SURVEY ARTICLE

Sociolinguistics, regional varieties of French and regional languages in France

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1 INTRODUCTION

May I at the outset crave the reader's indulgence for focusing the subject matter very largely on metropolitan France. The regional varieties of French referred to in the title are therefore those spoken in the French regions, rather than, for example Belgian or Canadian varieties. Moreover, while it is impossible to discuss the regional languages question without taking into account the languages of the DOM-TOM and, indeed, the so-called non-territorial varieties, both of which have taken on considerable political significance in recent times, I have largely limited myself to reviewing sociolinguistic studies of 'metropolitan' regional (i.e. territorial) languages. I have also decided to concentrate on the present and thus may be perceived as giving short shrift to the large and growing body of excellent socio-historical work in the field.

Four major approaches are reviewed: firstly, the work inspired by the dialectological tradition on French regionalisms (section 2); secondly, quantitative variationist studies (section 3); thirdly, the Imaginaire Linguistique approach to linguistic perceptions[1] (section 4) and fourthly, the approach emerging from the notion of diglossia, as defined by Catalan and Occitan linguists (section 5). Sections 6 to 8 deal with current issues – the Poignant (1998), Carcassonne (1998) and Cerquiglini (1999) reports and the vitality of regional languages as presented in numerous surveys of largely professed practices and exposure in the audio-visual media.

2 THE DIALECTOLOGICAL TRADITION AND ITS SUCCESSION

2.1 *Brief overview*

The first works on French regionalisms tended to be normative and pedagogical in aim. Titles such as that of Molard (1810) and Desgrouais (1812) stated their declared aim of helping readers correct their 'gasconismes' and 'solécismes', as they strove to acquire (standard) French. While the historical and sociolinguistic interest of such books has now been recognised,

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[1] I am grateful to Cécile Valletoux for introducing me to this research.

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e.g. Boyer (1986b), it is fair to say that linguists steeped in the tradition of dialect geography were the first to consider regional varieties of French as worthy objects of study in their own right. Until the 1970s, however, dialectologists, some as eminent as Brun (1933), Dauzat (1935b), Séguy (1950) only occasionally afforded themselves the luxury of excursi into the realm of French regionalisms. The 1970s saw the publication of two major collections, Lerond (1973) and Taverdet and Straka (1977), along with a fair number of other publications by the major contributors, which were dominated by dialectologists turning their attention to regional varieties of French. The volumes edited by Salmon (1985, 1991a), although containing significant contributions from dialectologists, mark a transition with chapters about such themes as teaching, socio-historical issues, perceptions, socio-linguistics and regional languages. In Vermes (1988), Vermes and Boutet (1987) and Bouvier and Martel (1991) although the regional languages take centre stage, some attention is given to immigrant languages. While working within a much broader framework, Sanders (1993) devotes a chapter to each of the three topics, i.e. regional varieties of French, regional languages and immigrant languages. Although this latter volume does not explicitly extend the notion of regional French to non-metropolitan varieties, unlike Allières (1981), its range of topics, perhaps implicitly, does so. This geographical range of varieties of French and the treatment of related topics are fairly reflected in the most frequently used introductory works: Müller (1985), Walter (1988), Ager (1990), Offord (1990), Battye and Hintze (1992) and Ball (1997).

2.2 From the study of 'dialects' to the study of regional French

The reader of Straka's conclusion to Taverdet and Straka (1977) might be forgiven for discerning more than a hint of triumphalism concerning the completion of the dialectological enterprise and the singling out of dialectologists as the best qualified investigators of regional varieties. In terms of linguistic (and other local) knowledge, this was perhaps uncontroversial at the time but the methodological approaches of their tradition, although admittedly adapted to suit the new subject matter, led largely to a continuation of a tradition that was content to catalogue linguistic items in relation to geographical space.

The various sub-areas of dialect geography, as outlined by Tuaillon (1976), could not all be extended into the study of regional varieties. As in dialectology, lexical studies dominate, followed at some distance by phonology and with syntax as a minor theme. It was axiomatic that the study of morphological regionalisms remained within the realm of dialectology, since morphology is often considered the crucial line of demarcation between regional French and regional dialect/language, where distinctiveness is an issue (as is the case for all Gallo-Romance varieties). Whereas traditional

dialectology abounds in studies of technical vocabularies, the bulk of the contributions in Taverdet and Straka (1977) are unusual in that they deal with the specialised regional vocabularies of wine-making, including champagne (Bourcelot) and cider (Lepelley).

Dialectology, it seems to me, dealt with Romance varieties by listing and mapping items from traditional speech forms which were clearly distinct from French (whether standard or not). The aim of this exercise is to discover and classify items which correspond to the set object of linguistic study thus conceived. Linguists trained in dialectology clearly have (had) a strong sense of the difference between patois and regional French, but this clarity depends on a static view of the varieties concerned. Such stasis is understandable if one considers that part of the aim of dialectology was to note down for posterity linguistic forms under threat of extinction, but is untenable when one sets out to describe living and indeed fast-changing varieties, such as varieties of French as spoken in different regions. I propose to deal with these two issues in turn.

Firstly, the study of regional Frenches and patois has generally been seen since Warnant (1973) as the study of regional deviations ('écarts régionaux') or to use Straka's (1977) term, a differential study of items that differ both from a regionally neutral variety of French and the traditional patois studied by dialectologists. This characterisation of regional French within a set of varieties is more formally restated in Carton's typology (*Cf.* figure 1) (1981, 1987; Carton and Lebègue, 1989). Carton glosses his typology by describing regional French as a 'mélange à dominante neutralisée' (1981), 'mélange à dominante de français' (1989), i.e. a linguistically mixed variety intermediate between (regionally neutral) French and local dialect but much closer to the former which is usually the speaker's target variety. In earlier work, however, (Carton, 1972) the notion of regional French covered what is referred to in the typology as dialectal French, i.e. intended patois which was, however, too francofied, for instance, to serve as data in a linguistic atlas (Carton and Lebègue, 1989; Eloy, 1991). A comparable typology has been at least implicitly configured by Boyer (1986a) and a tabulated comparison is shown in figure 1.

langue d'oïl	langue d'oc	Non-Romance
français commun	français officiel	néerlandais (Netherlands Standard Dutch)
français régional	français colloquial importé	français régional
français dialectal	argot français	dialecte (west Vlaams)
patois local	français d'Oc	patois
	francitan	
	occitan résiduel	
	occitan reconstitué	

Figure 1. Comparison of varieties – northern France (*langue d'oïl* – Carton, 1981) and southern France (*langue d'oc* – Boyer, 1986) non-Romance variety (Carton, 1981)

A number of authors have noted the lack of clarity of such criteria, e.g. Gonon (1977:150), Lefebvre (1991:49) and Hawkins (1993:72–3) and figure 1 gives ample illustration of this. It fails to address the crucial relationship between what Boyer calls colloquial French (sociolects?) and the regional varieties, whereas there is clear and significant overlap. While it would be unfair to seek to generalise the non-Romance column to situations as diverse as that of Breton, Basque and Alsacien, the omission of 'français commun' is serious and the relationship between local Flemish patois indigenous to France and the West Flemish dialect of a contiguous region of Belgium requires explanation. One wonders, too, why the regional Frenches emanating from the divergent substrates of the Nord are apparently not radically divergent (*Cf.* Sansen, 1988).

Secondly, the notion of dialectal French, construed as a 'mélange à dominante dialectale', adds a further element of unclarity. While it may well be an extremely useful notion for labelling a stage on the path of linguistic convergence, it perhaps unintentionally highlights an unresolved contradiction, i.e. that intended patois 'patois d'intention' should be called 'français dialectal'. Although Carton emphasises the distinctiveness of regional and dialectal French (and attempts to exemplify in Carton, 1981), it is in practice impossible to suggest any degree of Frenchness or dialectality (be it in quantitative terms or otherwise) that can be sensibly and consistently defended across varieties. Furthermore 'français commun' or 'français général', while remaining undefined tends to be replaced, in practice although not explicitly, by notions of 'bon usage' (Warnant, 1973:105). A number of commentators point out that while the process of linguistic uniformisation appears inexorable, phonetic regional features show the greatest resistance (Bourcelot, 1973: 228; Bourguignon, 1991: 21; Rindler-Schjerve, 1985: 101) to such homogenisation.

Thirdly, it is widely accepted that the crucial factor in the distinction of regional French and dialect is morphology (Warnant, 1973:117; Tuaillon, 1977; Taverdet, 1977; Eloy, 1997). The basic argument is straightforward: if the morphology is French, then we are dealing with a variety of French. While this is theoretically clear, it is more difficult to apply in practice since many *langue d'oïl* varieties do not have morphological systems that are systematically distinguishable from French. If certain allowances were made for a degree of variability, it would justify labelling 'français dialectal' as 'patois' since its regional dialectality (Carton, 1981) depends to a considerable degree on word forms. My own work (Pooley, 1996) suggests that forms of regional French may contain non-French grammatical forms variably or at least marginally. Petyt's (1985) contention that some phonological features are so salient that their use in itself marks a code-switch (Chtimi [ʃ] would appear to be a likely candidate) seems to receive some support from a cluster analysis described in Pooley (1988) which shows a close correlation in speaker distribution between such features and certain Picard grammatical markers.

