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## Chapter 10

### Variation, Identity and Language Attitudes: Polish Migrants in France<sup>1</sup>

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#### Abstract

This chapter examines migrants' use of French L2, analysing the speech of ten L1 Polish speakers, thirty to sixty years, in a naturalistic setting. Using informal conversations, this study focuses on L1 variation patterns; specifically *ne* deletion, a sensitive and powerful indicator of social issues using Rbrul. The data permit comparison of use of the same sociolinguistic variable by L2 speakers from two different L1 typological groups, Polish, and English. The analysis showed the migrants broadly adopt L1 speech patterns, constraint ordering, and frequently even rates (as had the more formal L1 English learners) with universalistic implications for sociolinguistic variation acquisition. However, two couples are 'outliers.' Qualitative analysis indicates that differences in the speech of these two couples relate to language attitudes and ideology and suggests language ideology plays an important role in L2 acquisition and use. Complementary quantitative and qualitative analyses reveal aspects of L2 acquisition, which, separately, might not have been captured.

**Key words:** French, language attitudes, language ideology, identity, migration, 'ne' deletion  
Polish migrants

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## Introduction<sup>2</sup>

### Language Variation, Migration and Superdiversity

The 21st century has seen a complexification of individuals' lives resulting from what has variously been referred to as 'translocality' (Greiner and Sakdapolrak 2013), 'liquid modernity' (Bauman 2000), 'global complexity' (Urry 2002), and especially 'superdiversity' (Vertovec 2007). Parkin (2016) characterises the term 'superdiversity' as descriptive rather than theoretical and argues for its power in addressing the complexity of the migrant experience in the 21st century, which results from geopolitical events on one hand, and, on the other, an explosion in technology and social media. For whatever reasons, we are experiencing, as never before, mass migration. For migrants, the barriers are fewer, and the opportunity costs for mobility less. Any overly simplistic perspective is problematic, or at least insufficient, in accounting for this new global situation. The term 'migrant' is a broad category today. There are, for example, asylum seeking migrants, 'cultural' migrants, economic migrants, 'traditional' migrants who travel from one place to another and settle there, and 'serial' migrants who, if they settle at all, do so only after multiple intermediate sojourns.

Which approach to capture this complexity, which involves history, society and identity? Language is a powerful lens through which to interrogate the experience of migration. Language practices can index the trajectory of those negotiating their constantly changing identities. It would seem that speakers do indeed use language to index and even create identit(ies), including their own history, their aspirations for the future and their childrens' future, and this process is dynamic and constantly evolving, even from interaction to interaction. Consequently many researchers feel the need to be alert to the emerging meanings from each interaction as it evolves,

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<sup>2</sup> My thanks to Robert Bayley for his welcome application of Rbul to the data set for this paper; his thoughtful questions and suggestions and his careful editing of the chapter.

rather than starting with *a priori* assumptions about the elements of the interaction.

In this context, within variationist sociolinguistics, an ethnographic and emergentist approach has served increasingly to interrogate language use, combining quantitative data with a sensitivity to issues emerging from qualitative data. Although the discourse turn in linguistics is by no means new (Stubbs 1983), the use of qualitative, discursual data has seen considerable recent growth in L1 studies of the role of attitudes and ideologies in language variation and change (e.g., Niedzielski and Preston 2003) and has emerged in SLA contexts as well (e.g., Kalaja and Barcelos 2003). In this line of research, quantitative analysis provides evidence of tendencies in the speakers' language practices, and qualitative analysis can provide useful indications as to which features are important in the analysis, sometimes by zeroing in on individual speakers (for example, Regan 2013).

### Migration and Identity Construction

People constantly engage in the process of identity construction, finding a place for themselves in the social world by negotiating their positions in intersecting communities in which they participate. Migrants using an L2 or other languages, are even more intensely caught in the maelstrom of different communities as they cross borders of various kinds – geographical, psychological and social. By the nature of the multiple worlds they inhabit and the fluidity of their relationships with these worlds, the process must be managed with subtlety.

An additional element for transnational speakers is that the linguistic 'bricolage' (Eckert 2012) in which L1 speakers engage to construct identities is, in their case, more complex. They may use a 'truncated' language and they may use language forms with functions different from those of L1 speakers. Paying attention to language practices can therefore be a useful tool for

charting their choices, providing connections between choice in language elements and identity as well as migrants aspirations. Language variation is necessarily intimately bound up with such choices, both in what is perceived to be available to the speaker, as well as most powerful in constructing the desired identity of the moment. In addition, depending on speakers' attitudes to language and their connections to how they see their future lives unfolding, they may choose to use the elements of language differently from more traditional speakers of the same language.

