

## ACCOUNTING FOR DIGLOSSIA IN FRANCE: SECOND GRAMMAR, 'BOLT ON', OR VIRUS?

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Collaborative project with Benjamin Massot (LMU Munich).

Special issue, *Journal of French Language Studies*, March 2013: 'L'hypothèse d'une diglossie en France'. Contributors include Katerina Palasis, Anne Zribi-Hertz, Mario Barra-Jover, Anne-José Villeneuve, Julie Auger, Jacqueline Billiez, Laurence Buson.

Uncontroversial observations:

1. There is variation .
2. Some of it is sociostylistic.

Massot's (2008) claim: variation does not involve combining L and H features (cf. Coveney 2011).

Research question: How is accounted for in minds?

Massot's explanation = diglossia (Ferguson 1959): speakers possess two distinct 'French' grammars, G1 (H) and G2 (L):

Marked H Z1	Unmarked Z2	Marked L Z3
G1 (H)		G2 (L)

Rowlett: It does not make sense to view G1 and G2 as two autonomous grammars.

Rather, only one autonomous grammar (= G2). G1 = dependent grammatical 'bolt on'.

Where G1 features cannot be accounted for in this way, assume account based on viruses (Sobin 1997).

Organised as follows: §2 phonological variation; §3 diglossia; §4 relationship between Massot's two grammars ; §5 the 'bolt-on' and virus alternatives; §6 issues; §7 concluding remarks.

### 2. (PHONOLOGICAL) VARIATION IN FRENCH

Massot (2008:87): intra-speaker variation.

One very familiar example from phonology: optional (as opposed to compulsory or impossible) liaison ([french.about.com/library/pronunciation/bl-liaisons-o.htm](http://french.about.com/library/pronunciation/bl-liaisons-o.htm)):

- (1) After plural nouns:  
les hommes arrivent  
des livres utiles

- (2) Between auxiliary and main verb:  
 Je suis allé  
 Ils onté eu  
 Tu vasé aller
- (3) Present tense of *être* + complement:  
 il esté idiot  
 il esté heureux  
 il esté ici
- (4) After multi-syllable adverbs and prepositions:  
 assezé utile  
 tellementé avare  
 aprèsé être venu  
 depuisé un an
- (5) Some conjunctions:  
 maisé enfin  
 puisé on est arrivé
- (6) After verbs:  
 Ils arriveronté à midi  
 Elle prendé un livre

Omission is usual; liaison realised only in careful speech.

See Zribi-Hertz (2011:236–7) for wider range. Phonological simplification: ks+C (*expliquer*), C+r# and C+l# (*quat'*, *rentab'*), *il(s)* and *elle(s)* ([ipaɛl], [ɛpaɛl]).

Variation ≠ sociolinguistically free. Variants = more or less strongly marked H or L.

Correlations: a speaker doesn't combine marked L and marked H within single clause (Massot 2008: 261); single-speaker corpus.

Massot's own idiolect (based on intuitions): distribution of back/front low vowel in negative *pas*, liaison in negative *pas/plus*, [ɪ] in *plus*, absence/presence of negative *ne*:

- (7) Negative *pas*: [a] or [ɑ]; optional liaison; *pas encore*

	G2 (L)		
		↓	
	Liaison	No liaison	
a	paʒɑ̃kɔv	paɑ̃kɔv	← G1 (H)
ɑ	*paʒɑ̃kɔv	paɑ̃kɔv	

Massot (2008: 269)

- (8) Negative *plus*: [ɪ] or ∅; optional liaison; *p(l)us ici*

	G2		
		↓	
	Liaison	No liaison	
ɪ	plyzisi	plyisi	← G1
∅	*pyzisi	pyisi	

Massot (2008: 271)

- (9) Negative *pas*: [a] or [ɑ]; optional *ne*; (n')*ai pas*

	<i>Ne</i>	No <i>ne</i>	
a	nepa	epa	-G1
ɑ	*nepɑ	epɑ	

Massot (2008: 273)

- (10) Negative *plus*: [l] or ∅; optional *ne*; (n')*ai p(l)us*

	<i>Ne</i>	No <i>ne</i>	
l	neply	eply	-G1
∅	*nepy	epy	

Massot (2008: 273)

