markedly with the rest of the province” (English and McLaughlin 6). Such contrasts are found in a number of different domains, most notably those of religion and language. The settlers brought with them their Pennsylvania German dialect.¹ Uttley mentions the names of the families who were among the first to arrive, among them Schneider, Erb, Weber and Eby, all locally well-known names (13).

Initially, the settlement was known as Ebytown (in honour of Bishop Eby) or more in line with its appearance, Sandhills. Then very soon, the region saw an influx of European Germans (Bongart 25) who were mainly tradesmen and industrialists. “As a result of the continuing arrival in the township of these new immigrants it was decided in 1833 that the hamlet near Bishop Eby’s meeting house should be named Berlin” (English and McLaughlin 9). The township and the county thrived; within twenty years Berlin became the seat of Waterloo County.² The late nineteenth century saw it described as the German capital of Canada. In 1916 at the height of World War I, however, 200 businessmen petitioned the council to change the name of the city in order to preempt anti-German feelings (Uttley 409). In a polling process in which many were not allowed to or simply did not participate, Kitchener was chosen as the new name (English and McLaugh-

¹ Mennonite and Amish immigrants who had come to Pennsylvania from regions in southern Germany, mainly the Palatinate, but also directly from Switzerland, where these Anabaptist movements originated (Meister Ferré 1), speak and write this dialect.

² The county and later one of the twin cities were named Waterloo by a patriotic British land surveyor in honor of the Anglo-Prussian victory over Napoleon in 1815.

lin 117ff.). The city is still named after Lord Kitchener of Khartoum who was the British secretary of state for war until his death in June 1916 and a general who led successful military campaigns in Africa and India (“Kitchener”). He is also infamously remembered for his role in the Boer War. The fighting in this war “was finally quelled only through the severe tactics of the new British commander in chief, Lord Horatio Herbert Kitchener. He exhausted the enemy by devastating the Afrikaner farms that sustained and sheltered the guerrillas, placing black African and Afrikaner women and children in concentration camps, and building a strategic chain of formidable iron blockhouses for his troops” (“Boer War”).

Up until World War I, three quarters of Berlin’s population claimed German ethnic origin. In spite of the absolute figures still rising after that, the relative size of this ethnic group has been shrinking ever since (*Census of Canada, 1871-1971*, statistics quoted in English and McLaughlin 246f.). After the large groups of German-speaking immigrants arriving in the area in the first half of the nineteenth century, the next hundred years did not see such a significant influx at any given time, but rather a continuous immigration of German-speaking people in smaller numbers. “Das änderte sich jedoch nach dem 2. Weltkrieg. 1948 setzte erneut der Zustrom in größeren Mengen ein, zuerst von Volksdeutschen und ein paar Jahre später auch von Reichsdeutschen” (Bongart 26). Helling ascertains that between 1951 and 1958, 220,000 German-speaking immigrants came to Canada, many of them to Ontario (qtd. in Born and Dickgießer 118).³ It can be assumed therefore that it is this group of German-speaking immigrants who represent a large proportion of the current German-speaking population of the census metropolitan area of Kitchener. This hypothesis is supported by data from the most recent, *2001 Census of Canada*. Although it confirms German as the “leading non-official mother tongue” in the tri-city area (Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge), it also states that speakers “with Spanish and Chinese as mother tongues were relatively young, and those with German and Portuguese were relatively old” (Canada, *Profile* 20). Only six per cent of the German population were under the age of fourteen, whereas 6,580 of the 20,535 were older than 65 (Canada, *Various*). Altogether, allophones accounted for 21.3% of Kitchener’s population, up from 20.6% five years earlier. Those with German represented 17.8% of Kitchener’s allophone population, compared with 21.2% five years earlier. The population with German as a mother tongue represented 4% of Kitchener’s total population in 2001. Less than 2% of the population reported speaking

³ See also the immigration figures Kloss provides for the period from 1946 to the early seventies.

German most often at home (Canada, *Profile 20*).⁴

With a decline in absolute and relative numbers of German speakers in Kitchener-Waterloo as well as the increase of the average age of these speakers, is the German language and culture going to be lost in this area? What variables are governing such processes? Is the situation in this area comparable to processes of assimilation and language shift in other areas of Canada (compare Prokop) or elsewhere?

In order to provide some answers to these and some subordinated questions, we will first describe the results of a case study, before outlining the research context of our larger project and discussing aspects relevant to the case at hand. This contextualisation will be used to interpret tentatively the findings of the case study. Before looking at selected results in some detail, it is important to note that the data elicited here is unusual in three respects: (1) Since this is a case study with in-depth interviews which have been recorded, archived and transcribed, it has the potential to provide insights that are different from more sociologically oriented statistical research often carried out in investigations of language shift. (2) The case study concentrates on family units over three generations, thus allowing us to compare feature-value pairs not just across families, but also across generations. The fact that we could interview members of all three generations consolidates our findings. (3) It looks solely at German-speaking immigrants from settlements in non-German-speaking countries of South-Eastern Europe.