This chapter focuses on the speech of Polish born migrants in France. The data described is from ten first language (L1) Polish speakers living in France. These speakers are a subset of a larger group of participants in a wider study of migration involving L1 Polish speakers. Participants in this wider study live in Ireland and France, in urban and non-urban settings. They are also of different generations of migration; some are long-time residents in Ireland and France, some are recent arrivals in both countries (for more detailed descriptions of the larger project, see, for example, Regan, Nestor, and Ni Chasaide 2012; Regan and Debaene 2013; Regan 2016). The multi-site design of the wider study, and the inclusion of multiple generations of migrants, aim to address, in horizontal as well as vertical layers, in chronological as well as spatial perspectives, the complexity of the migration experience today, in relation to one particular diaspora, Polonia.

The participants emigrated to France during three different migration 'waves': post World War Two, Solidarity (1980-1990), and more recent migration. They range in age from approximately thirty to sixty years, and acquired French in a naturalistic setting with little formal classroom learning. This study sought to describe their language practices in France and what these indicate about their migrant experience. In the first instance, the study focuses on their variation patterns, especially their use of a particular sociolinguistic variable, *ne* deletion or retention, a sensitive and powerful indicator of many social issues in French. In a second phase,

this study explores the wider/deeper implications of the quantitative results and uses a qualitative approach to more fully account for some aspects of these results.

#### Variation in L2 Speech and Individual Variation

Individual variation among the participant speakers was shown by quantitative analysis. A closer look at the speech of two couples suggested a focus on their discussion about their own use of the French language. This focus emerged from evidence that they spent a considerable amount of time talking about French, although this was not a topic that the interviewers focused on, or even raised. What they said suggests their attitudes to French, how these relate to their own use of French and ultimately how language attitudes and wider language ideology issues linked with notions of identity, self-determination and future plans. It touches also on the issue of individual variation in L2 data.

Individual variation has been a theme in SLA literature almost since its inception, evoked in general overviews of the field (for example Ellis 1994; Myles and Mitchell 1998), and in individual studies (Dewaele and Furnham 2000; Regan 1995). Individual variation is taken as a given, but quantitative studies of L2 speakers, often dealing in aggregates of large numbers of speakers and large amounts of data, are sometimes said to ‘swallow up’ the detail of individual behaviour. These issues have been addressed, for example, by Bayley and Langman (2004) and Regan (2004), who show, using variationist data, that individual variation patterns frequently follow group patterns. Sometimes, however, qualitative investigation of the data relating to individual speakers who do not follow group patterns and may seem anomalous can be revealing and enriching to the overall final analysis of the data. Analysis of *ne* deletion by Polish speakers in Regan (2013) reveals general group patterns, but intriguing individual differences suggested

the need for further probing. Of interest, also, is to see if the patterns of the Polish L2 speakers are similar to those of English speakers already studied in relation to the same linguistic variable, *ne* deletion, especially given the considerable typological differences between Polish and English.

### **The Study: Poles in France**

Emigration has been a staple feature of Polish societal landscape for at least two hundred years. Poles have emigrated to France in great numbers for centuries and the French *Polonia* is estimated to be close to a million. Only the United States has received greater numbers of Polish immigrants than France. Migration to France is often divided into two main periods. The first, post-World War Two migration, when Poles came in significant numbers to the mining regions in Alsace and northern France. The motivation was economic and employment was in mining and agriculture. This study deals with the second, post-1980 migration, which itself consists of two phases: before 1989 and afterwards. Migration from 1980 to 1989 is often called ‘Solidarity migration.’ Many people left Poland during and after martial law (1981–1983), when the Communist Party then in government, enabled one-way cross-border movement. Migrants who came to France before 1989 usually intended to settle there permanently. After the collapse of the Iron Curtain in 1989, migrants to France intended to stay for a few years only, save enough money to invest in Poland, and then return. Such intentions were not always fulfilled, as is the case of the couples who are the focus of this chapter. Each couple is from one of two French research sites (Paris and a northern provincial city). The second French town chosen is in one of the northern mining regions where many Poles had settled in the 19th century in a ‘chain migration’ pattern. The participants in the wider study emigrated to France between 1960 and 1995. Their length of residence varies from fifteen to forty years at the time of interview. Their

ages ranged from forty to seventy and they worked in a range of different occupations.

The broader project investigated language as an indicator of integration. It is understood that integration is not always an aim of migrants, but it is frequently seen as a goal by government agencies and the education system of many host countries. The sociology literature, for instance, frequently cites language as one of the most important indicators of integration. The acquisition and use of the L2 can certainly be used as an instrument for gauging degrees of integration and/or inclusion, the stances of the speakers in relation to integration and, ultimately, a fuller picture of migrants' lives. There is, however, no simple relationship between language use and practices and integration. This relationship is complex and shifting and needs to be approached in a way which is sensitive to each situation. There can be significant variation in the way the migrants, and also the receiving countries and institutions, perceive 'integration'.

