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### **A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF MAROLLIEN DIALECT FEATURES**

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The article provides an overview of the lexical and grammatical features as well as the sociopolitical environment of Marollien that originated in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a dialect on the territory of Brussels. Marollien is essentially the Dutch language in its Brabantian dialect, strongly influenced by French. There are literary works, performances, and musicals written and staged in Marollien, as well as dictionaries and journals published in it. Historically, the Marollien dialect is a sociolect: it was generally used by Belgians coming to Brussels from Wallonia in search of a job and settling in one of the districts of Brussels — Marolles. A special emphasis is placed on lexical features of the dialect: gastronomic and everyday vocabulary are looked at and the examples of French loanwords and Southern Dutch language norm deviations are provided. Standard Dutch calques in French, when translating idioms in particular, are also identified. The differences between Dutch, French, and Marollien place names are illustrated. In the field of morphology and word formation, there is a regular mixture of Germanic and Romanic stems which is indicated. Examples of Marollien phonetic features are also provided. The article acknowledges frequent code switching in Marollien speech, which by and large resembles the phenomenon of linguistic interference. Due to the fact that Marollien is rapidly disappearing, the Brussels-Capital region is trying to support the dialect: various activities are being organized in order to propagate its use and enhance its prestige. Nevertheless, Marollien is not included in the well-known citizen initiative “Marnix Plan”, aimed at developing the methodology for the sequential study of several languages for all segments of the population in Brussels. This initiative is also discussed in the article.

**Keywords:** the Marollien dialect, Brabantian dialects, the City of Brussels, Belgium, Flanders, Dutch.

The region of Flanders embraces four main dialect groups comprising a large number of dialects: Brabantian (53 dialects), East Flemish (69 dialects), West Flemish (34 dialects), and Limburgian (61 dialects) [Nederlandse en Vlaamse dialecten]. Both Limburgian and West Flemish are the most commonly used spoken varieties in daily speech of Flanders and differ from Belgian Dutch and Dutch in its common (standard) norm the most [Claeys, 2001].

Limburgian dialects are mainly spoken in the south-east of the Netherlands, as well as in the north-east of Belgium and in bordering western regions of Germany. The Limburgish variant is still regarded as a dialect in Belgium, while in the Netherlands since 1997 it is officially recognized as a regional language. A distinctive feature of Limburgian dialects in Belgium is a large number of French loanwords.

Despite the fact that the West Flemish variant differs from Standard Dutch roughly as much as Afrikaans, it is not considered to be a distinct language. West Flemish dialects are widely used in the west of Flanders. The spread of the dialects is explained by the fact that the introduction of Northern Dutch (the Netherlands Dutch, the basis of Standard Dutch) met resistance from the literary movement of the area in the latter half of the 19th century. One of the most prominent figures of the movement was Guido Gezelle [Weijnen, 1966].

The role of big cities in the evolution of languages and dialects is undeniable. As centres of manufacturing, commerce, culture and education, they “accumulate” regional features of a topolect. The influence of such features, focused within urban areas, extends beyond agglomerations. Urban dialect can therefore to some extent provide an overview of a dialect group it belongs to. Brabantian group can be in some way represented by the dialects of Brussels and Antwerp, East Flemish by the dialect of Ghent, and West Flemish can be represented by the dialect of Bruges. The Limburgian dialect group comprises related but quite different dialects and cannot be represented by a dialect of a city.

There are some 250 thousand speakers of Limburgian dialects in Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands each. A span across three countries is not exclusive for the Limburgian dialect group. West Flemish dialects are spoken in the Netherlands, in the south of Zeeland province (Zeelandic Flanders) by 80 thousand speakers, as well as in Hauts-de-France, the northernmost region of France (Westhoek, or Maritime Flanders), with 20 thousand people speaking a distinctive Franco-Flemish dialect.