The usage of individual speakers may give rise to further doubts about this 'clarté trompeuse'. An anecdote from a field trip in January 1999 will illustrate the problem. While waiting for a train in Marquillies (Nord), I overheard a conversation in which one of the participants – a man I assume to be in his thirties – used a variety that I (as I believe any linguist would have done) clearly perceived as French, and to whom his interlocutor replied in a variety which was uncontroversially French, but appeared to use the stereotypical variant [ʃ] and the Picard disjunctive pronouns *mi, ti, li* with apparently categorical consistency. This would suggest that definitions based simply on linguistic cataloguing, however excellent the description in core level terms, will prove sociolinguistically unsatisfactory, if speaker perception and perfor-mance are not taken into account.

2.3 *Lexical studies*

While most commentators would, like Tuaillon (1977), describe a variety of regional French in terms of the differences with standard French known to occur in a certain geographical space, they are not to be seen as distinct linguistic systems, but they are nonetheless, as Taverdet (1977:5) points out, more than the vestiges of traditional patois that have survived into French. Some previously purely patois terms have spread by koinéisation to a wider area; for example, *grassole* 'sled' (Taverdet, 1977) which has ousted rival forms in a mini-region of the Dauphinois. The classification of the lexical items deemed to be part of regional French is clearly crucial. Martin (1977:159) sees distinctiveness from (standard) French either both in terms of form and meaning, or in terms of either of those criteria, without reference to the traditional variety as the defining criteria. Simoni-Aurembou (1977) cites four categories of regional lexicalisms: (i) phonetically adapted patois items; (ii) adaptation of French terms to local realities; (iii) archaisms, particularly technical terms, which retain their vitality in a given region; iv) local figurative uses, or expressive words or turns of phrase. Carton and Poulet (1991) extend the list to no fewer than seven types of regionalism, largely by dividing archaisms into three subtypes: technical terms that may be considered part of folk memory, e.g. *gaffut* 'pot de grès présentant un défaut'; those that may occasionally be used jocularly *souhaiter le bon an*; those which appear to be more used than in other parts of the country *à cette heure* 'maintenant'. The latter example reminds us of the non-exclusive character of regionalisms. Most co-exist with more generally used French equivalents, except for a few which refer to local realities, e.g. *cramique* 'type of currant bun'. Finally, some of the regionalisms quoted are 'sentis comme incorrects'. Tuaillon sees features of regional Frenches as 'géographiquement délimitable' (1983a: 28) 'l'ensemble de variantes géographiques' (1977: 8) and Taverdet (1977: 41) explicitly adds written as well as spoken features. Tuaillon (1988) suggests too that the features are French and therefore generally comprehensible to all

francophones, a criterion at odds with geographical locatability and technical archaisms.

The mapping of items in geographical space is perhaps even more problematical than in traditional dialectology, mainly because lexical regionalisms are used over a wider area than dialectalisms. Walter (1988) is one of the few linguists to attempt to map regionalisms, such as *wassingue* 'serpillière' and *touiller* 'mélanger'.

Clearly, lexical regionalisms constitute the aspect of regional French of greatest interest both to linguists and to the general public, if one can judge by the number of dictionaries, lexicons, glossaries and lexically-oriented monographs. Such works vary considerably in the size of the target region from a village (Tuaillon, 1983b), to a city (Hadjadj, 1990), a mini-region (Germi and Lucci, 1985), a region of several départements (Wolf, 1972), whether following the pre-Revolutionary tradition (Martin, 1990; Potte, 1993), or complying with revolutionary orography (Carton and Poulet, 1991) and something between the two (Rézeau, 1990). Dictionaries of regional varieties aimed at the general public have met with considerable commercial success, e.g. Lepelley (1989), Rézeau (1990), Martin (1990), Lahner and Litaize (1990), Carton and Poulet (1991) and Potte (1993). Part of Walter (1998) also seeks to capitalise on the public's fascination with lexical regionalisms. Such dictionaries serve to underline the rather narrow lexical base of such regional varieties, e.g., Carton and Poulet (850 entries), Tuaillon (1983) (821 entries), Lepelley (1000 entries), Hadjadj (450 entries), Salmon (66 entries). As in traditional dialectology the older one's informants are, the more regionalisms one can expect to discover, particularly given the problematic demarcation line between regionalism and dialectalism. The 850 entries listed in Carton and Poulet are presented as French and not patois but nevertheless include archaisms, rare items and items merely considered to be used more frequently (or used more frequently in a specific sense) in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais – than in other parts of France. While linguists, whatever their target audience, are able to list hundreds of regionalisms for every part of France, studies of their use, or at least notoriety, prove extremely salutary. Walter (1991) studies the notoriety of Gallo regionalisms based on 40 items, of which 17 were unknown to more than 50% of her respondents. As regards professed use of the items listed, only one *tantôt* 'après-midi' was claimed to be used 'with everybody' by more than 50% of subjects. Similarly, Simon (1998) reports that for the 108 most widely known regionalisms in the southern Touraine, none was claimed to be known or used by more than 32% of informants, and only 23/108 (21%) were known and/or used by more than 75% of his subjects.

Carton (1998) suggests that for a given set of lexical regionalisms, some might be better known in certain parts of the Picardophone region, i.e. the Somme as compared to the Nord. The same study also suggests that some syntactic regionalisms were, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, more familiar to

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respondents under 40 years of age. The pattern was, predictably, reversed for regionalisms more discernibly dialectal in character. Salmon (1991c) studies the awareness of one octogenarian Lyonnaise of the items listed in the all embracing Lyonnais lexicon of Nizier du Puitspelu (1894). Remarkably, the informant not only had the stamina to be asked about no fewer than 2405 items, but responded positively on 926 occasions, i.e. in 38% of all cases. 'Qui dit mieux ?'

Straka (1977) and Salmon (1991a) advocate close scrutiny of what general-ised features do not occur in specific regional varieties. Although, intuitively, one may feel sympathy for what is apparently a plausible hypothesis, its verification cannot be expected to bring to light perceptually salient features nor escape significant, if not insuperable, epistemological difficulties.

2.4 *Phonological Studies*

Substratum influences may be preserved in pronunciation, both at the prosodic and segmental level, *Cf.* Philipp (1985), Dondaine (1977), Guiter (1977) and Nouvel (1977) for localised varieties and Walter (1982) and Carton *et al.* (1983) for exemplification of the principal features of a number of regional accents. Notwithstanding the somewhat misguided comments of Wolf (1991), the aim of this latter work is pedagogical and exploits recordings of speakers born in the early decades of this century and whose speech is markedly regional and manifests characteristics immediately audible to non-specialists. Undoubtedly, the most localised phonetic features are/were among the first to be lost when social changes triggered language contact and convergence (Pooley, forthcoming). Carton (1987) describes some features heard in several regions e.g. distribution of [O] and word-final consonant devoicing.

Carton *et al.* has the merit of exemplifying what are felt to be typical prosodic features of regional accents, which may well be the features which prove to be the most tenacious in the face of homogenising pressures and among the most perceptually salient for ordinary speakers. Carton (1991) compares some of the more striking suprasegmental features of Besançon, Lille and Nancy accents. The relation between phonemic vowel length, e.g. [li] 'lit' [li:] 'lie' and fundamental intonation patterns in Besançon Regional French has been studied in detail by Rittaud-Huttinet (1991a, 1991b), who argues for a polylectal grammar based on three distinctive sub-varieties defined by their fundamental stress systems. In fact, these systems are partially overlapping, and one is left intrigued as to their social distribution. Such superb phonological groundwork deserves a sociolinguistic follow-up of comparable quality.

2.5 *Syntactic studies*

According to Tuaillon (1976:59) traditional dialectology has been less con-cerned with syntax than with other levels of linguistic analysis simply because

the linguistic fragmentation of traditional dialects has resulted in comparatively little variation in sentence structure. That syntactic features are areal features i.e. common to varieties over areas far greater than those which correspond to the use of a traditional dialect, is reflected in dialectology in three ways: i) relatively little space devoted to it in traditional monographs, e.g. Flutre, 1955; ii) attempts to characterise the syntax of a whole dialect area (e.g. Lafont, 1967); iii) detailed study of a local variety carried out on the basis that other related varieties will be similar in most respects (Remacle, 1953–1960). Not surprisingly, therefore, studies of syntactic structures in regional varieties of French are few. Tuaillon (1983:227) suggests that the use of *y* as direct object *j'y trouve pas beau* or the regularisation of non-subject clitic order *je lui la donne* are characteristic of a fairly large area of eastern France (roughly, the franco-provençal area). As Blanche-Benveniste (1991) points out, some of the features quoted by Tuaillon, e.g. *je vais au docteur* are not regionally marked. A few features, although widely used, are by no means common to all areas of France, e.g. the 'passé surcomposé' (Walter, 1988; Carruthers, 1994) and the use of impersonal constructions followed by a definite NP, as in *il venait la batteuse*. Some of the syntactic features discussed in Pooley (1996), e.g. subject doubling as in *la femme elle est partie* or systematic use of *que* to mark relative clause as in *la femme qu'elle vient* are sometimes presented as typically dialectal (e.g. Debrie, 1983) but they are neither exclusively Picard nor alien to widely dispersed popular varieties of spoken French (*Cf.* Gadet, 1992).