### **Methodology**

The participant speakers were interviewed in their own home, place of work or in public spaces, cafés and restaurants which they frequented habitually. The interviews were semi-structured conversations. The participants were told that the researchers were interested in migration and their experience of it, and so they frequently recounted their personal stories of migration, present or past. Several told of their life in Poland; some of the older people told stories of the Second World War. Many talked about leaving Poland and their families and friends, migrating to France, and others of parents or relatives who had come to France in previous generations.

Each interaction lasted at least two hours, and involved two interviewers, one Irish (the author) and one Polish (a colleague working on the project). In addition, meetings had been held earlier by the Polish interviewer; this elicited biographical data and additional reflections, in



Polish, on integration and the experience of migration. Both sets of interviews were analysed and the data integrated in the final analysis. The interviews were transcribed, coded and analysed using Rbrul (Johnson 2009), a specialized application of logistic regression.<sup>3</sup>

#### The Variable: *ne* Deletion

Deletion and retention of *ne* is a stable variable in spoken French. French negates using two particles, one before the verb and the other after. French speakers have variably deleted the first particle *ne* since the Middle Ages (for example, see Martineau and Mougeon 2003). Today, deletion rates are very high and also stable in spoken French; *ne* deletion is a feature the L2 speaker would hear frequently. *Ne* is not traditionally deleted in written French and this is emphasised in educational settings in France (although *ne* deletion has become more common in informal written French used in SMS messaging and online media conversations).

Deletion or retention of *ne*, as mentioned previously, is a significant indicator of formality, power and solidarity, style, register, and variationist research shows that it has a network of relationships with sociolinguistic factors such as age, gender and social class (Armstrong and Smith 2002; Armstrong 2002). It often co-occurs with other such stable sociolinguistically sensitive variables in French, as *tu/vous* alternation or *on* as opposed to *vous* and *nous*. It is certainly a feature of which French speakers (L1 and others) would be aware, and probably invest with considerable significance. Given the very high level of omission of *ne* and the very low retention rates (it is sometimes described as ‘insertion’), the retention of *ne* is the more marked variant. It could be surmised that the L2 speakers would notice this feature and perhaps make a choice of insertion, where they felt appropriate, for stylistic or emphatic

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<sup>3</sup> My thanks to Isabelle Lemée for her help with the transcription and coding.

purposes.

Based on previous research on first language (L1) and L2 speakers (Ashby 1981, 2001; Dewaele and Regan 2002; Regan 1996; Sankoff and Vincent 1980), the factor groups hypothesised to constrain the variability in the deletion of *ne* in the data were: lexicalisation, following phonological segment, preceding phonological segment, subject of sentence, subject of verb, verb type, and presence/absence of clitic (Table 1). For this study, specific speaker factors relevant for migration processes were also included, such as length of residence, and language proficiency.<sup>4</sup> In addition, individual speakers were modelled as a random effect.

**Table 1.** Factor groups with examples from the corpus (alternative, without ‘*ne*’ deletion, in brackets; English translation underneath)

Factor Group	Factor	Example
Gender	Male	
	Female	
Age	>50 <sup>5</sup>	
	<50	
Following segment	Vowel	<i>Maintenant il [n']est pas bien avec Atena</i> ‘Now he’s not good friends with Atena’
	Consonant	<i>Je [ne] savais pas quoi</i> ‘I didn’t know like’
Preceding segment	Vowel	<i>Tu [ne] fais pas la tête pour ça</i> ‘You’re not going to sulk just for that’
	Consonant	<i>Elle [n']a pas dit pauvre</i> She didn’t say poor thing
Structure of verb	Main	<i>Je [ne] souviens plus le prix</i> ‘I can’t remember the price any more’
	Copula	<i>À 5 heures c’[e n]est pas possible</i> ‘At 5 o clock it’s not possible’
	Modal/Auxiliary	<i>Je [ne] peux pas dire quelle note</i> ‘I can’t say what mark’

<sup>4</sup> Occurrences such as “*ils ne parlaient que polonnais,*” and all infinitival propositions (“*de ne pas sortir*”) were excluded, as were consecutive repetitions of the negative particle, geminates such as “*on entend pas,*” “*on en veut pas, personne n’en veut.*” Where such cases were retained, they were counted as presence of *ne*.

<sup>5</sup> Based on the existing literature, it was likely that age would be a significant factor in the acquisition of *ne* deletion. (For example, Singleton and Ryan 2004; Labov 2001) Current age was divided into two groups; younger than 50 and older than 50; this dividing line was indicated as potentially influential during initial interviews. Age related influences were also captured by coding for age of arrival, duration of residence in France.