Belgium per se has 900 thousand West Flemish dialects speakers. East Flemish dialects are also spoken in the Netherlands: there are some 60 thousand speakers in the east of Zeeland province (Zeelandic Flanders). Belgium has around 210 thousand speakers of East Flemish dialects. Brabantian dialects are also widespread in some Dutch provinces — about 200 thousand speakers in North Brabant, and approximately 60 thousand speakers in southern Gelderland and in Limburg. There are around 870 thousand Brabantian dialects speakers in Belgium distributed quite heterogeneously between two of the Brabant provinces. Flemish Brabant, which surrounds Brussels-Capital Region, has around 160 thousand speakers, and in Antwerp Province there are about 710 thousand speakers. As an isolated from French-speaking Belgium community province, Antwerp is the only Belgium region without any adjustment for French. The whole province can use nothing but Dutch on a daily basis [Van der Gucht, De Caluwe, Jansen, 2017].

Over the past 20 years the number of the aforementioned dialects speakers has fallen drastically. An average number of citizens fluent in regional languages has dropped by 18% in Flanders and is at the moment around 33% of the total population, though the majority understands their native speech and is able to keep the conversation going. The Flemish Brabant province suffered the largest decline, with the dialect being a native language for just 17% of the population. The same holds true for both East and West Flemish dialects regions: only 19% of citizens are proficient in East Flemish dialects and 55% are proficient in West Flemish dialects. The decline is twice as little in the Limburgian dialects areas with 26% of the speakers [Van der Gucht, De Caluwe, Jansen, 2017].

The linguocultural world view of languages or dialects speakers can be illustrated in examining colloquial and professional vocabulary and as to the dialects of the capital, the City of Brussels, the analysis can be performed from the standpoint of Gallicisms and archaisms inclusion, as well as the inclusion of the words that are rarely used in Standard or in Belgian Dutch.

There is a specific Brabantian dialect in Brussels called Marollien (some linguists presume it to be a sociolect). It is also known as “Brusseleir” in academic literature which is not entirely accurate since the region of Brussels has residually at least two more spoken varieties — Bargoens (the language of vagrants, street vendors and street performers) and a

dialect of the Molenbeek municipality. Marollien is the dialect with the most remarkable representation: there are literary works, performances, and musicals written and staged in Marollien, as well as dictionaries and journals published in this language variant [Wanet, 2000]. Sometimes “Brusseleir” is seen as a variant of French spoken in the capital city. Marollien, however, is a Germanic variant with numerous inclusions from Romance languages.

Originally it was the South Brabantian dialect that was spoken in Brussels. Beginning in the 18<sup>th</sup> century workers from Wallonia, the south of Belgium, started settling in the Marolles district, the south-west of the capital. That was the environment where Marollien originated, a dialect that differed from other Brabantian dialects in a large number of Walloon loanwords. Over time, its transformation into a working-class language became increasingly discernable as it absorbed French, Spanish, German, English, and Yiddish loanwords. Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as Brussels was being actively francized, Marollien was almost entirely replaced by French, which had become compulsory in governing and education. The figures from population censuses speak for themselves: in 1830 French speakers made up some 30 % of Brussels’ population, and over the course of a century the figure went up to 70 %. The number of Brussels’ French speakers is reported by current estimate to be over 90 % [Vanden Branden, 2014].

Despite the fact that nowadays Marollien is of interest mainly for linguists and culture experts, it is still a source of national pride for a small number of native speakers and is widely used in traditional puppet shows. Furthermore, various cultural activities are organized in order to support it. For example, in 2004 the Marolles neighbourhood (around 2000 residents) enjoyed a banquet arranged by authors of *The last of the Brusseliers* photobook presented to the public in the same year. What is more, an action group was set up in the Marolles to ensure Marollien’s inclusion into the list of 19 European Union official languages (with EU enlargement taken into account). Marolliens’ intentions are firm: the action group has already announced a competition to recruit interpreters from Marollien into main EU working languages — English, French, and German [An unusual holiday...].

In some cases, linguists define Marollien as an argot because it has developed expressive expletives and created a number of set phrases, proverbs, and sayings obscure for both Dutch and French speakers

while being a working-class language. That is why young people tend to use Marollien to scandalize their company. One of the most well-known Marollien sayings is an invective “skieve architect” (literally — “shameful architect”) that appeared in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with the demolishing of the Marolles section to construct the Palace of Justice which resulted in many residents losing their houses.