2.6 *On the 'salience' of regionalisms*

If speaker awareness of lexical regionalisms is perhaps surprisingly low, several linguists have remarked on the unconscious nature of the use of regional French, when all linguistic levels are taken into account, e.g. Carton (1981), Straka (1977), Dondaine (1977), Taverdet (1977) and Simoni-Aurembou (1977) who all stress what Straka calls 'le caractère inconscient des français régionaux'. In the same collection Chauveau (1977) underlines speakers' unawareness of using regionally marked lexical items, *Cf.* Martel (1991), Gueunier (1991). Tuaillon (1977: 21–2), however, suggests that there may be a need to distinguish between conscious and unconscious use of such regionalisms and thereby raises the question of whether it is better to speak of 'régionalismes du français' rather than 'français régionaux' which would imply a (semi)-autonomous system linguistically intermediate between French and the traditional regional language/dialect. The contributors in Lerond (1973) and Taverdet and Straka (1977) clearly did not see regional Frenches as autonomous systems or sub-systems but merely in terms of catalogues of items which were French but not 'français commun'.

While Eloy (1997:90) suggests that while Belgian and Canadian varieties would be recognised as distinct entities by ordinary speakers (and labelled regional varieties by linguists), this is obviously not the case for varieties spoken in the various regions of France. A few studies, e.g. Hoare (1998) have explored

the issues surrounding attitudes to a regional variety using the tools of the English-speaking social psychology tradition, but early results from the work of Boughton (1998) suggest that Francophones find it easier to locate northern (i.e. from the *langue d'oïl* area) speakers socially than regionally. Whether that conclusion would remain as clear-cut for speakers from the Nord-Pas-de Calais or eastern or southern France is still an open question and an interesting topic for research.

3 THE VARIATIONIST APPROACH

3.1 *Overview*

While what might be broadly called the Labovian approach has enjoyed considerable success in francophone Canada (*Cf.* Mougeon, 1996 for a summary), this can hardly be said to be the case in France (*Cf.* Gadet, 1996). Despite the translation of two major works (Labov, 1976, 1978) and the publication of positive critical introductions (Marcellesi and Gardin, 1974; Encrevé, 1976), few French linguists have undertaken the kind of correlative studies which have enjoyed such success in the English-speaking world. Even then a number of these studies, e.g. Reichstein (1960) and Laks (1977) were undertaken in the Paris area, which would normally exclude them from being considered as studies of regional varieties. Gueunier *et al.* (1978) used quantitative methods as well as an attitudinal approach in comparing speakers from Tours, Lille, Limoges and St. Denis (La Réunion). Of the other major urban areas in France, the Lille conurbation has been the most studied in two book-length works by Lefebvre (1991) and Pooley (1996). Hornsby's study (1996) of Avion in the nearby Lens conurbation focuses on many of the same variables. Other variationist studies carried out in *langue d'oïl* areas such as that of Armstrong (1996) based on a corpus recorded in Dieuze (Lorraine francophone), claim no strong regional features in their data. The studies of Ashby (1983) and Coveney (1996) while using corpora recorded in the Touraine and the Somme respectively, concentrate on grammatical features, none of which are regional. In *langue d'oc* areas, the study of Potte (1977) in Puy de Dôme is remarkable for its adaptation of variationist methods to traditional dialectological subject matter comparing inter alia use of the (rural) alveolar *r* with the urban uvular realisation. Other studies of southern varieties include Chauvin (1985) in Fos-sur-Mer, Durand, Slater and Wise (1987) in the Languedoc, Unsworth and Armstrong (1999) in Carcassonne, Pickles (1998) on Perpignan and Taylor's (1996) book-length study of Aix-en-Provence.

3.2 *The Social Class Barrier*

Only Lefebvre's work resembles closely the classic studies of Labov (1972) in New York and Trudgill (1974) in Norwich, insofar as it attempts to present an

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acceptable sample (103 informants) of the overall population. One of the key aspects of Labov's early work was the correlation of linguistic variation and social class defined by an index of three indicators: occupation, income and education (Labov, 1972: 213) or six in the case of Trudgill (1974: 40–1), who added father's occupation, housing and locality. As Ager (1990) and Lefebvre (1991) point out, use of even a simplified version of the INSEE categories would result in far more socio-economic subdivisions than the four-way stratification used by Labov or the five-way classification used by Trudgill. Lefebvre's solution was to classify informants according to the level of education attained and length of time spent in formal education resulting in a five-way breakdown: higher education, Baccalauréat, Brevet, Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnelle, Certificat d'Etudes. Such a categorisation does not apply uniformly to all age groups and increasing success at the Baccalauréat and participation in higher education means that well educated younger subjects and older subjects with minimal formal education are more representative of their generations. Taylor (1996) selected what she intuitively felt was a representative sample of 60 speakers, but resorted to Cluster Analysis of the linguistic data to correlate pronunciation features with groups of speakers rather than stratify according to pre-determined categories. Pooley (1996) follows Milroy (1980) by concentrating on one social group (working class speakers) in his first corpus (1983) corresponding to the INSEE categories ouvrier(-ère) and employé(e) and using educational attainment to sub-divide the speakers into two social groups. The second corpus collected in 1995 concentrates on adolescents in a Special Needs Section ('Section d'Education Spécialisée') to obtain samples of the least well educated speakers.

3.3 *Methodological Issues*

The classic Labov-Trudgill four- or five-part interview has only been used in modified form in the study of varieties of French in France. Lefebvre, whose study perhaps most closely resembles that of Trudgill, asked her subjects to read minimal pairs and replaced reading the word list with a gap-filling exercise of the type 'un animal a quatre . . .' to test whether the informant observed the normative /a/:/ɑ/ opposition. Lefebvre's decision to eschew percentages and indices in favour of a three-way notation of variability: + (systematic use), − (systematic non-use) and Q (variable use) for any given pair of variants, has the advantage of avoiding the uncertainties of tokens where phonetic discrimination is difficult, but the drawback of dismissing as unimportant degrees of difference which are almost as potentially significant as use or non-use.

Unlike variationists dealing with varieties of English, Lefebvre systematically distinguishes phonological and phonetic variables. The former concern normative oppositions such as /o/-/ɔ/ in closed syllables in *côte*/*cote* and the latter local realisations such as [æ] for [a] before [ʀ] e.g. [tæʀ] *tard*. The

correlation between high educational attainment and realisation of normative oppositions broadly holds. Lefebvre portrays women as leading the way in eliminating local phonetic realisations and maintaining the oppositions of standard French which are least unstable. She grades the oppositions and phonetic realisations in terms of the gap in percentage terms between the number of men and women observing them: 0% for /e/-/ɛ/ and up to 19% for /o/-/ɔ/.

Lefebvre also gives each of her subjects two coefficients based on the number of normative oppositions observed and local phonetic realisations consistently produced. The variables are then ranged into an implicational hierarchy, which shows for instance all speakers who maintain one or more normative oppositions realise /o/-/ɔ/ in closed final syllables (op. cit. 179–80). Lefebvre claims that coefficients cluster in a way that corresponds to identifiable social groups defined by their level of educational attainment. Thus the most highly educated individuals cluster around the highest coefficient for phonological variables (10) and the lowest for phonetic realisations (0). This use of coefficients helps to ward off any charge of bittiness of a number of quantitative studies which concentrate on individual features. Social groups are identified not by single features but by the number of normative and vernacular features which they use.

Both Taylor and Pooley (in the 1983 corpus) decided to dispense with the word list and reading passage and concentrate on spontaneous conversation. Taylor nonetheless recorded her informants individually, whereas Pooley chose to use group recordings in order to counteract the effect of the observer's paradox. Such a procedure also partly counteracts the charge that use of formal and informal styles corresponds to the degree of concentration of the subject. Although, as Bell (1984: 197) has demonstrated, subjects cannot ignore the participant-observer's presence, and they may well reduce him/her to an unaddressed 'auditor' or even 'overhearer' if they start to talk among themselves and 'design their style' for their group audience.

One of the aims of the Pooley study was to tease out spontaneous use of dialectal variants. Any use of written material was thought to exclude or at least significantly discourage their use. In his second corpus recorded in 1995, a Labovian-type individual interview was introduced, in part to test informants' knowledge of Picard (Pooley, 1998b), but this was conducted only after group recordings were completed.