Clause type	Main	<i>Je[ne] voulais pas repasser et parler</i> 'I didn't want to go back and talk'
	Subordinate	<i>Parce que au début c'[e n']était pas possible</i> 'Because at the beginning it wasn't possible'
Subject	Pronoun	<i>J'[n']ai pas encore fini l'école pour aujourd'hui</i> 'I haven't finished school for today'
	Noun	<i>L'armée de résistance ne voulait pas le reconnaître</i> 'The resistance army wouldn't accept him'
	Zero	<i>Ne fermez surtout pas cette institution!</i> 'Above all don't close this institution !'
Object clitic	Zero	<i>Les agences polonaises [ne] sont pas tout à fait honnêtes</i> 'The Polish agencies are not altogether honest'
	Present	<i>Le Polonais il[ne] se tient pas ensemble</i> 'The Poles don't hang together'
Lexicalization	Non-lexicalized phrase	<i>Ils [ne] téléphonent pas chez nous pour la chercher</i> 'They don't telephone us to come and get her'
	Lexicalized phrase	<i>C'[n']est pas toujours ça ; il [ne] faut pas faire ça ; il [n'] y a pas ; je[ne] sais pas.</i> 'its not always that '; 'you mustn't do that'; 'There is'; 'I don't know'
Length of residence	Post WW2 (1945–) (1981-1983) Recent (1989 –) Fall of communism	

## Results

Tables 2 and 3 present the results of the quantitative analysis. Table 2 shows the results for all fixed effects that reached significance. Factor groups that failed to reach statistical significance (gender, age, length of residence) are not included. Table 2 includes both log odds and Rbrul factor weights. It also includes as the number of tokens and percentage of deletion for each factor, as well as the overall number of tokens, percentage of deletion, and the Rbrul input value, or corrected mean. The log odds in a factor group sum to zero, with positive values indicating that the factor favours use of the application value, in this case *ne* deletion, and a negative value indicating that the factor group disfavors the application value. Rbrul weights provide similar information. Weights between .5 and 1.0, like positive log odds, indicate that the factor favours the application value and weights between 0 and .5 indicated that the factor disfavors use of the

factor. Both measures, however, need to be interpreted in relation to the overall use of the application value by the speakers in the model. For example, the speakers whose data is examined here omitted *ne* at a rate of 81.4% (Rbrul input = .787). Thus, even though speakers omitted *ne* in the majority of instances where *ne* could be used in a subordinate clause, subordinate clauses are still said to disfavour deletion because speakers deleted *ne* at a rate of 71.9% (log odds =  $-0.425$ , weight = .395), compared to a 83.5% deletion rate for main clauses (log odds =  $0.425$ , weight = .695). Table 3 shows the results for individual speakers and includes intercepts and weights as well as the number of tokens and percentage of deletion by each speaker.

The Polish speakers of French L2 have an 81.4% deletion rate, which is similar to French L1 rates noted earlier (Coveney 1998; Armstrong and Smith 2002). On the whole, the constraint ordering is similar to L1 constraint order. Only in one factor was there a difference. In the case of lexicalisation, the Polish speaker order is the reverse of L1 speaker order. However, on the one hand, while constraint hierarchies were similar to native speaker patterns, on the other hand, the rates are variable according to individual speakers. Inter-individual variation is to be expected in L2 speakers, as noted.

**Table 2.** Ne deletion by Polish L2 speakers of French

Factor Group	Factor	Logodds	N	%	Weight	<i>P</i>
Subject	Pronoun	1.059	966	85.1	.743	2.1e-22
	Zero	0.862	39	84.6	.703	
	Noun	-1.922	72	30.6	.128	
Lexicalization	Non-lexicalized phrase	0.735	876	82.3	.676	2.65e-08
	Lexicalized phrase	-0.735	201	77.6	.324	
Object clitic	Zero	0.764	155	91.6	.682	6.84e-06
	Present	-0.764	922	79.7	.318	
Following phonological segment	Consonant	0.410	571	83.5	.601	3.61e-05
	Vowel	-0.410	506	79.1	.399	
Clause	Main	0.425	881	83.5	.695	0.000144
	Subordinate	-0.425	196	71.9	.395	

Total	Input		1077	81.4	.787
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Notes: Log likelihood = -408.043, df 8, intercept = 1.31.

**Table 3.** Speakers, social characteristics, and individual results

ID	Age	Gender	Arrival	Intercept	N	% Deletion	Weight
K	45	M	1982	1.193	73	98.6	.810
I	16	F	Born in France	1.000	30	100.0	.805
H	55	M	1980	0.912	33	93.9	.725
C	40	F	1990	0.961	154	96.1	.706
F	38	F	1992	0.460	6	100.0	.627
J	60	F	1982	-0.092	125	88.0	.492
B	40-45	M	Arrived age 8	-0.868	62	75.8	.308
A	60	M	1983	-0.933	212	75.5	.294
E	41	F	1992	-1.085	151	76.2	.264
D	42	M	1989	-1.251	48	70.8	.233
G	50	F	1983	-1.355	183	67.8	.215
Std dev				1.193	1077	81.4	

