Research report

Multicultural London English (MLE) / Multicultural Paris French (MPF)

Duration: 48 months

United Kingdom
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Abstract

This sociolinguistic project aims to compare developments in contemporary London English and in Paris French. It pays attention to the influence on the main languages, English and French, of varieties spoken by major communities of immigrant origin, including Afro-Caribbeans in the UK and French Caribbeans and Maghrebis in France.

Data obtained in two previous ESRC funded projects, is being used as a basis for a similar data-collecting exercise in Paris, having regard for the very different distribution of ethnic communities in the two cities. Research assistants are collecting recordings in areas of Paris with a heavy concentration of migrant populations. These recordings are being transcribed and coded according to the CLAN/LIDES system.

Linguistic features will be carefully analysed at different levels to determine their relationship with ethnic-derived varieties and with more traditional sites of linguistic change, such as non-standard varieties of English and of French. The data obtained in London is currently being re-examined so as to pick out features susceptible to language change, such as discourse markers and new verb forms. Particular attention is being paid to features taken over from the ethnic varieties through a process of code-switching or ‘crossing’. These linguistic features will be correlated with social variables like age, gender, ethnicity, network pattern and discourse type.

The emphasis in the second part of the project will be on the comparison of language change in the two settings. We will draw out conclusions about processes of language change in large metropolises, based on the contrasting factors pertaining in London and Paris. We will pay attention to the educational and policy-related implications in each country, ensuring that sound information is passed on to educators at a time when such discussions are highly politicized.

This project constitutes the first large-scale comparison of two significant Western European settings from a sociolinguistic perspective. It is unusual in tying together the study of variation and change at a monolingual level with the study of the interaction of different varieties derived from the mother-tongues of immigrant speakers with the official language of the host country. The project will contribute to our understanding not only of sociolinguistic processes of language change but also of social questions to do with migration, integration and their educational consequences.

Résumé

Les données de deux projets antérieurs appuyés par le ESRC servent de base pour le même type de recueil à Paris, compte tenu des différences de distribution des communautés ethniques dans les deux villes. Des assistants de recherche font des enregistrements dans des zones de Paris à forte concentration ethnique. Ces enregistrements sone en cours de transcription selon le système CLAN/LIDES.

Différents traits linguistiques seront analysés à différents niveaux pour établir leur relation avec des variétés ethniques et avec les lieux traditionnels du changement linguistique dans les variétés non standard d’anglais et de français. Les données londoniennes font l’objet d’une réexamen à la recherche de traits susceptibles de changement, comme les marqueurs discursifs et les formes verbales. On s’applique particulièrement aux traits pouvant provenir de variétés ethniques à travers l’alternance codique et le ‘crossing’. Ces traits linguistiques seront mis en relation avec des variables socio-démographiques comme l’âge, le sexe, l’appartenance ethnique, l’appartenance à des réseaux et les types de discours.


Ce projet constitue la première comparaison à grande échelle de deux situations européennes, d’une perspective sociolinguistique. Il est rare de relier ainsi l’étude de la variation et du changement dans une langue avec l’interaction entre différentes variétés de langues déterritorialisées avec la langue officielle du pays hôte. Le projet contribuera ainsi à la compréhension des processus sociolinguistiques du changement, et des questions sociales ayant à voir avec la migration, l’intégration et leurs conséquences éducatives.
1. **Scientific context**

The project aims at achieving a better sociolinguistic understanding of processes of language change in metropolises, by analyzing changes occurring in two European languages, French and English, as spoken by young people in the capital cities. These changes are seen as related to changes in the composition of the relevant societies in the wake of postcolonial immigration.

1.1. **Theoretical context**

Sociolinguistics is viewed very differently in France and Britain. Highly productive both theoretically and empirically in Britain (see, for example, Britain and Cheshire 2003), in France it is marginalized, and research based on large-scale surveys and corpora is less common than in other European countries (see Cappeau and Gadet 2007). There is therefore a dearth of survey-based sociolinguistic information about French. This project aims to help fill that gap by providing a sound empirical basis for understanding ongoing change in French compared with English, which is better documented. The role of the different sociolinguistic factors in each country will be highlighted in a way which could not be done through the observation of a single language. It will also be possible to obtain a clearer idea of the relative roles of linguistic and sociolinguistic factors (including typological and discourse-universal factors).