Marollien lexical features essentially relate to any Belgian dialects lexical set. The City of Brussels, however, as the capital of the country, enriches gastronomic Marollien vocabulary first and foremost. Many words for traditional and local cuisine have Southern Dutch origins. Although there are French equivalents, Brussels’ French speakers prefer using Southern Dutch lexis. Below are some examples sequenced as “Marollien” — “Belgian Dutch” — “Standard French”:

“bloempanch” — “bloedpens” — “boudin noir” (a blood sausage);  
“kip kap” — “kip kap” — “viande hachée, fromage de tête” (headcheese);  
“plattekkeis” — “plattekees” — “fromage blanc frais” (cream cheese);  
“smoutebolle” — “smoutebol” — “beignet” (a doughnut);  
“stoemp” — “stoemp” — “purée de pommes de terre et de légumes” (vegetables and mashed potatoes).

A Walloon, who visits Brussels infrequently, may find these words incomprehensible as Marollien “kip kap” is “tête pressé” in Belgian French, as well as “plattekeis” is “maquée”, and “smoutebolle” is “croustillon” [Beardsmore, 1971].

In addition, the majority of Marollien lexical items borrowed from spoken varieties and dialects of Flanders are not present in Standard Dutch. As a result, the Dutch do not understand them. This is reflected with the following: Marollien “bloempanch” is “bloedworst” in Standard Dutch, as well as “kip kap” is “hoofdkaas”, “plattekkeis” — “kwarck” or “wrongel”, “smoutebolle” — “oliebol”, and “stoemp” — “stamppot” [Wanet, 2002].

A similar situation appears in vocabulary related to social life and relationships. We see this with “chatterbox” in Marollien being “babe-laire”, in Southern Dutch — “babbeler”, in Standard Dutch — “babbelaar”, in Belgian Dutch — “berdelleur”, and in Standard French — “bavard”. A combination of Dutch and French in different spoken varieties with Walloon admixed produces belgicisms, generally specific to Brussels dialects. This is evident with the game of darts in Marollien being a Southern Dutch word “vogelpik”; in Standard Dutch howev-

er it is an English word “darts”, in Belgian French — “jeu de fleches”, and in Standard French — “jeu de fléchettes”. A café or a bar in Marollien is “caberdouche” — derived from the Southern Dutch lexical item “kabberdoe(ke)”, which is “kroeg(je)” in Standard Dutch, “estaminet” in Belgian French, and “bistrot” in Standard French. A French fries stall is a Southern Dutch word “fritkot”; which is “frietkraam” in Standard Dutch, “baraque à friture” in Belgian French, and “baraque de marchand de frites” in Standard French.

Despite all these forms being a defining characteristic of Brussels’ spoken varieties, they may be clear for a broader spectrum of Belgium population owing to radio talk shows and television with hosts using regional words and phrases. Recent instances of the “debrusselization” of Brussels’ dialect words are the lexical units “idiot” — “snul” (“sul” in both Southern and Standard Dutch, “abruti” or “crétin” in French variants), “brat, bastard” — “zinneke” (same in Belgian Dutch and Belgian French, “straathond” in Standard Dutch, and “chien bâtard” in Standard French), and “problem” — “stut” (“stoot” in Belgian Dutch, “problem” in Standard Dutch, “stuut” in Belgian French, and “problème” in Standard French). The last word was especially popularized in Wallonia because of an iconic comedian Marc Herman’s phrase “Y a un stuuût!” (“There’s a problem!”) [Francard, 2010].

Morphological features of Flanders’ dialects can be found in Marollien as well. The indefinite article likewise comes from an archaic form *eenen* and exists in the forms *ne*, *e* and *en*, for example, “ne pei” — “old man”, “en mei” — “old lady”, and “e peike”, “e meike” with a diminutive suffix.

The process of word formation involves Germanic stems rarely used or not compatible in Dutch spoken varieties. The lexical unit “labbekak” (“coward”) derives from Standard Dutch stems “laf” (“cowardly”) and “kak” (“shit”). Romance base morphemes are also used — the lexical item “pottepei” (“boozehound”) is based on the Standard Dutch stem “pot” (“pot”) and the Southern Dutch stem “pee” (“old man”, that comes from French word “père” (“father”)). The verb “kažoebere” (“to rummage through garbage cans”) supposedly derives from the French stems “caisse” (“box”) and “éboueur” (“garbage man”). Another French stem “régliſſe” (“licorice”) is quite obscured in the Marollien “calichezap” (“booze”), where also the Standard Dutch stem “sap” (“juice”) remains.