Specifically in relation to the factors proposed to constrain the variation, the following effects were observed. Results for ‘following sound segment’ were in the expected direction: the Polish speakers follow the constraint pattern of native speakers in relation to this factor and omit *ne* more often when the following segment begins with a consonant. As Ashby (1976) points out, the fact that a following vowel disfavours deletion is in accord with universal CV structure. Syntactic structure of the verb showed that the Polish speakers omitted *ne* significantly more when using a copula than modals or auxiliaries. Clause type was significant and similar to L1 and L2 usage in French in previous studies: Ashby, for L1 speakers, found main clause deleted .70 and subordinate .40, and Regan (1996), for L2 speakers who spent a year abroad in France, found main clause deleted .64 and subordinate clause .32. The Polish speakers in the present study show the same constraint order: main .69, subordinate .39. In relation to Subject type, where the subject is a pronoun, the rate is .74, but where it is a noun phrase, .12. Below is a comparison of the Polish speakers *ne* deletion in relation to noun phrase, with other L2 speakers (Regan 1996) and L1 speakers (Ashby 1976).

**Table 4.** Comparison of Polish speaker variable use of subject type with L1 French and Anglophone L2 speakers

	L1 (French) speakers	L2 speakers (Anglophone)	L2 speakers (Polish)
Noun Phrase	.28	.02	.06
Pronoun	.64	.53	.55
No subject (imperatives)	N/A	N/A	.44

The presence of an object clitic favoured retention of *ne*. Ashby (1976) for L1 speakers found the same pattern although it did not reach significance. For L2 speakers it was significant. The rates for L2 speakers in relation to clitics relate perhaps to processing issues. These Polish speakers behave similarly to the Irish English speakers in relation to object clitics. The L2 speakers may be monitoring the complexity of clitics in French and their position in the utterance, and so tend to produce more *ne* while in ‘monitoring’ mode. Only the results for deletion of *ne* in lexicalised phrases are different from the other factors and run counter to what has been previously found, in relation not only to L1 speakers (Ashby 1981), but also for L2 speakers (Regan 1996). As for previous studies, the factor group itself was significant in the Polish L2 data. Unlike the speakers in the previous studies, the Polish speakers retained *ne* in the lexicalised phrases.

In relation to the factors found to be significant in the Rbul analysis, comparisons can be made in relation to the same variable, *ne* deletion, and three different speaker groups: Polish speakers in France, Irish English Year Abroad speakers and L1 speakers of French (Ashby 1981).

**Table 6.** Comparison of *ne* deletion by Polish L2, English L2, and French L1 speakers

	Polish	Irish English	L1 French (reported as retention)
<b>Subject</b>			
Pronoun	.743	.54	.43 [non-clitic pronouns] .36 [clitic pronouns]
Zero	.703	N/A	

Noun	.128	.07	.72
<b>Lexicalization</b>			
Non lexicalised	.676	.38	.74
Lexicalised	.324	.71	.44 <i>je ne sais pas</i>
			.27 <i>ce n'est pas</i>
			.36 <i>il ne faut pas</i>
<b>Object clitic</b>			
Zero	.682	.52	.518
Present	.318	.27	.482
<b>Following phonological segment</b>			
Consonant	.601	.62	
Vowel	.399	.36	N/A
<b>Clause</b>			
Main	.695	.52	.30 [retention]
Subordinate	.395	.32	.60 [subordinate]

In addition, we now thus have evidence of the use of the same variable in French L2 from speakers of two typologically different L1's (Polish and English) with their potentially consequent L1 influences.

It seems as if the same linguistic factors as well as social factors constrain the variation in both cases, whether at the level of phonological constraints, as in following segment, or syntactic/morphological constraints, as in verb type or subject type or preceding clitics, or indeed even social factors such as gender and age, which suggest the expected patterns, despite non-significance here.

Thus, we can conclude from the quantitative analysis that the variation pattern in relation to this particular variable, *ne* deletion, is, by and large, similar to that used by L1 speakers of French, in terms of constraint ordering and even of rates. And we now know that this is true for L1 languages as typologically distant as Polish and English with potentially universalistic implications.

However, in relation to this particular group of Polish people in France, on a closer examination of individual usage, some results appear surprising, particularly in relation to two

couples in this particular sample.

### **A Tale of Two Couples**

It happened that there were two couples within the group of speakers. The first couple were Gaby and Henri.<sup>6</sup> They lived in Paris; Gaby was 50 years old and Henri five years older. The second couple were Elena and Daniel, who lived in the northern city, the second research site. Both couples were of similar age, had arrived in France roughly at the same period and had spent similar amounts of time in France. Both couples had one child (a daughter, in both cases), and both daughters were integrated into the education system in France. Both couples intended to stay in France; they had good jobs and incomes by now, and a better life economically than they would have had in Poland.