The sources of change are found in everyday spoken language, especially the vernacular used by young urban speakers. The influence on the language of significant ethnic groups present in France and Britain is primordial. In both countries influences from Caribbean (creole) linguistic features are found, but the relevant communities differ in size and distribution. In London we have
recordings from speakers of many different ethnicities; in France the most significant influences probably emanate from speakers of North-African (Arabic-speaking) origin.

1.2. Political and socio-cultural context

France and Great Britain have been centres for immigration for centuries (Noiriel 1988, Bouziri 2000, Deprez 2005), the linguistic outcome being multiple contacts between French/English and the languages and cultures of origin of such speakers. Nearly one in every four Parisians has at least one ancestor born outside France (Gadet 2007a). In London (2001 Census), just over a quarter of all Greater London residents were born outside the UK (Greater London Authority 2006). The figures for 2nd, 3rd and 4th generation migrants born in both countries are more elusive, but in both cases substantial.

Social and sociolinguistic factors interact in a complex fashion with demographic ones and substantial immigrant communities (e.g. Indian) in Britain have so far scarcely been considered in relation to their influence on English, even by those who have described their – frequently mixed – linguistic practices. Questions to do with the linguistic integration of such groups are very much on the agenda in both countries, notably in relation to school language policies and the debate surrounding citizenship (see the Bénisti Report in France, 2004; Honeyford 2003 in Britain). The effect of such contacts on the dominant language has been insufficiently investigated.

1 ESRC Ref ES/FO17057/1 RES-062-23-0814: speaker ethnicities (self-defined) include Afro-Caribbean, Turkish, Moroccan, African, Indian, Bangladeshi, and Filipino. This was itself a development of an earlier ESRC project, Linguistic Innovators: the English of adolescents in London, RES000230680.
1.3. Methodological context

This study will be the first large-scale sociolinguistic comparison between change in English and French. It will be one of a very small number of studies in both countries which integrate ethnicity explicitly into a study of language change in progress.

Just as London is conventionally considered by linguists as a motor of change in the English language (see however 2.1.1.), so developments in Paris are also likely to have repercussions for French as spoken far and wide. In earlier ESRC-funded studies from the 90s focussing on changes in the London periphery, ‘dialect levelling’ was found, with local accents and dialects becoming less distinct in a common set of pronunciation and grammatical features (Cheshire, Kerswill and Williams 1999; 2005). It is hypothesized that similar developments have taken place in France (see Lodge 2004 on the historical role of Paris in shaping and diffusing the French language in a consistently centralized nation, as well as the permanent role of levelling through language contacts).

The study is unusual, particularly in France, in using data collected naturalistically. The London data comprises over 100 hours of recorded conversational data and 5 hours of self-recorded data, of which several aspects remain to be investigated. In French such data are rare (but see data obtained by the Grenoble team), yet it is precisely there that the emerging changes are most likely to be found.
1.4. State of the art

There are few studies investigating the vernacular of young people in France (so-called ‘langue des jeunes’)
(see Trimaille 2004, Bulot 2004). Most of them were gathered in French cities other than Paris: Grenoble
In Britain studies carried out outside London include Trudgill (1974) on Norwich, Cheshire (1982) on Reading,
Cheshire, Kerswill and Williams on Reading, Milton Keynes and Hull (Kerswill and Williams 2005, Williams and
and 2006); Fox (2007); as well as papers emanating from previous ESRC-funded projects in which the co-investigator,
Jenny Cheshire, has been involved (see below).

For Paris and its suburbs, relevant studies include Lepoutre 1997 in La Courneuve 93, Bouziri (2000, 2002), a study of
Maghrebi communities in La Goutte d’Or (Paris 18th arrondissement), Fagyal (2003 and 2010), a study of the
Maghrebi accent in French (observed in la Courneuve 93) and how it is received and evaluated by French
speakers (perceptual study), and Jamin (2005) for pronunciation in different suburbs.