### 3. FRANCE AS DIGLOSSIC

Massot (2008): two grammars, *Français démotique* (FD) and *Français classique tardif* (FCT):

- (11) a. *Français démotique* (FD) (= G2 (L)): innovative but socially stigmatised vernacular; acquired early in naturalistic environment; stable, active competence; one set of features which generate unmarked forms and marked L forms.
- b. *Français classique tardif* (FCT) (= G1 (H)): conservative, more prestigious, learnt later, more formal context, influence of schooling/literacy; conscious instruction from caregivers; normative tradition; not necessarily to same degree of stability (passive competence), uncertainty and hypercorrection; (partially) different set of features which generate unmarked forms and marked H forms.
- c. speakers switch between grammars but don't access both simultaneously

FD and FCT: extensive overlap; some forms = generated by both grammars; unmarked; uniquely FCT forms = prestigious, valued, normative (H); uniquely FD forms = stigmatised, non-normative (L).

- (12) Massot's own idiolect (based on intuitions) (2008: 274):

	← FCT →		X
	X	← FD →	
Negative <i>ne</i> vs. ∅	<i>ne</i>		∅
[z] vs ∅ in <i>pas/plus</i>	[z]	∅	
[l] vs. ∅ in <i>plus</i>		[l]	∅
[a] vs. [ɑ] in <i>pas</i>		[a]	[ɑ]
	Z1 (prestigious)	Z2 (unmarked)	Z3 (stigmatised)

(13) Massot's informant (based on corpus) (2008: 310):

	← FCT →		X
	X	← FD →	
Negative <i>ne</i> vs. $\emptyset$	<i>ne</i>		$\emptyset$
1PL ' <i>nous</i> ' vs. <i>on</i>	<i>'nous'</i>		<i>on</i>
<i>il y a</i> vs. $\emptyset y a$	<i>il y a</i>		$\emptyset y a$
<i>il faut</i> vs. $\emptyset faut$		<i>il faut</i>	$\emptyset faut$
Topical subject doubling	Not doubled		Doubled
Non-topical subject doubling		Not doubled	Doubled
Liaison with <i>être</i>	Yes	No	
	Z1 (prestigious)	Z2 (unmarked)	Z3 (stigmatised)

Massot: only one grammar accessible at any one time; choice made on the basis of sociolinguistic assessment of context; crucially: marked L features (column Z3 below) therefore not combined with marked H features (column Z1 below); pattern above = expected.

## 4. TWO GRAMMARS OR NOT TWO GRAMMARS?

Two-grammar model = too powerful because of: (a) overlap; (b) non-overlap; (c) cognitive status.

### 4.1 Overlap

Overlap = massive, covering all grammatical levels (as well as lexicon). FD and FCT aren't commonly distinguished as discrete systems (cf. standard and dialectal Arabic).

Raises question of how similar grammars can be while remaining distinct in minds of acquirers and users. Acquirers already have FD and need reliably to notice, through exposure (inc. formal schooling), surface distinctiveness above threshold quality/quantity to conclude that data was output of distinct system. If acquirers/users have two grammars, why are they so similar?

### 4.2 Non-overlap

Distinct grammars potentially differ randomly, re points of grammar where differences are located, and re precise nature of each difference.

BUT non-overlap between FD and FCT don't all appear random; some appear to fit general pattern.

Gadet (1997): FD not = simplified version of FCT, but FD characterised in terms of *séquence progressive*, fixed word order, analyticity, invariability (in comparison with FCT).

Use of labels 'conservative' for FCT and 'innovative' for FD; labels = relative, suggestive that FD = diachronic development of FCT.

E.g. *est-ce que*.

E.g. bipartite and postverbal negation.

E.g. reanalysis of subject proforms as agreement markers (van Gelderen 2011:38ff.).

E.g. phonological simplification.

Question: if FD and FCT = two independent grammars, then why does so much of contrast appear amenable to single overarching generalisation?