One couple deleted at a rate similar to each other: Elena's factor weight was .264 (deletion rate 76.2 percent) and Daniel's factor weight was .233 (deletion rate 70.8 percent). But the other couple deleted at a strikingly contrasting rate: while Gaby's factor weight was .215 (deletion rate 67.8 percent), Henri's was .725 (deletion rate 93.9 percent). This fact, on its own, was not necessarily surprising. However, the demographic and ethnographic characteristics of husband and wife in the two couples were very similar, so it seemed puzzling that there should be such divergence within one couple (.215 versus .725) and not in the other (.264 and .233). As noted earlier, recent research trends have indicated that qualitative analysis can provide a complementary perspective which can illuminate issues which quantitative analysis has identified. Was there anything in their personal biographies that could explain these puzzling figures?

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<sup>6</sup> These, and all other names, in the study are anonymised.



### The First Polish Couple

The case of the couple with differing deletion rates is particularly intriguing. Gaby and Henri had had very similar life trajectories to each other and similar experiences. They met in France and were introduced by a mutual Polish friend in order that they should get together to organise trips back together to Poland, as both were in the habit of visiting their families. They discovered that they came from the same town in Poland, had attended the same secondary school, and just missed meeting and knowing each other there. They were not actually in the same class, only because there was a five year age difference between them. They also had very similar experiences in France. Both came to France for economic reasons; neither came during what they called the ‘state of war’ in Poland, where people were granted special refugee status in France, and given special conditions. Gaby and Henri both specified they were ‘normal’ migrants who came to France for a better life. Their linguistic experience also was similar. Neither had learnt French in Poland, and neither had had any early aspirations to visit or live in France (in fact, Henri had been hoping to go to Canada and only decided to stay in France when Canada didn’t work out for him). Gaby says she learnt Russian and English in Poland at school, the norm at the time. Both subsequently realised they were unlikely to get good jobs in France without proficiency in French. Gaby worked at a number of what she considered uninteresting jobs and found this frustrating. Both attended French classes in the same institution (*Institut Catholique Polonais*). Both found the French classes transformative as regards life opportunities and both got interesting and rewarding jobs, which they both attributed to the language classes. Henri noted that recently they had less contact with institutions such as the *Centre Polonais*, the *Institut Polonais* and the *Bibliothèque Polonaise*:

*au début oui mais depuis un certain temps non pas tellement quant est-c que la dernière fois à l'institut polonais on est allé oh ça fait quelques années de ça*

'At the beginning yes, but for some time now not really – when it's – the last time it was in the Polish Institute – we went a – that's some years now..'

He continues:

*oui oui mais bon ces derniers temps nous on n'a pas tellement – je veux dire on s'est un peu éloigné de ce milieu*

'yes yes but these days we don't – we have pulled away from this milieu'.

When asked who were his friends, French or Polish people, he says

*oh y a les deux oui/y a // y a des Polonais y a des Français oui*

'oh there are both, yes – there are Polish people and there are French people, yes.'

Then, with such a similar trajectory and shared notions about their present and future lives, as well as their feelings about France and Poland, why were their deletion rates so dramatically different? An analysis of the speech content of the couple provides a possible explanation for the observed divergence in deletion rates. The wife, Gaby, talked a bit more than her husband. However, relative contributions varied depending on the topic being discussed; the two of them differed significantly in terms of amount of time given to topics. A significant amount of the conversation was devoted to discussions of education and language, which ranged widely and included issues of language proficiency and also language and culture (even though, as noted earlier, these were not topics introduced by the interviewers). Gaby (a very low deleter) talked at length about her daughter's education: the French education system, the stage her daughter was at in the *lycée*, her choice of subjects in school, possible career options, and consequent possibilities for 'paths' in the *Baccalauréat*. She spoke also at length about her daughter's high proficiency in French: "*ma fille me corrige...elle est très bonne en français*" ('My daughter corrects me – she is very good in French').

Her husband who, by contrast, deleted at a very high rate, rarely made a comment during these discussions. But once the topic turned away from the local French educational arena to a wider one with a more global focus, where he talked about the visit of friends from Australia, his contributions were significantly more frequent and he was relatively voluble. When the conversation turned again to education and language, his contributions reverted to almost none.

Perhaps the answer to divergent deletion rates lies in their differing attitudes towards the French language. Not only do they have different attitudes to French, but different attitudes towards what it represents for themselves and their daughter. In the interviews, Gaby is very focused on her daughter's education and on her learning French. She doesn't prevent her learning Polish, rather encourages it; her daughter cannot then later she says reproach her for preventing her from learning Polish. She can do what she likes with Polish – "*c'était pas un handicap pour elle*" ('it wasn't a handicap for her') – but Gaby sees Polish as an additional extra, once her daughter's more important studies of French and in French are seen to. As noted above, her husband hardly comments on discussions of language and education, but does on holidays or visits from Australia.