These monographs focus mainly on how individuals, families (Deprez 1994) or networks (Bouziri 2000; 2002)
speak in specific locations, and make few comparisons, even in mixed areas (like Belleville, inside Paris in the
19th and 20th

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2 We will reconsider the accuracy of expressions like ‘youth language’, ‘langue des jeunes’: which are commonly accepted (e.g. in books and symposium titles), as these may tend to freeze the perception of practices (see Bouziri 2000, Gadet 2003, Fagyal 2010).

3 The number following the names of towns in Parisian suburbs represents the department (78 = Yvelines, 91 = Essonne, 92 = Hauts de Seine, 93 = Seine Saint Denis, 94 = Val de Marne, and 95 = Val d’oise). See Map in Appendix 2.
aroundisements, where North African, African and Far-Eastern populations, especially Chinese, can be found – Calvet 1993).

In France there are few studies of levelling or crossing among young people from different ethnic groups. However some studies (Billiez 1992; Billiez and Merabti 1988, Binisti 1999, Melliani 2000, Jamin and Trimage 2008) show that levelling is occurring, and that its effects on French should be investigated.

Code-switching/crossing phenomena have been found to be significant in many contexts –including francophone ones (Franceschini 1998). Apart from those above, there are few studies of language contact and change in large metropolises (Gardner-Chloros 2004a, 2004b), particularly among young people4 (Androutsopoulos and Georgakopoulou 2003) – despite the growing importance of this field within sociolinguistics (Thomason 2001; Clyne 2003).

2. Objectives

2.1. Former related Studies

Two recent projects funded by ESRC examine the English spoken in multiethnic districts of London (Cheshire, Kerswill, Fox and Torgensen 2011, Kerswill, Cheshire et al. 2008, Kerswill, Cheshire et al. 2007-2010 – see Map in Appendix 1). The first part of the proposed project is modelled on this work. The French team is collecting similar data in Paris, using techniques close to those adopted in London. The other part of the project involves detailed comparative analyses of data obtained in the two cities so as to better understand the relationship between linguistic developments and the sociolinguistic factors, and to throw light on similarities/differences between the linguistic processes at work. This will allow

4 Among the studies concerning mixed languages of urban youths, few concern French, with the exception of chiac (a mixed French-English language in Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada).
better understanding of the internal and external factors involved in these linguistic developments including their sociolinguistic genesis.

Amongst the most important findings in London were:

1. At a general level, that in outer London the same developments were found as elsewhere in the South East and, for some features, for the country as a whole, but that in multilingual inner London, contrary to expectations, there were independent developments. This suggests that the ethnic mixture which characterizes inner London may be a significant motor of language change. For example, there were unexpected innovations, such as the new quotative ‘this is + speaker’ (others listed in Kerswill, Cheshire et al. 2008).

2. Some globally innovating features, e.g. be like as a quotative, are more established and grammaticalized in inner London.

3. Some features involved in dialect levelling in the country as a whole (like was/weren’t levelling) are less levelled in inner London, because the ethnic minority groups tend to go their own way and monolinguals accommodate to them.

4. Ethnic minority speakers in inner London make innovative use of the variation, e.g. relative pronouns are levelled as elsewhere in the country (and in the outer London site), so there is now only that and who (no which, zero or non-standard what); in inner London who is used to mark topic persistence (when the referent of the antecedent noun is discussed in following clauses).
2.2. Expected results

While we expect to find similar innovations in Paris, we also plan to look further into the language contact implications of such developments in London. We will analyze new features from the data set from Kerswill and Cheshire’s London projects that seem particularly suitable for comparison between the two places (see Table below). New discourse markers and pragmatic features, being outside the grammatical system, can be code-switched or simply ‘innovated’ – and also compared between the languages – very easily.

We are investigating whether innovation and change is led by ethnic minority speakers in Paris as in London. The degree to which these changes permeate the main language of young people in London is related to the ethnic mix of their peer groups. Outer Londoners’ speech shows their participation in levelling processes that are widespread in the UK and appears to reflect the smaller proportion of ethnic minorities living there. The ethnic origin population in Paris is differently distributed (both in terms of origin and geographical distribution) but we expect to find correspondingly different patterns of change in Parisian French.