The use of a variant of the quantitative paradigm to analyse dialectal regional French raises a number of questions. Firstly, the Labovian paradigm requires that variants occur within a single variety, and therefore by implication a considerable degree of convergence between French and the dialect. The criterion most frequently used to distinguish varieties – morphology – can lead investigators analysing closely related varieties to adopt different approaches e.g. Pooley (1996) who uses a Labovian model and Hornsby (1996) who does not. Both decisions are amply justified in view of the degree of vitality of

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Picard morphology largely vestigial in Roubaix but much more significant in Avion.

Chauvin's (1985) use of a combination of quantitative variationist techniques with speaker evaluation tests, enables him to show that in Fos-sur-Mer where new industrial developments had attracted workers from other parts of France, a sociolinguistic marker – the use of *schwa* in word-final position – was more used by locally born children whose parents were manual workers than those from non-Provençal/cadre background. Moreover, the story-telling skills of those making greater use of word-final *schwa* were more highly rated by a panel of judges made up of teachers, a finding which suggests that they nurtured a favourable perception of the local accent. Durand, Slater and Wise's study (1987) of the same variant suggest that female speakers are leading the move towards northern French forms in the Languedoc, whereas Armstrong and Unsworth (1999) investigate the use of the same variant among teenage school students in Carcassonne and Lézignan-Corbières (Aude). The interesting gender patterns which emerge lead the investigators to suggest that girls/women tend to use surpra-local, but sub-national variants, whereas boys/men favour more localised variants as argued for glottalisation in Tyneside English by Milroy, Milroy, Hartley and Walshaw (1994). Regrettably, the study makes no suggestions as to which variants might be localised and 'masculine'. The work of Taylor gives grounds for believing that the velar nasal /ŋ/ (Aix-en-Provence), and that of Pickles the palatal fricative realisation of *r* (Perpignan) might be such variants but this can only be suggested as a rather tentative possibility, leaving one to deplore the lack of data available. One can only loudly applaud Durand, Laks and Lyche's[2] recent initiative in proposing a widely agreed questionnaire to gather comparable data across a wide range of varieties. The initial response to the proposed French Variation Forum[3], launched at the AFLS workshop on French accents in October 1998, is further recognition that sensible answers to significant sociolinguistic questions cannot be attempted for lack of field data.

3.4 *'Il n'existe à peu près pas à ce jour de sociolinguistique variationniste française'* *(Gadet, 1996)*

This comparative neglect of what has proved to be an enlightening method of investigation in many other parts of the world may be due to a number of factors. It has arguably never really been divested of its Anglo-Saxon packaging. The success of studies such as Trudgill (1974) lies in the way in which they show patterns of variation which correlate sometimes in enlightening, although it must be said more often predictable, ways with social class distributions. The classification of speakers into middle and working classes

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with two or three subdivisions, however debatable it may be, works well at a broad level in the UK and North America (including French Canada) but does not correspond to INSEE socio-economic categories. Some scholars have preferred to use levels of education in order to produce a comparable stratificational model, particularly Lefebvre (1991) but such an approach encounters the difficulty of the ever-lengthening time spent in full-time education by younger speakers. Moreover, even the traditional Labovian requirement of five informants per cell, although questioned by Romaine (1982) as to the degree of significance that it yields, may easily cause the project to reach proportions beyond the capacities of a single researcher given the amount of detailed analysis required. For instance, if a researcher were to take five males and five females across five age groups and five levels of education (or macro social categories) 200 informants would be required and the sample would have to be adjusted upwards to take account of potentially significant factors such as ethnicity and networks. Blanche-Benveniste and Jeanjean (1987) and Durand (1993) have pointed out that phonological variants – often crucial ones – are often quite subtle and therefore difficult to discern consistently. This can be attenuated by having transcriptions checked by or preferably carried out in 'double-blind' fashion. The quality audit can be further enhanced by sample use of spectrograms. It may also be argued that since Labovian-style models carry with them the underlying assumption that linguistic variables occur within the same variety, their use with markedly dialectal varieties is questionable, if linguistic representations suggest that speaker intention and/or hearer perception point to a distinct variety. More significant by far, however, is the desire of most French sociolinguists, particularly those working within the diglossic framework (*Cf.* section 5) not to delve into phenomena which are the direct consequence of what they deem to be an ideological outrage.

I would take issue, too, with those who claim (e.g. Walter, 1982; Ager, 1990) that phonological variation is geographical rather than social. In broad terms, France conforms to the pattern in which the socially least prestigious forms are the most localised. That being the case, there are, however, far fewer accents characteristic of particular (urban?) areas than in the UK. Equally it is more socially acceptable amongst highly educated and successful speakers to speak with a regional accent in the south than in the north. Taylor's argument that some prestigious professions, e.g. medicine and teaching, tend to require practitioners to be more locally/regionally oriented than business people in national and international companies and lawyers, is highly plausible. Moreover, according to Taylor (p. 197) and Lefebvre, southern speakers suffer far less from linguistic insecurity than northern speakers (*Cf.* Gueunier *et al.*, 1978) which would imply that speakers from a broad social spectrum may feel comfortable in using regionally marked pronunciations.

Labovian sociolinguistics may also justifiably be felt to introduce confu-

sion with regard to the notion of dialect. Dialects may be distinguished by a very small number of pronunciation features (e.g. the diphthongs of *out* and *white* in Martha's Vineyard in Labov, 1972) which would fly in the face of the dialectological tradition which prefers to study varieties distinct from French by and large conceived in holistic fashion or at least characterised by a large number of consistently used features. Such a tendency was reinforced by the overriding concern with standard French, which meant that few, if any, established scholars were attracted to a view which saw linguistic varieties as inherently variable. Unfortunately very few established scholars have cut their teeth using this approach, possibly because it is no soft option, requiring competence in structural linguistics, historical linguistics, social history and considerable familiarity with the community under scrutiny.

4 LINGUISTIC PERCEPTIONS

4.1 'L'Imaginaire Linguistique'

While it is certainly true that the number of French variationist sociolinguistic studies in France carried out so far is extremely modest, (*Cf.* the number of studies quoted in Section 3), it is nonetheless the case that some of the major themes of Labovian sociolinguistics have been taken up and developed by French schools of sociolinguistics. The 'Imaginaire Linguistique' approach (in particular Houdebine, 1996) provides an attractive set of methodologies for the linguist interested in variation. While not developed specifically in the context of regional varieties, it provides an elegant way of handling variation at the systemic level and at the social level of differing behaviour among speakers.

The Houdebine model examines linguistic behaviour in terms of two sets of norms, objective (those of the linguist) and subjective (those of the speaker). Objective norms can be described on the basis of firstly, the statistical frequency of particular items or structures, and secondly, on the basis of systemic norms, which are defined initially by detailed analysis of appropriate idiolects. The investigator can therefore readily locate points of convergence and divergence between idiolects as well as peripheral forms in the language under study. Convergence is indicative of stability and divergence of variation and possibly change. Of course the usage of sub-groups of speakers may converge on given features, e.g. the use of /h/ in Poitevin is characteristic of older rural males. Rather than the Labovian notion of apparent time, Houdebine prefers the Martinet (1969) notion of synchronic depth (épaisseur synchronique).

It is, however, the analysis of subjective norms that marks out the Imaginaire Linguistique. Houdebine argues that speakers are far from passive and do not simply behave in a manner more or less totally pre-determined by

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their social characteristics. Admittedly, prescriptive norms, particularly important in France, are those internalised by the speaker, often on the basis of values acquired through contact with state-dominated institutions, especially the education system which, in teaching writing conventions, inculcates hierarchical value judgements between varieties. Fictitious norms consist of representations based on such value judgements other than those underpinned by institutional norms, e.g. aesthetic judgements and also crucially identificational factors. Speakers may also consciously disregard institutional prescriptions and use what Houdebine calls communicational norms, which are usually more informal and/or more local to adapt to their perceived audience, or to integrate into a given group.

In highlighting the lack of fit between speaker behaviour and commentaries on varieties or variables, Houdebine is not simply taking up the Labovian theme of linguistic insecurity but attempting to give it greater psychological depth. Moreover, the Imaginaire Linguistique model integrates what is salvageable from the notions or covert and overt prestige into a systematic framework where speakers can be shown to be active individuals yet subject to a number of possibly conflicting social forces.