Of course, it might be suggested these differences are due to gender, as opposed to differing attitudes to language and education, as indicated by topic. Gender is frequently an important causal factor in linguistic variation, both in L1 (Labov 2001) and L2 (Adamson and Regan 1991). Stereotyped speech behaviour might suggest that the wife might be focused more on education and language than her husband. However, if the issue of gendered attitudes were to explain the divergent deletion rates, then this should also be evident in the speech of the second couple.

## The Second Couple

As noted earlier, the second couple was of similar age to the first, had arrived in France roughly at the same period and had spent similar amounts of time in France. Like the first couple, this couple also have an only daughter and she is in the education system in France. And, like the first couple, they now had a good life in French and intended to stay.

Initially, the second couple were going to try and earn enough money in France to buy an apartment in Poland and did not intend to settle in France permanently. They were separated for a year at the beginning, she, with their daughter in France and he, still remaining in Poland. Elena says “*c’était pas planifié*” (‘It wasn’t planned’). Their move to France was due to the economic situation in Poland, and the difficulty of predicting life there. In France, “*on a trouvé une stabilité – l’emploi était plus ou moins sûr pour mon mari... on savait combien on gagnait par mois*” (‘we found stability- my husband’s work was more or less secure – we knew how much we would earn each month’).

The second couple talked about the same amounts of time. In the first couple, the wife spoke 75% of the time, and, in the case of the second couple, the wife spoke for 70% of the time.<sup>7</sup> However, when topic is considered, the similarity between the two couples ends. On language and education, the husband in the second couple spoke just as much as his wife.

This is clear for example, from their recounting of their personal biography, their journey to France from Poland. The conversation moves very quickly on to the education of their daughter in France and especially to the issue of language. Daniel says

*à ce moment là on a dû prendre la décision parce que notre fille commençait – on était obligés d’envoyer à l’école donc on savait pas si nous encore on pouvait jouer comme ça un an ou deux mais il fallait prendre la décision définitive*

‘at that moment, we had to make a decision because our daughter was beginning – we had to send her to school – and therefore we didn’t know if we – we could still have a year or two to play around with but it was becoming urgent to make a definite decision.’

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<sup>7</sup> If the daughter’s speech is excluded, the wife spoke four times as much as the husband.

and then Elena says “*on voit elle aimait bien être en France*” (‘we saw – she really liked being in France’). And so they tell the story of their decision to come to France permanently. They tell it together, almost as one speaker, in a jointly constructed narrative which seemed to have been years in the making during their life as a migrant couple in France. They repeat each other’s sentences/phrases:

Elena: “*Maintenant maintenant c’est pas pareil*” (‘now – now – it’s not the same’)  
 Daniel: “*maintenant c’est pas pareil*” (‘now it’s not the same’)

The husband spoke enthusiastically and knowledgably about the detail of the French education system, the programmes in which his daughter was participating, the choices she had available to her and that she was making in her education:

Daniel: *euh elle fait des études en ce moment c’est les langues étrangères appliquées – elle étudie anglais et polonais à l’université de d’ici de [...location deleted..] mais seulement c’est que pour sa troisième année de – des études elle va partir en Pologne*  
 ‘euh eh she studying right now, it’s applied foreign languages – she is studying English and Polish at the university here [...location deleted...], but only it’s – for her third year she is going to go to Poland’.

Interviewer: *où ca?*  
 ‘where exactly?’

Daniel: *à Cracovie*  
 ‘in Cracow’ (Cracow is the preferred English spelling.)

Interviewer: *ah Cracovie*  
 ‘Ah Cracow’

Daniel: *oui oui c’est l’échange Erasmus*  
 ‘yes yes it’s the Erasmus exchange’

Throughout the conversation, one frequently took up where the other left off:

Elena: *parce que c’est le français sa langue natale maintenant c’est pas le polonais*  
 ‘Because French is now her native language now – it’s not Polish’

Interviewer: *ah bon*  
 ‘ah yes’

Elena: *oui oui elle est plus à l’aise et correcte en français – en français elle parle très bien elle fait pas de fautes d’orthographe*

- ‘yes yes she is more at ease and correct in French – in French she speaks very well- she doesn’t make spelling mistakes’
- Daniel: *sans accent*  
‘with no accent’
- Elena: *elle fait pas de fautes*  
‘she doesn’t make mistakes’
- Daniel: *elle parle pas comme si elle était née en Pologne – elle parle parfaitement*  
‘she doesn’t speak as if she was born in Poland – she speaks perfectly’

They had shared ambitions for their daughter and placed her, her education, and her future at the forefront of their reflections on life in France and Poland.