This case study of three families in Kitchener-Waterloo was conducted during the summer of 2002 as the main part of an MA project at the University of Waterloo in the Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies. Its purpose was to analyze selected factors which could be involved in language shift within a family whose ancestors left Germany several generations ago for South-Eastern Europe and continued practicing their German culture and language until their immigration to Kitchener-Waterloo. Although Kitchener-Waterloo is an area with a sizable German minority, these families are slowly phasing out German with each generation and shifting to English as the home language. Here we will focus on the reasons participants gave for deciding for or against passing on the German language and/or German culture to the next generation. The case study is based on three families, the Bauers, the Meiers, and the Schmidts, each with three generations (for family trees that will aid the understanding of

⁴ Allophone is the term used by Statistics Canada for persons with a language other than French or English.

the following sections, see figures 1, 2 and 3 at the end of this article).⁵ The families share similar backgrounds: four of the five grandparents (first generation) were born in South-Eastern Europe in a German-speaking community (one was raised in German in Kitchener-Waterloo) and eventually immigrated to Kitchener-Waterloo after the Second World War. These members of the first generation made some attempt to raise their children in German. Most of their children, though now dominantly English-speakers, also made some attempt to raise their children, the third generation, in German. However, all family members show different levels of ability in that language.

The 29 participants first filled out questionnaires about the amount of time they feel they spend using German and exactly what activities they do in that language. The questionnaire was then followed by a recorded interview. Interview questions covered a large range of topics including basic background and immigration, how German was used in the family at different stages of family life (e.g., with the first child, when all children had moved out, etc.), and the current language situation in the family.

The first generation of the Meier family (see figure 1), A. and B. Meier, initially raised their children, J., K. and L. Meier, in German. Once the children began playing with other children in the neighborhood and attending school, English took over as their dominant language, and they began speaking English at home with their parents. A. and B. Meier decided not to enforce German. A. Meier explains his attitude as follows:

Das ist nur eine Sprache. ... Wir haben uns sowieso ganz verändert von Deutsch auf Kanadisch. Uns hätten sie auch nicht verjagt in Jugoslawien, wenn wir uns vermischt hätten mit den Serben. ... Und in Jugoslawien, die Deutschen, die haben sich nicht vermischt, die haben sich ... immer separat gehalten. Deswegen hat man sie rausgeschmissen.

A. Meier's explanation describes a disadvantage of continuing the family's ethnic language when it is a minority language. Although he did not expressly say that he was afraid of a similar experience in Canada, his statement does seem to suggest this. Continuing to uphold one's language and culture, when they are different from the majority of the population, can lead to ostracization and expulsion from the mainstream culture. Maintaining the family culture and language, in his opinion, can lead to negative consequences. Therefore, he and his wife did not enforce German at home. In this generation of the family, one should learn a language because it is useful, not because it has a certain heritage attached to it, as he explains: "Jede Sprache ist wertvoll, was wir können. Es macht nichts aus –

⁵ Names have been changed to preserve anonymity.

Deutsch, Russisch, Französisch” They believe that learning languages can make a travel experience much richer, for example. In the end, a language, according to A. and B. Meier, will only be learned if it can be used in some way. J., K., and L. Meier echo these sentiments. J. Meier, the eldest of the three siblings, emphasized the practical reasons for learning German, such as travel or work. She also sees no need to teach her children the Austrian and Danube Swabian dialects her parents speak because no one will be able to understand them. The only exception to this she could think of was “for sentimental value maybe.” She would much rather her children learn standard German so that they can communicate with more people, again emphasizing the practicality of learning a language instead of purely for continuing the family heritage. She summarizes her viewpoint in this way: “If you want to have another language, if you want to speak German, then do it. But I don’t think that everybody that’s from German-speaking ancestry should and has to further the fatherland. That’s not my way of thinking.” K. Meier seems to share an attitude of assimilation similar to that of his parents and older sister. He believes French should be the first foreign language his children learn because of its higher status in Canada than German: “German not being a language of business, not being a language of necessity in our country, falls to an elective subject, okay? It’s not a requirement. And because of its status as an elective subject, it’s not going to grow and prosper, it’s going to fail in competition with the primary languages.” L. Meier, the youngest of the three siblings and still unmarried, repeats the same beliefs his siblings and parents have. He said he may try and teach his children German, if he ever has any, but also realizes that if they do not find a use for it, they will eventually forget it. This also emphasizes the importance of practicality in learning a language.