4.2. *Applications of the 'Imaginaire Linguistique' model*

For *langue d'oïl*-influenced varieties, the model provides a means of providing a more dynamic account of the use of traditional varieties than the static model of the dialectologists. It enables investigators to integrate a description of variable behaviour in the use of varieties that might be labelled regional or dialectal French and speaker (and non-speaker) perception of distinct but hierarchically differentiated codes often characterised in terms of dialectal bilingualism (Encrevé, 1967), Billiez (1996), Léonard (1991, 1998), Auzanneau (1999). A number of studies show that regional languages indisputably distinct from French, are perceived as having greater hierarchical status than *langue d'oïl* varieties, e.g. Dubuisson (1991), Galimard (1991) in regions near the *langue d'oïl-langue d'oc* boundary and Chauveau (1991) for Gallo and Breton. Dubuisson found also that 'good patois' was perceived as more statusful than dialectal French. Gallard (1996) is one of the very few scholars to report – in the Deux Sèvres – a situation where speakers put relatively high value on 'français patoisé', possibly on the basis of communicational norms, although this is not explicitly stated. This attitude has also to be set against the conscious non-transmission to the younger generations and the perception of Poitevin in terms of spatial proximity. Rebaudières-Paty (1985) uses the notion of linguistic and non-linguistic representations in an urban context to explain variable use and knowledge of Frankish (Franconian) in a small Lorraine mining town. Le Berre and Le Dû (1996) apply the notion of subjective norms to the standardisation of French and the linguistic uniformisation of France while integrating the ideology of protest characteristic of conflict

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sociolinguistics. The model can be applied to the writings of distinguished linguists of the past. Fodor's (1996) exposure of Meillet's negative views of Basque and Breton as part of his subjective norms is nothing if not provocative.

As it is far broader in scope than much sociolinguistics which concentrates on non-standard varieties, Houdebine's approach encourages interest in stylistic variation and possibly suggests more fruitful lines of enquiry with regard to speaker awareness of variants deemed to be important by linguists. It also suggests that factors dismissed as mythology by Eloy (1991,1997) define the crucial psychological and ideological battleground on which speakers will decide whether or not to (continue to) speak minoritised languages.

5 DIGLOSSIA

5.1 *A sociolinguistic perspective on linguistic perceptions*

The psychological approach of Houdebine may be questioned on the nature of the input that underlies subjective norms – overwhelmingly the consequences of the centralist Jacobine ideology of linguistic uniformity. Boyer (1996) prefers to speak of 'manifestations symptomales' rather than objective norms and 'manifestations imaginaires' rather than subjective norms. Such symptomatic manifestations are norms dictated by diglossia, construed as ideologically loaded hierarchical bilingualism rather than a neutral descriptive tool as developed by Ferguson (1959) and Fishman (1971) and redefined as encapsulating a situation of social and cultural conflict between dominant and dominated languages (Jardel, 1982; Eliman, 1983; Gardy, 1983; Rousset, 1983; Kremnitz, 1982, 1987). Ferguson's notion of stable diglossia is considered to be a rare exception and reinterpreted as a situation of latent conflict (there are no neutral diglossias, Kremnitz, 1991), whereas most cases of societal bi- or multilingualism show considerable instability and more open manifestations of tensions and individual speaker choice in the face of perceived norms. Fishman's perspective of diglossia as a social phenomenon and bilingualism as a psycholinguistic issue is rejected on the grounds that bilinguals need the communicative competence to know when to use the varieties at their disposal appropriately. Taking inspiration from Bourdieu (1982) and Catalan sociolinguistics e.g. Badia i Margarit (1976), Aracil (1983), Ninyoles (1972) and Vallverdù (1970), Occitan linguists, in particular, e.g. (Eckert, 1981; Lafont and Gardy, 1981 and Boyer, 1986a) have portrayed the imposition of French as an act of symbolic violence which leaves minority language speakers facing a stark alternative: acculturation-assimilation or normalisation (for a (fairly) recent overview see Vallverdù, 1994). In other words, minority language speakers can either shift to French or look for ways in which Occitan, for instance, can reassume H(igher) (Ferguson) or A(lta) (Ninyoles)

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functions. Buoyed by the successes achieved in Catalonia, Lafont (1984) proposed a four-fold strategy for re-establishing the prestige of Occitan ('retrousser la diglossie'): (i) through serious writing; (ii) through use in administration; (iii) by using Occitan as a medium of education; (iv) through use in the audio-visual media. By 1994 the same author acknowledging the undeniable reality of the continued erosion of vitality retrenches pessimistically to a position of windows of opportunity ('créneaux d'histoire'): firstly, in serious writing, although it risks distancing itself to a greater and greater extent from ordinary spoken forms; secondly, through education, although the undeniable excellence of the Calandretas and other regional language medium schools is scant consolation for their negligible numbers and hence lack of real impact; thirdly, he points to the network of active nostalgia and the widely perceived sense of past injustices that need to be righted – perceptions stored largely in the minds of people of mature, if not advancing, years, but many of whom now hold positions of influence at a local/regional level. There is a sense of disillusion concerning administrative use and media airing of minority languages, since all measures so far introduced smack of tokenism, the former tend to result in 'dead letter' uses such as name signs and the latter in insignificant amounts of air time.

5.3 *Bilingualism as a potential remedy for diglossia*

Members of the Montpellier School have generally rejected bilingual projects like that advocated for Alsacien in the 1970s by the Cercle René Schikele and by Philipps (1978). Kremnitz (1980) argued against the proposal on two accounts. Firstly, bilingualism implied a choice of written form. To opt for standard German would keep the unity of the written form in the face of considerable dialectal variation and maintain direct access to the riches of germanophone culture, but would acknowledge Alsacien-Mosellan's status as an allogenic language or a mere subvariety of a foreign language, thus effectively excluding it from regional language status. Any attempt to develop a generally acceptable written form of Alsacien would result in the need for at least two writing systems – Alsacien and Mosellan (Frankish) and in the distancing of these forms from the overarching international language and marginalise them geographically. Moreover, there is no known example of stable societal bilingualism with two languages coalescing in total equality. Their ineluctably overlapping functions would render one redundant within a short time – almost inevitably Alsacien. The same arguments apply to Flemish (first meeting of Cercle Universitaire pour l'étude du flamand, Lille, October 1998). Some like Marteel (1992) have chosen to teach the local dialect (that spoken around Dunkerque) which differs from that spoken in more easterly locations. Others would argue that unlike in Alsace the teaching of Nether-landic, particularly by Belgians, gives exposure to near enough the target variety as well as useful access to a foreign language culture.

The adoption of Luxembourgish as the national language of Luxembourg puts the Frankish spoken in Lorraine in a comparable, though by no means identical, position (see Laumesfeld, 1997 who applies the diglossic conflict model in this posthumously edited book).

In a parallel debate regarding Corsican, linguists are divided on the issue of the Italiannness of the language, Marchetti (1989) and Casanova (1991) appearing to be favourable and Thiers (1993) implacably opposed. Léonard (1998) applies the Lafont model to a *langue d'oïl* variety – Poitevin – as spoken in the fishing communities on the island of Noirmoutier and finds it wanting, particularly for the older fishermen who, thanks to their stable economic base and isolated geographical location, are (were?) able to maintain something approaching Poitevin monolingualism. Marconot (1983) also applies the diglossic paradigm to a langue d'oïl variety in Franche-Comté using material gleaned mainly from the brief remarks of amateur dialectologists and followed up in Marconot (1986) by the analysis of the linguistic representations and practices of surviving fluent speakers.

5.4 *Two launchpads of vitality – Corsican polynomia and Francitan*

Drawing on the theoretical notions of conflict sociolinguistics, Thiers (1993) argues for the notion of polynomia. While acknowledging the lack of linguistic unity among Corsican varieties – northern varieties being related to Tuscan and southern varieties showing affinities with Sardinian and southern Italian, he can point to agreed spelling conventions which have been worked out without the help of the authorities or linguists. Dialectal variation is tolerated and there is no need to argue for a Golden Age when the Corsican language was pure and ubiquitous. Linguistically, Thiers recognises, Corsican unity is an abstraction. The notion of a linguistic heartland in the central part of the island where isoglosses cross cannot be corroborated by dialect surveys. It is important that Corsicans of various dialectal origins communicate with each other successfully in the largest number of ways possible. Extralinguistically, the assertion of Corsican identity is very real, and can take on board individual idiosyncrasies and even cultural myths. Crucially, French is seen as a begrudged necessity rather than an integral part of Corsican unity. While distancing himself from the terrorist fringe of Corsican nationalism, Thiers suggests that such militancy is without doubt symptomatic of a cultural strength that needs to steer a middle course between the Scylla of cannibalisation (French) and the Charybdis of satellisation (Italian). Interestingly, he almost disparagingly refers to Corsican regional French as an unstable variety that has not been properly described.

Lafont (1994), to his credit, sees description of mixed varieties as part of the linguist's task. Schlieben-Lange (1993) points out that conflict sociolinguistics tells more about attitudes of speakers than actual behaviour – the diglossic

model gives the oppressed language the status of a distinctive code, when as she points out language shift is visibly taking place.

Paradoxically, such diglossia gives rise to code-mixing and a set of more or less French-influenced varieties (Francitan) which can be classified through a typology of varieties (figure 1) (Mazel, 1980; Lafont, 1984; Boyer, 1988). Some linguists, particularly Couderc (1976a, 1976b) and Auzias (1982), see the range of varieties as a single code. Auzias sees Francitan as a creole which is the true language of identity throughout Occitanie, whereas others, e.g. Viaut (1996b) see Francitan as the source of vitality from which Occitan may become resurgent. Accounts of personal experience such as that of Bourdet (1982) suggest that even for the linguistically aware it is no easy matter to recover H(igher) functions for a minoritised L(ower) language.