Another quite peculiar phenomenon of Marollien is verb formation with a Germanic suffix *-eire* added to a French stem verb, for example:

autoriseire (authorize) — from “autoriser”;  
applaudisseire (applaud) — from “applauder”;  
constateire (note, state) — from “constatater”.

Such forms are evident in the Marollien sentence “Deei mense kan’k-ik ni supportèire, die m’n schuune Vlamse taal konstant moete massacreire!”, which is “Je ne peux pas supporter ces gens qui doivent tout le temps massacrer ma belle langue flamande!” in French (“I can’t stand people who are desperate to obliterate my beautiful Flemish language!”). This sentence also demonstrates “ik” (“I”) subject reduplication: the subject does not split, it reduces one of its parts — “ik” to an ending *-k*, which essentially merges with the verb form “kan” — “kan’k”. It is worth noticing that the form “kan’k” corresponds to the rest of the subject in a French manner: “peux-je” — “kan’k-ik”. Nevertheless, Marollien, as any other Flanders dialect, has Dutch syntax at its core. Despite the decreasing number of speakers, Marollien syntactic structures are entrenched in both Brussels and Belgian variants of French: for example, the Marollien “wat ik nodig heb” (“what I need”) becomes “ce que j’ai besoin” in Belgian French and “ce dont j’ai besoin” in Standard French; “c’est” in French common norm sometimes in Belgian French turns into “ça est” under the influence of Standard Dutch “het is” [Treffers-Daller, 1994].

Furthermore, the Southern Dutch diminutive suffix *-ke* can be added to French noun stems in Marollien, for instance: “little boy” — “filske”. The opposite also holds true, adding the French suffix *-eur* to Dutch stems creates a new noun, as in “zwanze” (“joke”) — “zwanzeur” (“joker”).

Generally speaking, the Marollien Brussels dialect differs from other Flanders dialects in rather frequent code switching. Such a phenomenon also occurs beyond Belgium borders (Nord and Pas-de-Calais departments in northern France) in the Franco-Flemish dialect, which belongs to the West Flemish dialect group. However, historically the Franco-Flemish dialect is a combination of Picardian and West Flemish spoken varieties. Marollien, as mentioned above, combines Brabantian, Walloon, and French language variants.

Below are some more examples of code switching, Germanic or Romance stems are deliberately not pointed out:

“Ei aa gienen débouchonneur” — “He didn’t have a corkscrew”;  
 “Il sort manger avec sa mokke” — “He’s out to grab a bite with his girlfriend”;  
 “Ge zai nen imbecile” — “You’re an asshole”;  
 “K’em a carrément de woeraait gezeit” — “I told him the truth straight out”;  
 “Il est kroemmeneil zat” — “He is quite drunk”;  
 “Op de chaussee is da te dangereus» — “It’s too dangerous on the carriageway”:  
 “Allien mo vè aile t’amuzeire” — “Merely to amuse you”.

A striking example of code switching can be found in first lines of Victor Lefèvre’s (1822-1904) poem “Flup le Marollien” (“Flup the Marollen”) from the book *Le Marollien* (“The Marollens”) (1871) where French and Dutch words rhyme [Lefèvre, 1871]:

El frèr’ de Flup duvait partir pour l’guerre  
 Il était kron et toch ! goed gekeurè!  
 (Flup got his brother taken to war —  
 He yet can fight, though was wounded before!)

In Brussels French sentences are quite often calques from Dutch, for instance:

J’espère que ça va pas continuer à rester durer. (I hope it won’t last.)  
 (Ik hoop dat het niet gaat blijven duren.) or  
 Arrive une fois, filske! (Come here, boy!)  
 (Kom ‘ns, jongen!)

Idioms are translated word for word as well:

Il a une pièce dans ses bottes. (He is quite drunk)  
 (Hij heeft een stuk in zijn laarzen (literally — He has crumbs in his boots)).

Dutch verb extensions can also sometimes be translated literally:

Nous sommes (o) chemin. (We are away.)  
 (We zijn weg)

As we assume, the facultative *o* in French sentence may be related to the interferential influence of the corresponding English structure “We are away”.