The only exception to these tendencies towards the usefulness of German is M. Meier, J. Meier’s husband. He reported that any second language is useful, but added that he “couldn’t think of a better one than German.” He also felt that teaching his sons the Danube Swabian dialect spoken within his family is important because “it’s the language of their ancestors.” M. Meier’s beliefs also seem to be the ones prevalent in his and J. Meier’s sons, Q. and R. Meier. Both boys expressed a strong interest in German culture and continuing with German language instruction once they reach high school. (Due to difficulties with their teachers, they pulled out of Saturday morning German school which they had been attending for several years.⁶) Usefulness is therefore a very important reason in the

⁶ “German school” refers to German language instruction which takes place on Saturday mornings through the German Language School Concordia in Kitchener.

Meier family for passing on German or deciding to concentrate on another language, such as French. The only person to insist that learning German is important to keep one's heritage is M. Meier, who married into the family.

The next family, the Schmidts (see figure 2) also consider the practicality of German to be an important reason for passing it on. However, in comparison to the Meier family, the Schmidts still retain aspects of their German culture. C. and D. Schmidt explained that they initially attempted to raise their first child, K. Schmidt, in German until they realized he might have difficulties in kindergarten. D. Schmidt, having been born in Kitchener-Waterloo but raised in a household where English was only allowed if a non-German-speaking guest was visiting, remembered having very negative experiences in kindergarten because of her lack of English proficiency. After she realized that K. Schmidt could encounter similar problems, she and her husband switched to English as their language of communication with their son but sent him to German language instruction. This language shift with K. Schmidt resulted in his three younger siblings, L., M., and O. Schmidt, receiving less exposure to German, thus being able to understand their family's German but using English as their language of communication.

In the Schmidt family, the practicality of learning German is placed below that of other activities, also suggesting that passing on the German language is not a high priority. N. Schmidt, M. Schmidt's husband, gave the example that children will attend hockey practice three nights a week because they hope to win the match on the weekend. In other words, they see a purpose for practice. Teaching children German when they have very little or no use for it is, then, more difficult because they do not see a goal. However, M. and N. Schmidt have made it a point to tell their children, U. and W. Schmidt, about their heritage. There are pictures of early Danube Swabian dwellings around the house, and N. Schmidt uses the local Mennonite population to show his children how the Danube Swabians lived. M. Schmidt mentioned that her father-in-law also takes his grandchildren out into Mennonite country to show them what his way of life was like before he and his wife emigrated to Canada. So although they did not spend too much time teaching their children German, they emphasized their German heritage. This emphasis on one's heritage is reflected in other activities enjoyed by the Schmidt family. All of the second generation members of the family have attended German folk dancing and those with children have sent them to folk dancing as well, even if it was only for one or two years when they were young. L. and M. Schmidt even started a folk dance group at their German ethnic club a few years ago, using dance steps learned

from their parents to choreograph the routines. They toured a little in Kitchener-Waterloo, especially during Oktoberfest, and L. Schmidt said they heard some very positive comments. U. and W. Schmidt participated in this group (they were teenagers by then), along with T. Schmidt (L. Schmidt's daughter, also in her teenage years) and all reported that they enjoyed it. During Easter, the entire Schmidt family plays a game called "*ticksen*" in which participants knock Easter eggs against each other to see whose egg breaks first. D. Schmidt reported that the family enjoys it so much that J. Schmidt has already figured out how to prepare the eggs for the game so that she and her family always win.

When asked if they would continue passing on German to their children, the third generation respondents all said they would at least give it a try. In many cases, though, culture was the important factor. R. Schmidt reported he would not try raising his future children in German if his wife ends up being of a stronger culture, such as Indian. However, by placing more importance on heritage than language, the Schmidt family has managed to develop their children's general interest in learning German. L., M. and N. Schmidt are looking for a private German tutor for their daughters, and U. Schmidt is registered for a beginners German course during his first year of university studies.

The Bauer family (see figure 3) is the only one in this study that strongly encouraged both language and culture in one branch of the family, that of J. and I. Bauer. In the other branch (K. Bauer's), culture and language were not passed on for a while because the family had moved away from Kitchener-Waterloo to a town where there was little exposure to German culture. They will therefore not be discussed in detail. J. and K. Bauer were raised in a German household in Kitchener-Waterloo and thus have always spoken German with their parents (their father has died recently). I. Bauer, J. Bauer's wife, reported that she also still speaks with her parents in German. However, all three use English when speaking to their spouses and children. I. and J. Bauer feel that it is important to keep one's heritage, as J. Bauer reports:

But I always say that sports is only with you as long as you're capable, healthy and young to play in sports, where culture, you can start to learn at a very young age and basically, culture is with you for the rest of your life because you can use it in different aspects. You can always say you maybe get too old to dance, but you never get too old to sing, until your voice and your vocal cords are completely gone or something like that.