6 REGIONAL LANGUAGES AND THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE CHARTER

Since 1996 when the Council of State expressed the view that the Council of Europe Charter on minority languages was incompatible with the French constitution (particularly Article 2[4]), there has been a wave of protest orchestrated by an association called Collectif Pour la Langue which has drawn the government's attention to the regional languages issue (Judge and Judge, 1998). The Jospin administration therefore commissioned a report, initially researched by Nicole Péry but completed by Bernard Poignant (1998) who recommended that France should sign the Charter provided that it was not in conflict with the Constitution, as revised in 1992.[5] The dossier was entrusted to a constitutional lawyer called Guy Carcassonne (1998) who took the view that France could legitimately sign 50 out of the 98 articles on the grounds that the potential beneficiaries were 'langues de France' and therefore part of the collective national heritage. This was followed by the Cerquiglini report (1999), the publication of which was timed to coincide with the signature of the Charter in May 1999[6], and the aim of which was to specify the inventory of regional languages (table 3) with a view to selecting the sub-set which would benefit from the provisions of the Charter upon ratification. President Chirac, however, used the powers of his office to ask the Constitutional Council to express a view on the constitutionality of the Charter. In

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[4] Law 92-554 of 25 June 1992 Article 2, stipulates that French is the language of the Republic. This revision, introduced following the Maastricht agreement, was designed to enhance French's chances of being used in international fora by giving it official status in the Constitution. Its effect on the position of regional languages was apparently not foreseen.

[5] France accepted 39 articles which are listed:
http://www.culture.fr/culture/dglf/lang-reg/39-engagements.html.

[6] Despite the apparently solid methodology, the figures cited for Berber and Cornish, in particular, suggest that like is not being compared with like and that the number of Berber speakers in particular has been underestimated.

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Table 1. *Vitality of minority languages in Europe – number of speakers and grouped ranking A-E for reproductive potential (Nelde* et al. *1996) compared with Kloss and McConnell (1984), Kloss, McConnell and Verdoodt (1989), European Commission (1986) cited in Ball (1997)*

Category (Nelde *et al.*, 1996) capacity for reproductivity on Scale A to E	Number of speakers Nelde *et al.*, (1996)	Number of speakers cited in Ball (1997) as percentage of population
Category A		
Catalan (Catalonia)	4,065,000	
Luxembourgish	350,000	
no 'langue de France'		
Category B		
Alsacien	1,800,000	1,000,000 (62%)
Basque (Spain)	544,000	
Category C		
Catalan (Roussillon)	150,000	200,000 (56%)
Frisian (NL)	400,000	
Category D		
Basque (France)	86,000	90,000 (39%)
Corsican	125,000	150,000 (60%)
Occitan	2,100,000	1,500,000 (12%)
Breton	180–250,000	600,000 (40%)
Occitan (Italy)	35–80,000	
Category E		
Irish (UK)	142,000	
Flemish	20–40,000	100,000 (29%)
Berber[6]	25,000	
Cornish[6]	1,000	

Table 2. *Other languages listed by Kloss and McConnell (1984), Kloss, McConnell and Verdoodt (1989), European Commission (1986) cited in Ball (1997)*

Language	Number of speakers cited in Ball (1996) as percentage of population
Auvergnat	500,000 (38%)
Franco-provençal	30,000 (2%)
Frankish (Mosellan)	200,000 (50%)
Norman	700,000 (23%)
Picard	2,000,000 (36%)

June 1999, the Constitutional Council, while accepting that the 39 articles subscribed to in the signing of the Charter were perfectly compatible with the Constitution, argued that the rationale of the Charter was at variance with the principle of the indivisibility of the Republic (Article 1) and the unique status

Table 3. *Inventory of regional languages of France, 1951−1999*

Source	Languages
Loi Deixonne, 1951	Basque, Breton, Catalan, Occitan.
Décret 16/01/74	Corsican.
Décret 12/05/82	Tahitian.
Décret 20/10/92	Melanesian languages (New Caledonia) : Ajië, Drehu, Nengone, Paicî.
Poignant Report (1998)	Alsacien-Mosellan, Basque, Breton, Catalan, Occitan. Creole languages (Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guyane, Réunion). Tahitian. Melanesian languages: (New Caledonia) : Ajië, Drehu, Nengone, Paicî.
Carcassonne Report (1998)	As in Poignant + *langues d'oïl* languages (undifferentiated). *langues d'oc* (subsumed under Occitan). Flemish. 6 Amerindian languages of Guyana. Non-terrorial languages: Yiddish, Romany, Berber.
Cerquiglini Report (1999)	As in Carcassonne + *langues d'oïl* languages listed as Franc-Comtois, Walloon, Picard, Norman, Gallo, Poitevin-Saintongeais, Bourguignon-Morvandiau, Lorrain. Non-terrorial languages; Chib Romany, Dialectal Arabic, Western Armenian. DOM: Creoles of Martinique, Guadeloupe and Réunion. Amerindian languages of Guyana: Galibi, Wayana, Palikur, Arawak, Wayampi, Emerillon. Hmong (refugee community from Laos). In addition to French-based creoles as above, Anglo-Portuguese-based creoles: Bushinenge Saramaca, Aluku, Njuka, Paramaca, Aluku, Njuka. TOM: Tahitian + Marquisien, Tuamotu and Mangarevienne languages. 3 languages spoken in South Sea Islands Ruturu, Ra'ivavae, Rapa. Walissien, Futunien. New Caledonia: 28 Kanak languages, + 4 languages spoken in Loyalty Islands: Nengone, Drehu Iaai, Fagaavea. 2 languages spoken in Mayotte: Shimaoré, Shibushi.

of French as the language of the Republic (Article 2) and therefore uncon-
stitutional. This ruling, while its major lines of argument may be perceived as
being at cross purposes with those defended by Carcassonne nine months
earlier, have resulted in open declarations of support and opposition across
party lines between regionalists and souverainists. President Chirac subse-
quently refused Prime Minister Jospin's request for a revision of the Constitu-
tion as a way out of the impasse. The political mess is compounded not only
by the length of Cerquiglini's inventory (75 languages) but by the fact that it
confuses the arguably very different problems of the precarity of the traditional
European patrimony (which the Charter has in mind) and the much more

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Table 4. *The teaching of regional languages in France – 1996–97*

	Number of students
All regional languages	335,000
All school students	12,000,000
State schools	
'German dialect' of Alsace and Moselle	194,222
Occitan	68,894
Corsican	27,459
Breton	14,657
Secteur associatif	6,000

Other languages taught include: Basque, Catalan (the fastest growth areas) plus less commonly recognised languages such as Auvergnat, Vivaro-Alpin, Gallo, Gascon, Provençal. Source: *Le Monde* 21 July 1999

recent problem of immigrant minorities. Although under the terms of the Charter, there is no requirement for a state to treat all such languages spoken within its borders uniformly, since uniformity may not take local circumstances into account, France's accepting of only 39 articles (4 above the minimum) leaves virtually no room for manoeuvre. Since the enactment of the Loi Deixonne in 1951, the list of regional languages has been extended and truncated from time to time in somewhat piecemeal fashion as the legal status (see table 3 and Grau, 1985; Martin, 1996 for an overview) has changed.

Since 1998 the inventory of potential regional languages has expanded considerably as different reporters have chosen to perceive languages differently and make a more detailed survey of overseas territories. Poignant took the view that *langue d'oïl* and *franco-provençal* varieties were not living languages, since, so he argued, their traditional forms have disappeared and they only survive as regional varieties of French. Moreover, he construed Flemish as an allogenic language for which current levels of Dutch teaching were adequate. Although Poignant, Carcassonne and Cerquiglini list Alsacien or Alsacien-Mosellan (or the German dialect of Alsace and Moselle) as a regional language, table 4 shows that recently published statistics concerning the numbers of school students learning regional languages are, to say the least, potentially misleading, because they are skewed by the inclusion of students studying a special option in German as a regional language in the Moselle, the Bas-Rhin and the Haut Rhin. The Carcassonne report, however, lists both Flemish and Alsacien as regional languages. The *langues d'oïl* are subsumed under one head as are the *langues d'oc* under the banner of Occitan. Carcassonne argues too that the regional languages of France are part of the cultural heritage of the nation and that 'regional' cannot be construed in its current legal sense, since on the one hand, the regions created in 1982 do not match traditional linguistic geography, and on the other there are languages with no clear territoriality, but which are not only spoken by many French