This comparison raises intricate questions related to historical social and demographic differences between the cities. Immigrant communities are not perfectly comparable in the two capitals, even where they have similar (e.g. Caribbean) origins. Whereas studies carried out so far in London show the influence of Afro-Caribbean speech modes, with other substantial populations of immigrant origin having apparently less impact on English, there are several possible sources of such change in France (Maghrebi or Africans). An understanding of the – often tense – relations between France and its North-African (majority Algerian) population (Tribalat 1995, Bouziri 2000) is a significant element.
2.3. Expected research outcomes

The outcome will provide better knowledge of the target communities, thanks to improved knowledge of the impact of their integration in the relevant societies, measured through language, cultural identity and school integration – which places heavy demands on school teachers (Bautier and Branca-Rosoff, 2000; Sneddon 2000, 2007; Guerin 2009, 2010).

At the same time the project will improve theoretical insights in sociolinguistics, language contact, language ideologies, bilingualism/multiculturalism, code-switching/crossing, and language variation and change.

3. Research plan and project organisation

3.1. Research plan

We will describe and differentiate the varieties\(^5\) of English and French involved, in terms of pronunciation, grammar, lexis and discourse features, as spoken by children, adolescents and adults living in different areas of London and Paris, notably those most characterized by ethnic diversity and multilingualism. We focus on the native English/French of young people and the native or second-language English/French of adults (and when possible or relevant, third generation immigrants). From existing observations, we surmise that a levelling process does take place (Sourdot 1997, Fagyal 2010, Billiez 1992, Jamin and Trimaille 2008, Anzorge 2006). Kerswill, Cheshire et al. reported the existence of ‘Multicultural London English’ in London; we believe that evidence will be found of an ethnically neutral ‘Multicultural Parisian French’ (MPF), close to what Billiez 1992 called ‘parler véhiculaire interethnique.’ We expect this to co-exist

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\(^5\) The term ‘varieties’ is problematic (as it seems to imply static states of the language), but is difficult to avoid.
alongside more ethnically-marked varieties and the traditional range of accents, as well as grammatical and discourse features identified with Paris speech and traditionally described as ‘français populaire’ (see Gadet 1997, 2003, 2007b).

We will look into age-grading in MPF, and male/female differences (Lambert 2005 for girls). Through interviews we will explore whether speakers acquire this variety directly from the parents’ generation, or mostly in peer groups. If the latter (as we hypothesize), at what age (late childhood or early adolescence)? Do speakers cease to use it in adulthood and when entering the job-market? To investigate these three points fieldwork is done in two ethnically contrasted areas: one suburb with a heavy concentration of North-Africans (Nanterre 92), and one with French-Caribbean immigration (Créteil 94).

All precautions will be taken to meet appropriate ethical standards: in collecting the French data, we will follow the ethical procedures recommended by the CNRS.

3.2 MPF, crossing and code-switching

The emergent phenomena will be compared with the situation described in London through the existing projects. We will focus on specific features through which the acquisition of MPF can be demonstrated. We will also consider its evaluation by other speakers of French (Fagyal, 2010); the role of cultural productions, particularly youth radios (Fagyal 2004, Fiévet 2008), music, styles, raï and rap in propagating these varieties (Trimaille 1999, Auzanneau 2000). As in London, we will observe whether certain features of MPF are more widespread than others. We will contrast Franco-dominant districts with districts with heavy ethnic concentration and other districts of more mixed population. We will consider both the English and French data-sets in exploring features shared across
different ethnic groups, which originate in borrowing or code-switching from one group to another, including the majority population. Rampton (1995), who named this ‘crossing’, found it characteristic of adolescent, identity-marking speech. We will explore this phenomenon at different linguistic levels, including pronunciation and prosody, lexis and grammar. We will focus particularly on discourse markers, which appear particularly promising in London, and beyond that we will look at the discourse functions of crossing/switching, which in some communities have been found to be highly specific (Gardner-Chloros 2004c; Rampton 2006). As in London, we will explore to what extent changes characteristic of dialect levelling over the whole Parisian conurbation are also used by central Paris speakers, and if so which.