They initially raised their children in German: They would speak to them in German but then switch to English between themselves when the chil-

dren were in bed. S. Bauer reported still remembering speaking German at the dinner table when he was young. However, no one could remember when English became the language of the household. J. Bauer mentioned only that he and his wife also wanted to teach their children English to help them avoid the problems they had encountered themselves when they first entered school. Both J. and K. Bauer were sent to German language school and also took part in ethnic club events because their father, as one of the founders of the club, was often there and took his children along with him. They in turn enrolled their sons in folk dancing and German language lessons. K. Bauer's sons, however, discontinued that for several years once the family moved away from the Kitchener-Waterloo area. J. Bauer's sons continued with German language instruction until at least grade 12 and took part in folk dancing for several years. In speaking to three of the five members of the third generation of this family, we heard mixed feelings about whether or not they would pass on their German language and culture to their future children. Q. Bauer, K. Bauer's younger son, said he would definitely do it "because it's basically part of our heritage, where we come from." S. Bauer, the oldest of J. and I. Bauer's sons, enjoyed the cultural activities he attended and the benefits he feels knowing a second language has, so he plans on passing on German to his future children. R. Bauer, though, said he would do it if his future wife is also of German heritage. If she is of another culture, then, like R. Schmidt, he would not force the issue.

Selected main findings of this case study can be summarised as follows: The Bauer family, especially I. and J. Bauer's branch, listed both the usefulness of another language and the importance of culture as reasons for passing on their German culture and language in the family. In the Schmidt family, three of the five third-generation members are interested in learning German because it is part of their heritage. The two children who were interviewed in the Meier family are also very interested in learning German because they have a strong interest in their German culture. K. Meier's belief that French is more important has led him and his wife to set German aside and concentrate on French as their children's first foreign language, showing the importance of the usefulness of a language. Of the third generation who were not sure if they would like to pass on German, the culture of their future spouse was an important factor. In conclusion, culture and practicality are the two main reasons which led parents to decide if they will pass on German to their children.

How do these findings compare to results of related studies? The linguistic development of immigrant minorities has been researched from a

variety of perspectives. Studies such as the ones by Klein and Dittmar as well as Klein and Perdue have investigated the uninstructed acquisition of the language of the host country (L2) by immigrants. A large number of studies in second language acquisition research (in particular for English as a second language) deal with variables that influence the learning of L2.⁷ Here research that concentrated on the mother tongue (L1) of immigrants is more relevant. Studies of this kind fall under two admittedly broad categories.⁸ Linguistic descriptions concentrate on selected structural aspects of immigrant languages (e.g. phonology, morphology and syntax). Richter's work on the phonology of Pennsylvania German is one example of the focus on a particular layer or aspect of the *langue* – the system of linguistic entities and rules. Many such descriptions have contrastive elements which capture results of language contact and language transfer. In Waterloo, Gubitz investigated the influence of Pennsylvania German and English on the writings of one author in her textual analysis of a diary written in German by Catherine Breithaupt, a prominent Canadian-German community member of Berlin, Ontario. Mehrer studied English-German interference phenomena in the speech of established immigrants in the Kitchener-Waterloo area. She concludes that “although all informants have lived in this country for ten years or more, interference phenomena occurred less frequently than initially expected” (71). Using an analysis of occasional morpho-syntactic deviations from standard German, she briefly discusses a number of extra-linguistic factors (57ff.) which are normally associated with the discipline of sociolinguistics, stating correctly that it is such factors that are the cause of the manifestations she found in the texts.

The second group of studies, sociolinguistic studies that investigate the linguistic behavior of immigrants, commonly concentrates on the phenomenon of bilingualism. “Bilinguals will here be taken to mean those people who make use of more than one language and who recognize themselves, and are recognized by others as using more than one language, regardless of their degree of competence in those languages” (Pauwels 7). Bilingualism can thus be studied in this context as a feature of an individual or of a society or a group within a society. The former, individual bilingualism, lends itself to discourse and/or conversational analyses which study phenomena such as code-switching (Liebscher and Steiger, this volume) or to a psycholinguistic investigation of bilingual language acquisition. Researchers of societal bilingualism, on the other hand, are concerned

⁷ For a comprehensive overview of this kind of research see e.g. Ellis.

⁸ They are briefly illustrated through examples relevant to the current field of investigation. For an overview of the state of research on German in Waterloo Region see Liebscher.

with the deeper understanding of processes such as language maintenance, language shift and language attrition, linguistic concepts which will enable us to shed some more light on the data of our case study.