### **4.3 Cognitive status of FCT**

Acquisition of FD suggests it's cognitively 'real'; for FCT it doesn't: not acquired early in naturalistic environment; dependent on literacy and formal schooling; competence sometimes only passive; characterised by uncertainty and hypercorrection. Cf. Ferguson's notion of diglossia as relatively stable co-existence.

Doubt re cognitive reality and coherence of FCT for years (Bauche 1928; Côté 1999). FCT = subject of artificial interference from *Académie française*.

Question: Can FCT really be thought of as (output of) separate, independent grammar?

## **5. ALTERNATIVES TO TWO GRAMMARS**

### **5.1 Grammatical 'bolt on'**

Basic idea: child = initially exposed to PLD in naturalistic context and acquires FD.

Later, child notices subtly different kind of linguistic input, and uses FCT patterns.

Child develops sensitivity to marked status of FCT.

Child notices that (some of the marked features of) FCT ≠ randomly different from FD. Child notices that (some of the marked features of) FCT = predecessor to FD, and defines nature of FD–FCT relationship.

Therefore, child doesn't need to posit/acquire full FCT grammar alongside FD. Instead, child can define/acquire how FCT compares to FD.

= (small?) set of different parameter settings = grammatical 'bolt on': (a) not defined autonomously in absolute terms, but only relative to FD; (b) more concise/economical than full grammar.

Grammatical 'bolt on' encodes FCT differences only, not identity.

FCT acquisition therefore = acquisition of 'bolt on' rather than second grammar. Steps in (14) not needed:

- (14) a. creating second grammar initially by copying first  
 b. modifying copy as required, to take account of problematic input, and  
 c. maintaining two grammars independently of each other and indefinitely, not only re differences, but also re overlap.

FD–FCT alternation not = switching between two grammars, but (dis)engaging grammatical 'bolt on'.

Answers to questions above =

- (15) a. FCT = similar to FD because, rather than being autonomous grammar, FCT has FD at

core, and differs only to limited extent specified by grammatical 'bolt on'.

- b. (some) FD–FCT differences  $\neq$  random because = 'micro' expression of 'macro' parametric difference within grammatical 'bolt on'.
- c. FCT  $\neq$  independent grammar.

Key notion: FD = central; FCT = peripheral.

## 5.2 Grammatical viruses

Two problems with FCT grammatical 'bolt on' on its own:

Problem (1): if single core grammar [FD] and single grammatical 'bolt on' [FCT], then expect common sociostylistic contrast; expectation not met:

- (16)
- a. Jean (ne) vient pas.
  - b. Jean (il) arrive demain.
  - c. Est-il parti? / Est-ce qu'il est parti?
  - d. (Ah) que tu es belle! / Qu'est-ce que tu es belle!
  - e. Nous allons partir. / On va partir.
  - f. les lettres que j'ai écrit(e)s
  - g. si elle avait pu . . . / si elle eût pu . . .
  - h. si elle avait su . . . / si elle aurait su . . .
  - i. la robe que je me suis fait(e) faire

Problem (2): if grammatical 'bolt on' = alternative parameter settings, then expect FCT to be as UG-constrained as FD, i.e., should be 'natural'.

Evidence that it's not: past-participle agreement:

Ian MacKenzie (unpublished ms): 'prescriptive artefact', 'carefully self-monitored registers', "primarily a component of orthographical competence", 'mastery often delayed until secondary schooling or beyond', 'does not reflect undisturbed language change, but stems from an arbitrary codification of variable usage introduced . . . in the 16th century'.

Kayne (1975: 101 fn 55) (cited in MacKenzie ms): 'permeated with a great deal of artificiality'.

1900: Georges Leygues, Minister for Public Instruction, 'il paraît inutile de s'obstiner à maintenir artificiellement une règle qui n'est qu'une cause d'embarras dans l'enseignement' (cited in Arrivé 1994: 71–2, and in MacKenzie ms).

Grevisse: 'passablement artificiel'.

Ian MacKenzie: where language pedagogy and normative tradition conflict with unconscious language acquisition, we get 'pseudo-rules', grammatical viruses: 'participle–object agreement is a virus'.