Some quite illustrative differences in placenames in Dutch, French, and Marollien should be noted as well:

Oudergem — Auderghem — Âvergoum (Auderghem);  
 Elsene — Ixelles — Olche (Ixelles);  
 Hoogstraat — Rue Haute — Uugstroût (High Street);  
 Oude Markt — Vieux Marché — Den Â Met’ (Old Market);  
 de Vismarkt — le Marché-aux-Poissons — De Vismet’ (Fish Market).



The dialects of Brussels are captured in the famous play written by Frantz Fonson (1870–1924) and Fernand Wicheler (1874–1935) — *Le Mariage de Mademoiselle Beulemans* (1910), as well as in Joris d’Hanswyck’s (1878–1942) and Paul Van Stalle’s (1908–1995) play *Bossemans et Coppenolle* (1938). Marollien is also used in Théâtre Royal de Toone: some plays are performed in the three original languages of Brussels. The first novel including Brussels folklore is *La Famille Kaekebroeck* (*The Kaekebroeck family*, 1901), written by Léopold Courouble (1861–1937).

Best known for his series of comic albums *The Adventures of Tintin*, cartoonist Hergé, whose grandmother came from the Marolles, not only systematically used Brussels words and phrases in his comics but also published three albums entirely in Marollien. It is also fascinating that an artificial language of a fictional country Syldavie was as well based on this language variant. The country appeared in five Tintin albums, and Cyrillics was used for the artificial language’s written form.

One of Jacques Brel’s songs has a line which contributed to the popularity of the “Brusseleir” concept — “C’était au temps où Bruxelles brusseleait...” (“There was a time when Brussels spoke Brusseleir ...”).

The advice in Marollien “Amplajeit zou veul Franse woude ni, de Vlomse langosje es abundant genoeg!” (“Don’t use so many French words, Flemish is rich enough!”) sounds quite funny as there are at least three words of French origin.

Balancing Germanic foundation and Romance superstructure, Marollien is an example of a truly Belgian dialect, which is also reflected in its phonetic features. In all Flanders dialects except Limburgian ones, diphthongs are barely discernible. It is still however possible to note several features: The Standard Dutch *ei / ij* becomes *aai* in the Antwerp dialect, *ie* (long vowel) in the Bruges dialect, and *aa* in the Ghent dialect. In Marollien this diphthong combines both Antwerp and Ghent features. The same is with the Standard Dutch diphthong *ui*, which becomes *oei* in Marollien (*oui* in Antwerp, *u(u)* in Bruges, and *oai* in Ghent dialect). The Standard Dutch sound *aa* developed in a special way in Marollien. In the Northern Brabantian dialect, spoken in the Netherlands, the sound becomes *ao*, in the Antwerp dialect it is *au*, and in Ghent — *oa*. In the fading Leuven dialect it is *oo*, the sound transforms into *oe* in Marollien. As a result, “water” (“water”) is pronounced as “woeter” in Brussels.

The City of Brussels was also the first city to introduce adopted from high society French velar *r* to Brabantian. This feature is relevant only for two Flanders dialects — Brussels and Ghent ones [Quiévreux, 2015].

There is also a palatalization of *t* and *d* consonants in Marollien which makes them sound as *t(s)j* and *d(z)j* in a certain phonetic environment. A similar case is present only in some of the Limburgian dialects [Bakkes, Cromptvoets, Notten, 2003].

Marollien is rapidly disappearing and if it could be considered to be an interlingua for people speaking different languages before, then at the moment this spoken variety is being replaced by English. The Brussels-Capital Region is trying to support Marollien; the *Brusselse sproek* magazine is being published and various cultural activities are being organized. Still, Marollien is not included in the “Marnix Plan”, a well-known citizen initiative that is due to pragmatic features of the language situation in Brussels [Philippe van Parijs, unable data].