Language maintenance “denotes the continuing use of a language in the face of competition from a regionally and socially more powerful and numerically stronger language” (Mesthrie 42, qtd. in Hornberger 365). Hornberger explains its opposite, language shift, as the gradual substitution of one language by another in the lives of the community members (365).⁹ Language attrition is a process that affects the language of an individual and it is the gradual loss of that language by that individual (Schmid 7).

Studies into how first language attrition proceeds on the level of the linguistic system have mainly been characterized by the following five hypotheses:

- Language attrition is determined by the acquisitional sequence (Jakobson’s regression hypothesis [Jakobson 1941]);
- Language attrition is determined by inter-language effects, aspects from the linguistic system of the L2 encroaching on that of the L1;
- Language attrition is determined by general tendencies of language change, leading to a simplification of the linguistic system;
- Language attrition is determined by principles of Universal Grammar (UG); marked structures will be lost while unmarked structures will be preserved;
- Language attrition is determined by reduced accessibility of information in retrieval processes (Schmid 11).

Data such as cited in Steiger or Mehrer clearly show that processes of attrition have an effect on the language used today by (some) German speakers in Waterloo Region. However, if one looks closely at the data of the current case study and other similar studies (Stadler, Tandogan) then it is apparent that the language shift from German to English is heavily influenced, perhaps even caused by sociolinguistic factors and not a result of nor dominated by language attrition. This becomes even more apparent if one considers recent research in language attrition.

These findings suggest very strongly that what is affected by prolonged non-contact with the L1 is only actual and momentary control. The deeper linguistic repertoire, including the range and breadth of the lexicon, appears to remain untouched by any systematic process of ‘erosion’ or ‘attrition’. This strongly supports hypotheses that what is affected in ‘language attrition’ is merely online accessibility of certain morpho-syntactic rules, as opposed to underlying competence (Schmid 190).

⁹ Her definition is based on Dorian’s.

Schmid bases her conclusions on textual analyses of interviews conducted with German Jews who emigrated to America about 60 years ago. This certainly makes her data and conclusions applicable to the findings of our case study. If language shift is not caused by language attrition, or in other words, if the first-generation immigrant German speakers are sufficiently competent to pass on the language, what prevents them from doing so? For her study, Schmid singles out attitudes, in particular identity and self-perception, as the most important extra-linguistic factors affecting attrition (191f.). Our data suggests that German speakers in Kitchener-Waterloo think and feel very similarly. First-generation immigrants, who in our case are also the 'last' generation of immigrant minorities in Europe to pass on the German language and culture for many generations, attached a higher priority to the success their children would have in Canadian society (initially, kindergarten and school) than the maintenance of their native language. Members of the other two generations act(ed) according to a similar hierarchy of values in this regard, but obviously did not face the same choice to switch the language of the home because English had already been dominant prior to the kindergarten or school entry of their children. This is linked to at least one trait of their self-perception, namely that the overwhelming majority of our participants see themselves as Canadian. This striving for assimilation we found among our participants was also given as the dominant reason for the language shift from German to English in studies such as those by Prokop and Stadler. It is difficult to determine what in turn causes the wish to assimilate in Canadian society. Prokop lists possible reasons such as the acceptance of Canada as home and the frequent malignment in public life during, between and after the world wars (321), both of which resulted in the immigrants adopting English as their main language very quickly and in developing a Canadian identity out of respect and gratitude (acceptance) and/or out of negative experience or potential threats as a member of a minority. Our data for the first generation suggests that for them the latter is not based on Canadian experience, but on their life in countries like Yugoslavia.

Many of our participants, at some stage, actively encouraged the acquisition and maintenance of German. Having lived in an officially bilingual country most or all their life, they portray a positive attitude to multilingualism in general. Even members of the third generation make an attempt to learn some German in an educational setting (high school or university) and/or express a willingness to pass on the German language and culture to their children. Many study participants attended German school on Saturdays. Stadler, when talking about the role of the German language school

in her study, concludes that “[m]other tongue maintenance is practiced only to a small extent in the family ... and the responsibility for language maintenance and transmission is being shifted onto school” (100), something the data from our study confirms. Since this instruction does not seem to have any influence on the linguistic behaviour at home, i.e. English is still used as the home language, it also hardly ever helps the learners to attain a level of language proficiency that would enable them to pass on this learnt language (as opposed to its being acquired in a natural setting) to their children. This dilemma is apparent for some of the representatives of the third generation in our study. Even if they really wanted to pass on the German language to their children, they are very unlikely to succeed given their current perceived linguistic competence.¹⁰ This insufficient competence (of some members of the second and third generation) and the low rate of endogamy¹¹ among German immigrants (Prokop 79) appear to be main factors which explain the significant difference of figures for German as a mother tongue and German as a home language in the statistics for Kitchener-Waterloo (Canada, *Various*). With 4% and 2%, respectively, only half of those who claim to have German as a mother tongue actually use it as the main medium of communication in their family (Canada, *Profile* 20).