These features will be evaluated experimentally, through phonetic and other linguistic analysis; we assume that they function as markers of ethnicity and other social categories. Do speakers who are not from those ethnic origins notice particular features, and do they use them (or some of them) in assessing other speakers’ ethnicity (or other relevant social category)?

The table below provides examples from the London research, some of which have not yet been systematically examined, and from preliminary observations in France. We will focus on features allowing the comparability of the two data-sets.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature/level</th>
<th>Examples in English</th>
<th>Examples in French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>phonetic</td>
<td>Closer, fronter realization of vowel in <em>face</em> (<em>monophthongal for non-Anglos</em>) Non-Anglos leading the reversal of <em>h</em>-dropping Intervocalic <em>t</em> realized as glottal stop</td>
<td>Pronunciation of ‘r’ Palatalization and affrication of stops, particularly [t] and [k] Prosody, particularly rhythm and pace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>morphological</td>
<td>- <em>dem</em> plural (‘one of the boydem’); new ‘regular’ plurals (<em>mans</em> for ‘men’) Verb modifications: levelling of was /were</td>
<td>Lexical truncations Neutralisation of gender (<em>il</em> for ‘elle’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>syntactic</td>
<td>Omission of prepositions: <em>I’m going college</em> New interrogative frame ‘Why…. for’</td>
<td>Verb constructions (transitive/intransitive) <em>genre</em> for ‘comme’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lexical</td>
<td><em>yard</em> for home, <em>ends</em> for neighbourhood intensifiers (<em>bare</em>) adjectives (<em>sick</em> = good)</td>
<td>Verlan, borrowings (to which language?), ‘recycling’ of former argot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discourse</td>
<td>Extenders (<em>and stuff, and whatnot</em>) Variation between <em>you know</em> and <em>you get me</em> <em>Still</em> as a discourse marker</td>
<td>Extenders such as <em>pi tout / et tout</em> Discursive particle: <em>tu vois je veux dire</em> (single enunciation), <em>quoi</em> as a punctuation device Ways of introducing reported speech: <em>je sais qu’est-ce qu’il veut, je sais il veut quoi, il dit il</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Multicultural London English (MLE) / Multicultural Paris French (MPF)

| Quotatives:  | go, be LIKE, Tthis is + SPEAKER | veut, je sais il veut quoi, il dit il peut |
| Invariant tags: innit, yeah | Quotatives: faire GENRE, être là |
| Invariant tags/discourse markers: t'as vu instead of tu vois |

| pragmatic | Address terms: bruv and blood for friends/kin | Address terms: la famille, mon frère for friends/kin |
| Exclamations: oh my days! | Interjections/insults: sa race, ta mère |
| Greetings: wagwaan | Greetings: expressions with wesh / ouèche |

Table 1: Examples of comparable features in English and French

3.3. Franco-British comparison

We will compare (as far as possible) the new data with data from the earlier studies to determine whether MPF has emerged over the past 25 years, or if not which varieties have, and how. Our further objectives will be:

1. to compare both the processes and linguistic outcomes of multiculturalism in the two cities, focusing on its respective effects on the main local languages (English/French)

2. to assess the impact of different social and sociolinguistic factors in the two cities on the outcomes, and thereby to clarify the relevance of these factors on linguistic change in more general terms.
Our ultimate questions will be:

– whether there is a specific effect for metropolises such as capitals of large Western European states. We will compare the information available about London with that on other British cities, and what is found in Paris to what is known of other French cities (particularly Grenoble and Marseilles);

– whether particular types of network give rise to the relevant changes, e.g. inner v. outer city, girls’ v. boys’ networks, ethnically mixed v. ethnically concentrated. At a theoretical level, we will re-evaluate sociolinguistic descriptive and theoretical approaches describing or predicting which features are adopted, and which features are active in social identification (auto- and hetero-perception). We will investigate the extent to which discourse universal processes, for example to do with information processing or the construction of interpersonal relations, and processes resulting from language interaction and contact, are involved in innovation and change in the two cities.