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citizens, but are also not officially recognised by any other state and which could justifiably be included, in particular Romany, Yiddish, and Berber (particularly the latter which was spoken on French soil for a significant period). To extend the status of 'langue régionale' to such migrant languages would, however, raise more problems than it would resolve. While both Carcassonne and Cerquiglini agree that there would be little justification for introducing measures designed to protect migrant languages such as Spanish and Arabic, which obviously enjoy great vitality and official status elsewhere, they find no arguments, given the French constitutional framework that lend support to clearly territorial languages like Flemish, Mosellan and Basque (which happen to be spoken and enjoy greater recognition in neighbouring states) that should not in all fairness be applied to so-called non-territorial languages which enjoy no such official recognition outside France, such as Berber, Romany and Western Armenian. The constitutional difficulty of distinguishing between territorial and non-territorial languages (as in Vermes, 1988), coupled with a regional administrative division based on Revolutionary orography, introduced as part of a plan to 'smash these instruments of error', seemed for a time to be resolved by an ingenious fudge proposed by Carcassonne that these languages are 'langues de France'. Cerquiglini appears to have attempted to follow Carcassonne's fudge with an equally ingenious finesse. Confronted with the obvious impossibility for the French state of funding teaching and media air time for 75 languages, Cerquiglini cautiously suggested that the inventory constituted by Deixonne and the subsequent décrets should serve as the basis for the list of languages in the ratification agreement. The linguistic criteria would appear to be that the languages selected should have vitality and a written form, thus excluding the *langue d'oïl* varieties and *franco-provençal* on the first condition and many of the languages spoken in the DOM-TOM on the second. It would at the same time exploit Part 2 of the Charter to honour the first set of languages in their death throes, while giving others the hope of benefiting from the provisions of Part 3 at some time in the future. The delicate balance that Carcassonne and Cerquiglini sought to underpin, has, however, been seriously undermined by subsequent events.

Nevertheless, the difference of terminology implied between geographically settled regional languages and mobile linguistic minorities points to issues regarding cultural and regional identity that have been pushed into the public arena and therefore need to be seriously addressed. The difficulties of including a regional language in the newly emerging regional identities are considerable in cases where, as with Midi-Pyrénées and Languedoc-Roussillon (Lagarde, 1998) the territories do not correspond to linguistic entities. Conversely, there is much evidence to suggest that in cases where the language-territoriality pairing is apparently unproblematical, e.g. Picard-Picardie (Parisot, 1998 and Parisot, Moro & Eloy, 1998), Breton-Brittany (Hoare, 1998), Alsace-Alsacien (Broadbridge, 1998), regional identities, at least

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partly divorced from the corresponding languages, are emerging. Moreover, the Constitution recognises no ethnic minorities (notably when the Constitutional Council rejected the notion of the 'peuple corse' in 1991, previously recognised in the Joxe Statute) but only minority cultures, although Prime Minister Jospin went on record on national television in the spring of 1999 to state the opposite view regarding Corsica and the press started to suggest that recognition of the 'peuple breton' would soon follow, particularly, since the pick 'n' mix nature of the Charter (a state needs to assent to 35/98 paragraphs) means that France can readily comply with relatively few changes on the ground, particularly in the Métropole, and that, despite the stipulation that at least one article regarding various aspects of public life must be chosen. Moreover, it would hardly require spin-doctoring of the most sophistic kind for France to present herself as a beacon of multilingual tolerance given the plethora of non-metropolitan ethnolinguistic groups.

The Poignant, Carcassonne and Cerquiglini reports are all in Lafontian terms 'reformist', i.e. any recognition of a regional language will remain secondary to that accorded to French, whether it be in public life or in teaching. Significantly, militant regionalists would not be able to demand to use their language in court to 'make a statement' although that is permissible out of necessity, for instance, in French Polynesia. Neither can académies be expected to use regional languages as a medium of instruction as in the 'écoles associatives'. Moreover, any provision is subject to local demand and resources, which means, at least in theory, that Breton classes could be available, for instance, in certain parts of the Paris region but not in parts of Brittany. Such a proposal smacks very nastily of tokenism, where largely unco-ordinated efforts (although, admittedly somewhat less unco-ordinated than at present) will increase classroom acquired knowledge without protecting or indeed recreating situations of use, especially for H functions in public life. Studies such as that of Lobier (1992) and Behling (1997) suggest that only intense exposure and learning through the medium of the regional language such as that given in the 'écoles associatives' will result in the acquisition of both linguistic proficiency and positive attitudes. Indeed, Lobier's study suggests that children who go through brief awareness type courses acquire more negative attitudes than those who have no classroom-based exposure to a regional language. My own investigations clearly suggest that voluntarily run courses in Picard tend to encourage school students in the perception that it is an old language spoken by some of their grandparents. Clearly, as Fishman (1991) argues, if the natural transmission process breaks down, then the reversing of language shift is made considerably more difficult. Wanner (1993) points out that if language L is no longer the first acquired in sequential acquisition, then it has lost its one indisputable advantage over the H variety. Any possible restoration of the natural process of mother tongue transmission, is further handicapped by the traditional association of local languages and masculinity e.g. Maurand (1981), Wanner (1993), Auzanneau

(1998). There is also considerable doubt as to whether there are the human resources (*Cf.* Estève, 1991), the political will or the financial means to implement such a policy, even if anyone in authority were proposing it. In the light of political events over the last two years, however, the three reports discussed were, as has already been demonstrated, about as far-reaching as they could have been. Historical reparation was never on the agenda.

While it is ultimately a partially defeatist position, it is difficult not to recognise the aptness of Carcassonne's comparison of the architectural and linguistic heritage of France. Some regional languages may be fairly compared to medieval castles in ruins, while others are like serviceable buildings in varying states of disrepair. My fear is that buildings capable of repair will fall into total ruin, when there is still time to co-ordinate a programme of refurbishment, particularly in the cases of Breton, Alsacien, Flemish, Catalan, Corsican and Basque where strongly distinctive regional languages used within a single administrative region with limited populations could be targeted for authentically bilingual education and provided with adequate resources. The vastness of the Occitan area, spanning several regions, raises another set of problems. In any event, it would be far better to salvage some languages properly, rather than allow them all to die out of a misguided sense of equity. The best hope afforded by the Poignant report is the proposal to recognise 'écoles associatives' as part of a co-ordinated strategy.

7 THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF VITALITY

The most obvious measure of vitality – number of speakers – is generally arithmetically problematical given that there are no census data for minority languages in France. Extrapolated estimates can vary enormously, as in the case for Breton varying from 900,000 (Broudic, 1995a), 600,000 (Kloss-McConnell, 1984), 500,000 (Hagège, 1992), 250,000 (Walter, 1994), 180–250,000 (Nelde *et al.*, 1996) (table 1). It is also significant that on Nelde *et al.*'s classification of minority languages on a five-point scale of reproductive potential (A to E), no regional language of France warrants entry into Category A. Moreover, comparison with the figures in Kloss McConnell (1984) and Kloss, McConnell and Verdoodt (1989) raises a number of absolutely fundamental problems regarding the identity of the languages, e.g. German (sic !) and Occitan in Nelde *et al.* as opposed to Alsatian and Frankish and Occitan and Auvergnat in Kloss, McConnell and Verdoodt *Cf.* table 2.

Nelde *et al.*'s (1996) perceive minority language transmission, not in negative terms of resistance to language shift, but in terms of reproduction, i.e. the capacity of a language group to reproduce their language in a new generation. Such a conception of clear ethnolinguistic group identity does not fit with the reality of the sociolinguistic (and constitutional) situation in France, and not surprisingly, no studies exploit it. On the other hand, the Reversing Language Shift model developed by Fishman's (1991) gives a more

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incisive analytical tool – the GIDS (Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale) for evaluation of the degree of threat facing specific languages. Using the Fishman model, it would appear fair to say that for many generations in France, most, if not all, regional languages were transmitted through more or less totally oral tradition with a fairly solid community base as mother tongues to be used as L varieties in a diglossic situation (Point 6 on the GIDS). Two studies to use the GIDS indicate clearly that for Catalan in Perpignan (Marley, 1995) and for Picard in the Lille metropolis (Pooley, 1998a) the community base has been eroded and that the lowest points on the scale (7 and 8) have been reached. Linguists using the diglossic model are not alone in suggesting that concentration on H functions (covered by Points 1 to 5 of the GIDS) will encourage vitality, but seem to pay too little heed to Fishman's fundamental argument that restoration and maintenance of the community base is a key factor in reversing language shift.