One other reason given for the low priority of language maintenance among our participants is that German is perceived as less useful than other languages. Members of the second and third generations have hardly any or very loose ties to German-speaking relatives in these countries. Closer family ties would increase the usefulness of German as a medium of communication in social interactions. French in Canada is clearly seen as more useful – particularly in the context of work and career – and hence often the preferred choice of both parents and children if they have to learn a foreign language. Prokop also shows in his study that ‘usefulness as a second language’ is seen as most important among those who consider maintenance of German desirable (95). In other words, thinking that German is a useful language to have does not necessarily lead to this person’s acquiring or maintaining it, but if someone intends to maintain German, usefulness of the language is an important reason for doing so. On the other hand, if the parent generation of a Canadian of German descent does not see German as

¹⁰ Participants’ competence in German was not tested; they were just asked to rank it themselves.

¹¹ “Endogamy” refers to the marriage of two people of identical linguistic and cultural background. Our case study showed that participants were or say they will be unlikely to maintain German as the home language if they have a spouse from a different cultural or linguistic background.

a candidate for the first language for their children nor as a useful second language (relative to a language like French), then this obviously facilitates the language shift from German to English in a very short span of time.

Although the majority of our interviewees did not see cultural transmission as an important reason or a reason at all for language maintenance, many of them understand what they perceive to be German culture as an important part of their own and their children's identity. The cultural activities listed above as well as other interview and questionnaire data suggest that for these participants, German culture mainly serves as part of diachronic identity in that it is used to describe the roots/point-of-departure, not a current point-of-reference or even a destination. This is understandable if one takes into consideration their lack of exposure to Germanophone culture in the 21st century. Whereas the first generation seldom appears to be interested in aspects of modern Germanophone literature, music and art but more in phenomena of popular culture in the 1960s and earlier (judging by the public display of these cultural interests on the radio, at fairs and during festivals), for the second and third generation this is at least partly due to their insufficient linguistic competence. However, it appears to be the interest in cultural traditions that causes some of our participants to now acquire German in an instructional setting.

So whether one wants to congratulate German-speaking immigrants and their descendants in Kitchener-Waterloo on their often highly successful integration and assimilation or whether one wants to criticize them for having been and being unable to maintain their mother tongue as a first or second language, one has to admit that they have certainly left and are leaving their cultural mark in the cities and in the region. Butchery and bakery products, main courses and dessert, beer brewing and wine making, festivals and dances, rural architecture and village structures, religious and ethical codes, all these and many others, which German speakers brought with them, have enriched the culture and life of the Kitchener-Waterloo region.