3.4 Work in progress

In France, the initial stages of the project are being dedicated to data-gathering, starting with the choice of locations and subjects, selection of relevant sociolinguistic 'spaces' and empirical methods. Research assistants are responsible for approaching the relevant networks by snowball techniques (gender, social class, friendship groups, type of school). After informal contact is established between the RA and the youths, recordings are being made, in pairs, of people from different districts chosen for their ethnic composition. To facilitate the comparison with London, the aim is to focus on various districts within the chosen locations (i.e. ethnic-dominant, Franco-dominant and mixed) and on more mobile
and independent older adolescent groups (16-19), likely to have contacts with other networks.

Additional self-recordings are to be carried out without the investigator’s presence, in the light of contacts and the relationship of trust established during the initial stages of the project (so-called ‘ecological’ recordings). The size of the sample is intended to reflect that of the London data (at least 30 interviews in each location, 10 in each district of each, with as many boys as girls). Careful re-listening to the data and checking of transcriptions and coding will allow salient points of comparison to be determined. Transcriptions are time-aligned with the sound files (CLAN/LIDES system – see Gardner-Chloros et al. 2000) and double-checked by a transcriber different from the recorder.

In London, the 'Transcriber' system used for the English data is being converted to the CLAN/LIDES format, which allows detailed coding in tiers and direct use of SPSS and other tools. Adopting the use of this analytic software will not only ensure better comparability of the Franco-British data, but also enhance international visibility. It has been agreed that in the conversion of transcripts, priority should be given to speakers with a bilingual/multilingual background, especially from the point of view of language contact, believed to be an influential factor related to innovation and change.

As a first stage in getting to grips with the multicultural data, a study is being carried out of commonalities between the innovations in ostensibly monolingual speech (MLE), and linguistic sites where code-switching occurs in various communities, which also often correspond with discourse markers and quotative points in the sentence (Gardner-Chloros and Secova, 2011).
Throughout the project, confirmation of trends identified is cross-checked through comparison with data already available but not collected through this particular project in various communities (e.g. Guerin 2009; Fagyal 2010), while the recordings/transcriptions continue to be examined for comparable linguistic features (see Table 1 above) and other relevant phenomena such as imitation, crossing and metalinguistic comments. Official meetings between the Paris and London teams are organised at least once a year with the aim of discussing the progress of work, while informal meetings are held more regularly.

At a later stage, the patterning of linguistic features across social parameters will be analysed quantitatively for phonetic, grammatical, lexical and discursive features, and qualitatively for all phenomena. Code-switching and crossing will be specifically coded. As in London, the notion of 'ethnicity' as a part of identity will be explored in Paris qualitatively as well as being used in the quantitative analysis, along with the ethnic composition of social networks. In the final stages of the project, a report will be produced. The results will also be presented at a number of conferences beginning with the Leiden Conference on ‘Rethinking Language Contact’ in June 2011. They will also be published as special issues of two linguistics journals. Both teams will be equally involved in drawing out comparisons between the two data-sets and in investigating the differences/similarities between results in the two settings.

3.5. Complementarity
Most members in both teams have already worked together on issues of common interest. Complementarity between the English and the French teams is ensured by their involvement and expertise in their national situations. There is also some methodological complementarity: the emphasis in British sociolinguistics is, overall, more quantitative and variationist – though this is by no means total (see joint papers by Cheshire and Gardner-Chloros which are more qualitative). In
France a more qualitative-oriented sociolinguistics has held sway. We plan to exploit the best of both approaches.

3.6. International collaboration

Senior members of both teams have taken part in international collaboration: Gardner-Chloros was a member of a CNRS Team and was instrumental in setting up the European Foundation Network on Code-switching and Language Contact. Gadet is involved in an ANR/DFG Franco/German project (2008).

The project will constitute a – probably unique – opportunity for Franco-British collaboration and comparison in Sociolinguistics, with specialized teams who are able to draw out issues of common academic interest and significant policy-related implications.
Bibliography


Gardner-Chloros, Penelope and Secova, Maria (2011) ‘Contact-induced change in monolingual and bilingual speech’; Paper to be given at the conference on Rethinking Language Contact, Leiden, 9-11 June 2011.


Appendix 1: London
Appendix 2: Paris