Surveys of regional languages in particular areas among particular social groups have proliferated in recent years. Overarching studies e.g. Dorandeau and Chapalain (1991) and Bonnemaison (1993) or regionally-based opinion poll style surveys such as Média Pluriel (1993), hold some interest but are generally subject to current administrative divisions which do not always correspond to linguistically pertinent areas. Since vitality is also extremely sensitive to local circumstances, more intensive, even exhaustive studies of specific areas, yield greater insights. By way of example one may cite: for Occitan – Hadjadj (1981), Maurand (1981), Cohen (1991), Lobier (1992), Kristol (1996), Wuest (1996a), Behling (1997) and Boyer (1999), plus the bibliography of Wüest (1996b), which lists around 50 studies; for Breton – Laurent (1992), Broudic (1995a), Jones (1996, 1999), Prémel (1998), Hoare (1998); for Catalan – Média Pluriel (1993), Marley (1995); for Alsacien – Cole (1975), Tabouret-Keller and Luckel (1981), Ladin (1982), Veltman (1983), Denis (1985a, 1985b, 1988), Denis and Veltman (1989), Vassberg (1993), Broadbridge (1998); for Frankish – Rebaudières-Paty (1985), Laumesfeld (1997); for Basque – Héguy (1991), Coyos (1999); for Flemish – Ryckeboer (1977), Ryckeboer and Maeckelberghe (1987); for Corsican – Thiers (1986, 1987), Marchetti (1989), Casanova (1990), Moracchini (1991). Wanner's (1993) comparison of the sociolinguistic situations in a Catalan and an Occitan speaking village is to be recommended for its thorough and clear-sighted treatment of the issues addressed.

Broadly speaking, this impressive body of literature clearly shows a significant decline in the native speaker base and a progressive erosion, often to the point of disagregation, of the community underpinning. A serious generalised breakdown of the natural processes of transmission occurred after the Second World War and despite the emergence of regionalist activism since the 1970s and more recent political measures, the potential for reproduction is depressingly low and that for resocialisation remains a pipedream of a few intellectuals. Competence in regional languages is significantly on the wrong

side of the old–young, urban-rural divides. The work of Broudic in Brittany (1995a, 1995b, 1998) is the most thorough retracing of the historical steps of linguistic erosion based on such sources as legal (e.g. the presence of an interpreter in court), and church records (e.g. the language of the catechism and preaching). Successive studies of the linguistic limit of Lower and Upper Brittany, particularly Sébillot (1886), Panier (1942) and Timm (1976), plot the inexorable westward drift of the linguistic border.

Alsacien clearly enjoys the greatest vitality. Code-switching can be observed anonymously in public places (Gardner–Chloros, 1985a, 1985b, 1991; Girardot–Soltner and Salmon, 1991; Vassberg, 1993) and surveys indicate the functionality (at least until fairly recently) of family-based acquisition (Denis, 1988), school teachers and inspectors discuss problems of dialect speakers in French (Hatterer, 1985; Schilling, 1985; Stoecklé, 1985). Moracchini (1991) points to the functionality of family-based acquisition in Corsica for students born in the 1960s, but elsewhere, as in Brittany, the point where more Breton speakers under 25 years of age have acquired their competence in the classroom rather than in infancy has already been documented (Prémel, 1995) and I suspect that other languages are at best fast approaching the critical crossover, despite (or perhaps partly because of) the acknowledged excellence of the 'écoles associatives'. Even European Union and Council of Europe support for regions shows no sign of reversing the historical contingency that brooks no exception in France whereby regional languages were wedded to primary (agriculture and fisheries) and, in a few notable cases, secondary sector activities (e.g. coal, steel, textiles). Such industries provided the economic undergirding for stable communities where levels of formal education were generally not very high. In highly mobile societies with tertiary sector-based economies minority languages require special measures to enable them to adapt. Nelde *et al.* (1996) devote much space to addressing the issues surrounding the economic conditions necessary for the survival of minority languages, but as Judge and Judge (1998) remark, this report is not being given much publicity, because of the potentially explosive consequences for the delicate economic equilibrium of the EU. Much ink has flowed concerning regional identity, but this is by no means inextricably linked to use of a regional language. Indeed, folkloristic and culinary traditions can be readily preserved and repackaged through the medium of French, for instance, for the pragmatic economic purpose of attracting tourists. Moreover, there is clear evidence that regional languages cannot be a factor in identity if people are ignorant (Pooley, 1998b), or even unaware (Prémel, 1998), of them. On the other hand, there is good reason to believe that regional languages enjoy greater recognition as languages and are shaking off the long-standing traditional stigmas manufactured by centralist ideology. Whether this will result in greater numbers of people wishing to acquire proficiency in them is, to inject a hint of optimism, an open question.

Although it is always difficult to assert non-existence or at least chronic lack,

the number of studies devoted to code-switching, that I am aware of at least, can only be interpreted as telling. The early issues of *Lengas* contain a few articles devoted to this theme, particularly Pécout (1977), Baudou (1977), Martin (1977), but the latter concludes that the examples which he noted confirm the diglossic nature of code-switching, i.e. that generally speaking Occitan is limited to the private sphere. Eloy (1988) and Hornsby (1996) describe private or semi-private French–Picard code-switches but have to wrestle with the problem of distinctiveness. Broudic's (1998:57) acknowledgement of the difficulty of studying the phenomenon also appears to be a tacit recognition that Breton is more or less confined to the private and semi-private domains. The notable exception is to be seen in the work of Gardner-Chloros (1985a, 1985b, 1991) and to a much lesser degree Vassberg (1993) and Girardot-Soltner and Salmon (1991) which show Alsatian being used in public domains.

8 OTHER FORMS OF VITALITY

Vitality can be measured to a degree through the numbers of candidates studying the languages, e.g. Sarpoulet (1996), Mercadier (1996) (Basque and Occitan). Barelli *et al.* (1980) underline the difficulty of promoting regional languages using moderate reformist language without reducing them to folklore (e.g. theatre, dance, handicraft). They foresaw modern media as both a danger and at the same time the only real opportunity to reinject vitality into minoritised languages. Newspaper reports in 1998 estimated the number of schoolchildren studying regional languages in France at 320,000 or 2% of the total school population (table 5). Exposure varies enormously from region to region with 85% of school students in Corsica getting some form of instruction in their regional language compared to 13.5% in Roussillon and 5% in Occitanie and Brittany. Fewer than 10% of students get comparable or greater timetable space for classes in their regional language as compared to subjects taught through the medium of French and the corresponding regional languages and in general regional language classes are heavily dominated by courses concentrating on awareness and culture. (*Le Monde*, 4 February 1998, 21 July 1999).

Clearly, television, radio and the Internet have considerable potential for creating a new sense of community, which breaks the carcan of localisation and the contingent, but apparently indissoluble marriage of regional languages and traditional rural (and of course outmoded) life styles. The contributions in Viaut (1996a), however, show a picture of marginalisation on television. Grosclaude reports that in the early 1990s FR3 broadcast a total of between 220 and 312 hours per annum spread over six languages. In 1997 the station broadcast 260 hours in regional languages (*Libération*, 1 October 1998). Both in terms of programme hours and market penetration, Alsacien shows significantly greater vitality than any other language. More recently, initiatives taken by the Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel on local television channels

tend to favour large centres of population (Cheval, 1996) and only privately-run cable and satellite channels from Belgium and Spain seem to offer any hope of genuine resocialisation. Gardy (1996) deplores the predominantly passeist and language-centred character of FR3 regional programmes compared to the Occitan broadcasts from the Val d'Aran.

Local radio stations represent the best hope to focus vitality and a sense of community. Cheval (1994, 1996) reports that between 20 and 25 radio stations in Aquitaine use regional languages ranging in time slots from half an hour a month to virtually exclusive use of Basque by three stations covering the three dialect areas within France. Cheval, Grosclaude, Cheval and Viaut, Gardy and de la Brétèque (1996) and Pooley (forthcoming) all point to the difficulty of producing quality material in sufficient quantity given the number of competent native speakers and the generally parsimonious budgets available. These factors go a long way to explaining the low impact and high mortality rate of such stations.

One area of expansion for regional languages is the number of Internet sites, all of which have been set up very recently. At London Guildhall University we have found over 60, a figure which probably understates the actual number. More crucial than an accurate overall figure, of course, is the impact of such sites, which is difficult to evaluate.

9 ENDPIECE

The study of regional varieties of French has been one of missed opportunities and hence of gaps in the fundamental knowledge base, compared to French-speaking Canada, Britain, USA and the Scandinavian countries. It is to be hoped that recent initiatives such as the Durand-Laks-Lyche project and the French Variation Forum will stimulate an increased volume of research into this area so that there is more data available to answer some fundamental questions about the nature of variation in spoken French.

The study of regional languages has by any criterion been less neglected than that of regional varieties of French, but the overall picture emerging from the body of academic work is a sad one. The need of the hour is for linguists to stand up and be counted by advocating more widespread implementation of forms of teaching which have proved their efficacy in producing proficient bilinguals imbued with a positive image of the minoritised language. Reports of regionalist movements, particularly in Brittany, (e.g. *Le Monde*, 17 May 1999) give some cause for optimism. While the Poignant, Carcassonne and Cerquiglini reports offer more vigorous support for some regional languages than has been forthcoming hitherto in official circles, they stop far short of recommending measures strong enough to reverse language shift given the age profile of fluent first language speakers. Nonetheless, they have exposed deep-seated political divisions (e.g. regarding a federalist view in the EU) and the debates on the proposed law authorising the specific arrangements of

enactment (particularly the inventory of beneficiary languages) of the commit-
ment already made through the signature of the Charter in May 1999 – debates
expected to take place in 2000 – may yet provoke a constitutional crisis.

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