Figure 1. The Meier Family

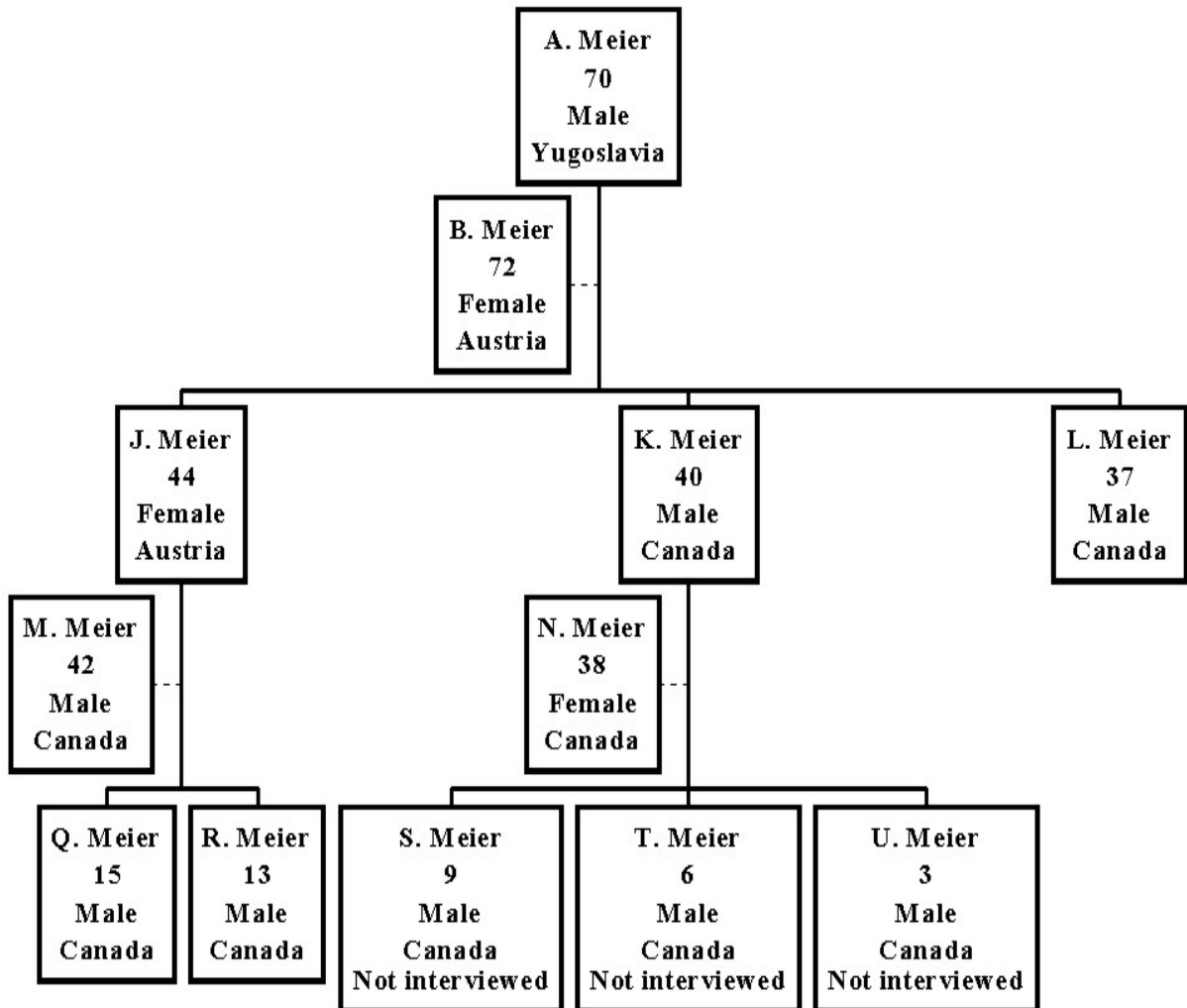


Figure 2. The Schmidt Family

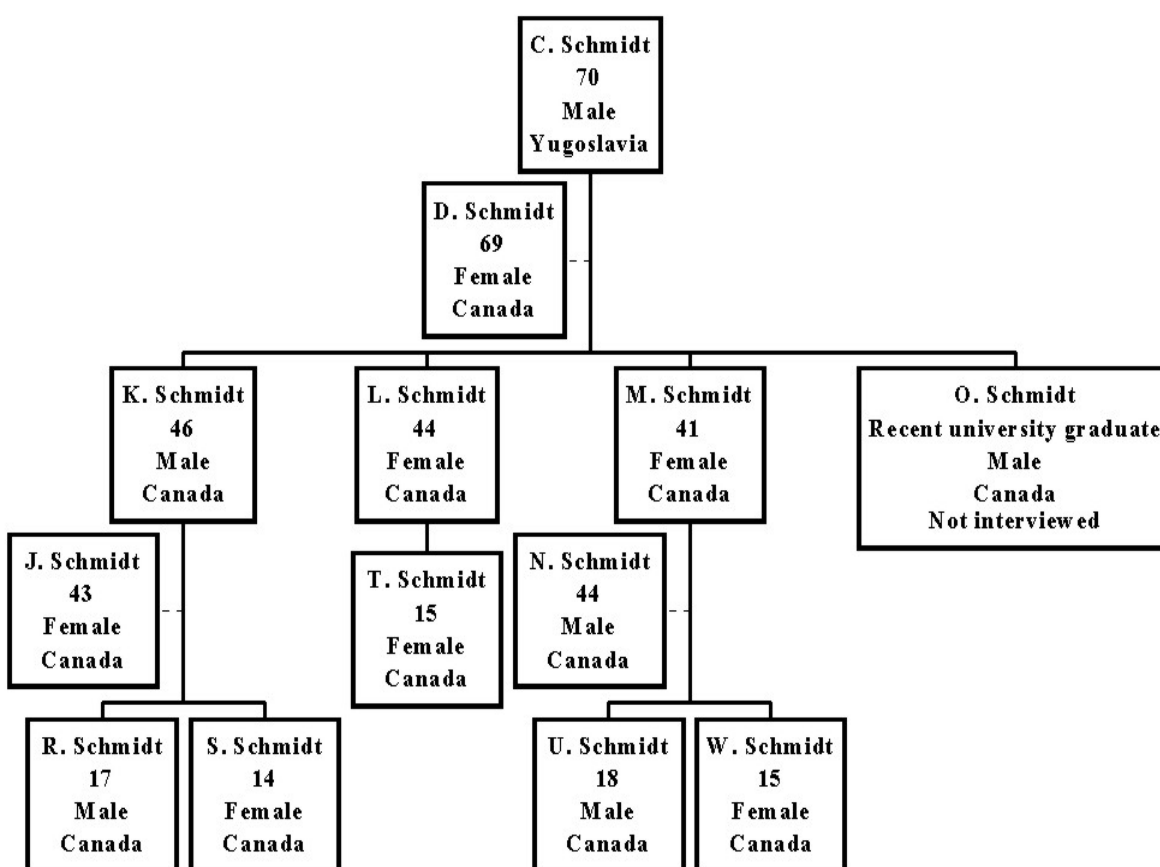