Grammatical viruses (Sobin 1997): constructions in prestigious English which speakers have difficulty acquiring and controlling; linguistically deviant, product of **grammar-external rules, called grammatical viruses, spread via schools**; use of constructions = product of conscious editing.

- (17)
- a. Mary and I/me left early.
  - b. It was I/me.
  - c. Mary is richer than I/me.
  - d. The are/'s books on the table.
  - e. The are/'s/is a cat and a dog in the yard.

Lasnik & Sobin (2000) re *whom*: ‘derives from a set of extragrammatical rules called “grammatical viruses”. Such virus-licensed products have a ‘prestige’ status, they are not typical of child language, and the intuitions about their use are strikingly different from intuitions about the use of other grammatical elements that they are traditionally claimed to work along the lines of.’

Cf. split infinitives, dangling prepositions, *an historical* (with fully pronounced [h]) in English.

Felber (2004): grammatical viruses: “ad hoc rules created by speakers in an attempt to mimic prestige input received, for example, through prescription”; “grammatical virus rules can be stated without reference to objects internal to the grammar, and cannot actually carry out grammatical operations”.

Larrivée (2012): negative doubling (use of main negator *pas* with clause-mate n-word: *\*!/?/?/?/!!!! a pas rien fait*; cf. *Il a plus rien fait*) found throughout history of French; stigmatisation from 17th c onwards; ten times more common in Quebec Fr than Fr Fr; ‘a learned local conversion rule that would ban the PF realisation of *pas* with clause-mate n-words applying to the vernacular grammar’, ‘learned in normative varieties’, rule not found in language structure itself, but in arbitrary normative considerations spreading across relevant communities.

Larrivée (2012): ‘This paper elucidates the question of how many grammars are needed to account for the relation between high and low stylistic varieties of a language. It proposes that such a relation can be established by local conversion rules that operate on the vernacular grammar [= FD] to produce the normative manifestations [= FCT]’, ‘the vernacular is the basic grammar from which normative practices derive’.

Evidence for this approach: existence of explicit normative material.

- (18) Sobin’s features of viruses:
- lexical specificity: *ne, p(l)us*
  - directionality: past-participle agreement
  - under-extension: outlawed negative doubling sometimes found, esp. if *pas* and n-word are distant, and under performance pressure, or with emotional subjects
  - over-extension: *et ainsi, moi z avec* (pataqués: *Je ne sais pas [t] à qui est-ce), tu peux-t-avoir, mal-t-à propos; moi-z-aussi, cent-z-euros* (cf. *deux cents euros, donne-moi-z’en*)
  - late acquisition: MacKenzie on past-participle agreement: ‘internalised late, if at all’; Larrivée re negative doubling: children double negatives until introduced to normative varieties during schooling

Viruses are lexically specific, hence can have differing strengths, hence the FCT–FD variant pairs can have different socio-stylistic statuses.

Orthographic viruses: *Parle-lui!* vs. *Parles-en!, événement*

Pre-AP *tout* agreement: ‘orthographic conventions . . . artificial, unstable and counterintuitive’ (Rowlett 2007:51).

Miller *et al.* (1997): facts can be explained by ignoring spelling and looking at spoken language: *tout* = [tu] in M contexts before a consonant, as in (19a), [tut] in M contexts before a vowel, as in (19b), and [tut] in F contexts, irrespective of whether adjective = consonant (19c) or vowel initial (19d):

- (19) a. *tout petit(s)* M.SG/PL [tup(ə)ti] ‘very small’  
 b. *tout étroit(s)* M.SG/PL [tutetɔwa] ‘very narrow’  
 c. *toute petite(s)* F.SG/PL [tutp(ə)tit] ‘very small’  
 d. *tout étroite(s)* F.SG/PL [tutetɔwat] ‘very narrow’

[tus] and [tuts] = never found, even with PL APs (20a, b):





Speaker (dis)engages FCT 'bolt on', or respects grammatical virus, in line with socio-stylistic evaluation of situation and/or the closeness of their self-monitoring.

Next steps: detailed content of 'bolt on'/virus; nature of acquisition vs. learning. Challenge = to push economy approach to the FD–FCT relationship as far as possible.

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