Since 2010, the “Marnix Plan” has been promoting the necessity of speaking three languages — French, Dutch, and English. The project is named after Philips of Marnix (1540-1598), who was born and brought up in Brussels. He was a renowned Dutch writer and statesman, an adherent of William, prince of Orange, who fought for the Netherlands to secede from Spain. Less famous is his work as the first Dutch cryptographer, who succeeded in deciphering secret Spanish documents. Philips of Marnix was fluent in seven languages, wrote books in French, Dutch, and Latin, and translated from Greek and ancient Hebrew. One of his works, *Ratio instituendae iuventutis (A Pedagogical Treatise of Marnix de Sainte-Aldegonde, 1583)* presents a number of ideas about simultaneous learning of several languages at a young age by the method of “immersion”. As a result of the book, Philips of Marnix was immortalized in a statue in front of a primary school opened in 1897 for illiterate boys from the Marolles, one of the poorest districts of Brussels. This is quite symbolic — in his book Philips of Marnix spoke about the upbringing of upper-class children. The “Marnix Plan’s” proponents believe this project is of great importance for all Brussels’ citizens, and, first of all, for children of foreign origin, who now form the majority of Brussels’ students [Philippe van Parijs, unable data].

One of the objectives of the “Marnix Plan” is to develop a methodology for the consistent learning of several languages for all of Brussels’

social groups, combining the priority of French, Dutch, and English with the encouragement of cultural integration of foreigners coming to the capital with their own languages.

In order to achieve the objective, it is necessary to change school curricula. However, not everything depends on education. A consolidation of all public forces is needed: from intellectual to political. The “Marnix Plan” is above all an attempt to discover as much as possible on successful existing enterprises, to stimulate development of new ones and to combine them all into one global effective project. The ideas of “Marnix Plan” are propagated via their website and regular public events. The goal is to convince citizens of Brussels that language learning and assisting others in language learning should become a common everyday activity.

There are 65 % of Belgians out of more than 1,2 million Brussels citizens, the remaining 35 % are of other nationalities. The inevitability of some “lingua franca” emergence, despite all the efforts of the “Marnix Plan” comes from the following figures. At the end of 2017, some 72 % of Brussels region citizens were of foreign origin (born or having one parent born outside of the country). Some 28 % have roots in one of the European Union countries, the rest are related to other countries. The majority of immigrants are from the Maghreb or from Turkey (around 25 %). This is a sharp contrast to the times of Marollien dialect emergence. The language is no longer able to save itself. It is precisely because of this why a professional linguistic recording of this vanishing phenomenon is important, as well as a smart language policy that could help to save this linguistic monument which has been significant in the historical events and sociopolitical transformations in Belgium. The Marollien dialect is an essential element in the kaleidoscope of Brabantian dialects.

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**Любовь Ульяницкая**

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#### **КРАТКИЙ ОБЗОР ОСОБЕННОСТЕЙ МАРОЛЬСКОГО ДИАЛЕКТА**

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В статье представлен обзор лексических и грамматических особенностей, а также социально-политического контекста образования марольского диалекта, бытующего на территории Брюсселя и ведущего свою историю с XVIII века. Марольский диалект представляет собой брабантский диалект нидерландского языка с сильным влиянием французского; на марольском написаны литературные произведения, поставлены спектакли и мюзиклы, существуют словари, выпускаются журнальные издания. С исторической точки зрения марольский диалект является, скорее, социолектом: на нем говорили приезжие из Валлонии в Брюссель в поисках работы бельгийцы, которые селились в одном из кварталов Брюсселя — Мароле. Особое внимание в статье уделяется лексическим особен-

ностям изучаемого диалекта: рассматривается гастрономическая, повседневная лексика, указываются примеры заимствований из французского языка, а также отклонения от общенидерландской языковой нормы. Выявляются кальки с нидерландской нормы во французском языке, в частности при переводе идиоматических выражений. Показываются различия в топонимах на нидерландском, французском и марольском языках. В области морфологии и словообразования отмечается регулярное смешение германских и романских основ. Приводятся также примеры фонетических особенностей марольского диалекта. В статье отмечается частое переключение кодов в речи марольцев, что, в общем и целом, напоминает явление лексической интерференции. В связи с тем, что марольский диалект, к сожалению, стремительно исчезает, брюссельский столичный регион оказывает всяческую поддержку диалекту: устраиваются различного рода мероприятия, направленные на распространение диалекта и повышение его престижа. Однако в известной гражданской инициативе «Marnix Plan», направленной на разработку методики последовательного изучения нескольких языков для всех слоев населения Брюсселя, марольскому диалекту не нашлось места. Об этой инициативе также рассказывается в данной статье.

**Ключевые слова:** марольский диалект, брабантские диалекты, Брюссель, Бельгия, Фландрия, нидерландский язык.

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