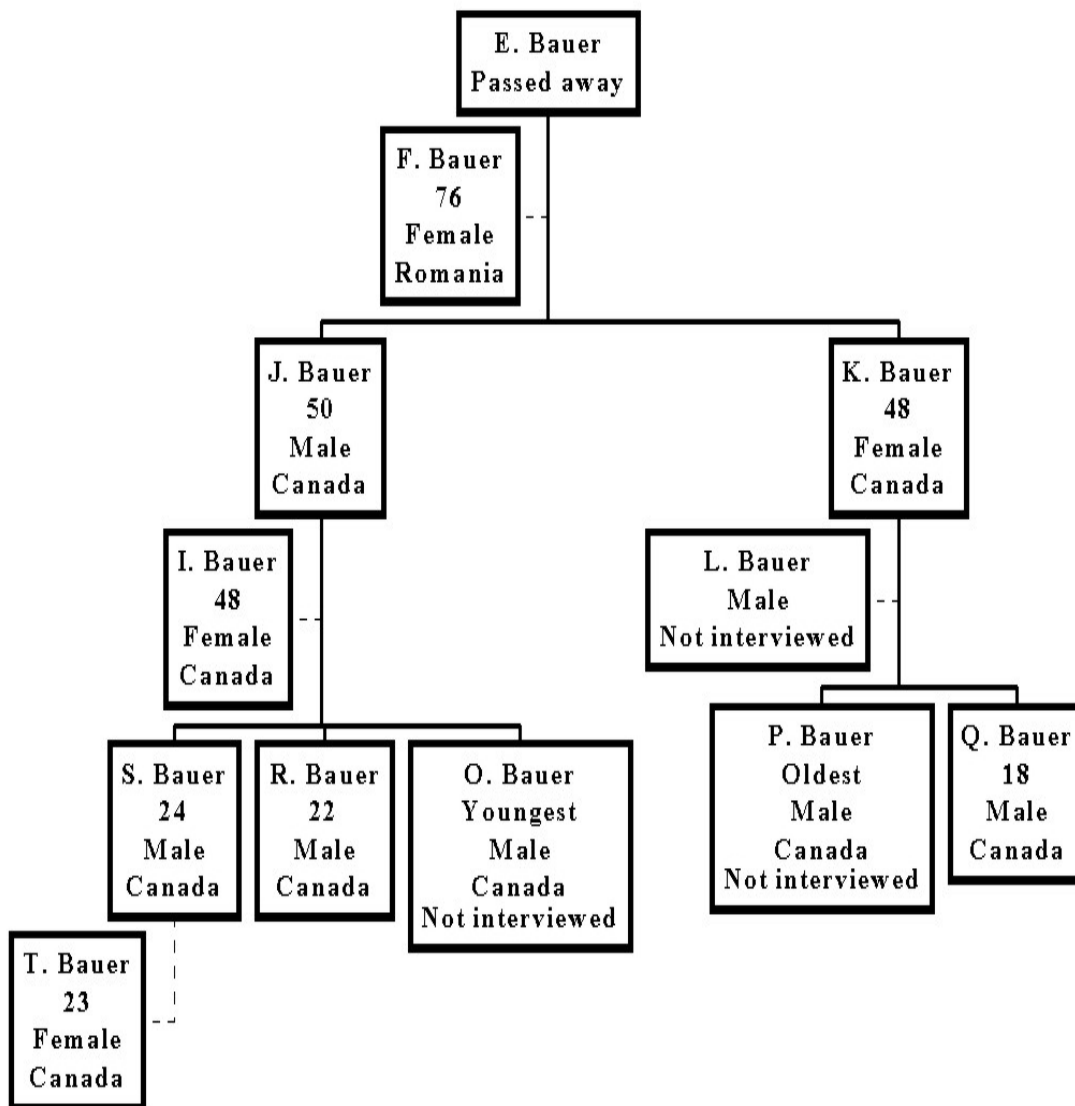


Figure 3. The Bauer Family



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