Interestingly, both spoke a lot about ‘correct’ French, as well as what they perceived as its importance for integration and the fact that they themselves chose actively to learn as much as possible to ‘fit in.’ They were critical of some other Polish people (and indeed of other immigrant groups) who chose to stay within their own communities and did not make efforts, in their view, to learn French:

Elena: *mais en fait c’est très personnel ce que nous avons fait nous- parce que on connaît des familles qui vivent en France plus longtemps que nous et qui ont du mal à s’exprimer en français parce que ils ne voulaient pas apprendre – sortir s’adapter // euh ils voulaient pas euh justement s’adapter comme nous on a choisi justement cette adaptation- on s’est dit dès le début si on vit en France il faut qu’on vit comme les Français avec les Français il faut que notre fille apprenne le français.*

‘But in fact it is very personal what we did, because we know families who have been living in French longer than us and have difficulty expressing themselves in French because they didn’t want to learn – go out – adapt – they didn’t want to – just adapt like us- we chose precisely this adaptation – we said to ourselves from the beginning if we live in France, we must live like the French – with the French – our daughter must learn French.’

The mother describes how she used to leave her daughter deliberately at school in the canteen so that she would be with French children all day, even though, at that time, she herself was not working and could have taken her home:

Elena: *et même à l’époque je ne travaillais pas et Edyta, elle est partie à l’école les premières années je l’ai laissée à la cantine exprès pour qu’elle reste avec les Français plus longtemps donc toute la journée les premières années après elle s’est habituée j’ai trouvé*

*du travail donc la cantine c'était toutes ses années d'école elle a elle a dû apprendre et aimer mais c'était tout notre choix pour / pour ne pas être différents- pour ne pas rester à l'écart et c'est avec Edyta qu'on a -qu'on apprenait (le)français et même à l'époque je faisais vraiment beaucoup d'efforts pour apprendre le français en écoutant la télé en répétant les mots et en faisant les exercices de prononciation à la maison justement pour apprendre*

'and even at the time I wasn't working and Edyta went off to school – the first years I would leave her in the canteen on purpose so she would remain with French people longer so all day long the first years afterwards she got used to it, I found work- therefore the canteen – it was throughout her school years – she had to learn- and to love – but that was our choice for/so as not to be different- not to remain apart and it was through Edyta that we – that we learnt French and even at the time I made really a lot of efforts to learn French by listening to the TV, repeating words and doing pronunciation exercises at home precisely to learn.'

Their relatively low rates of deletion of *ne* (as we have seen, this is the prestige variant which normally suggests a more formal French), may well reflect their desire as a well-educated professional middle-class couple to be part of the native French 'community' and especially of the community (of practice) of the education system of which their daughter is a participating member. They seem to see this participation as her passage to 'becoming French,' which they see as a possibility for her, as the child of migrants, and one which is not open to them as adult migrants to France. They say that they themselves will never be totally French. They say the first generation of migrants who don't speak French will have to accept jobs which are less interesting and or prestigious.

Elena: *dans l'émigration c'est plutôt la deuxième génération qui réussit vraiment faire dans la vie qu'ils ont envie parce que la première euh première vague doit accepter ce qu'ils trouvent – ce qu'on leur propose – le travail qu'on leur propose voilà travailler dans un restaurant travailler dans une usine voilà on l'accepte parce que c'est le seul moyen...*

'In emigration it's rather the second generation who succeed in doing what they wish in life – because the first – the first wave are forced to accept what they can find- whatever people offer them – there – to work in a restaurant, work in a factory, there – we accept because it's the only way....'

Daniel: .... *On a pas de diplômes*  
'... We don't have degrees'

Interviewer: *oui*  
‘yes’

Elena: *On connaît pas encore très bien la langue donc on accepte ce qu'on a et on travaille pour les enfants malheureusement c'est comme ça et c'est ce qu'on a observé en France c'est les enfants qui réussissent à faire leurs métiers leurs carrières ils sont médecins ils sont dentistes ils sont avocats eu journalistes mais c'est tout le temps les enfants.*

‘We don't know the language well, yet- therefore we accept what we get and we work for the children unfortunately that's the way it is and that's what we observed in France it's the children who succeed in making their careers – they are doctors they are dentists they are lawyers and journalists but all the time it's the children.’

Daniel: *j'en suis sûr – qu'ils réussissent nettement mieux que – en parlant français parce que les parents sont toujours là pour pousser.*

‘I'm sure they succeed much better – by speaking French because the parents are constantly there pushing them.’

As the Rbrul results showed, both are relatively low deletors of *ne*, users of the prestige variant. During their reflections on language, this couple is evidently conscious of prestigious linguistic forms. This awareness extends to their first/heritage language, Polish, as well as to their other main language, French. They talk about other Polish emigrants in France who remain within Polish culture (particularly regional), continue to speak Polish rather than French, and, they point out, especially, do not speak a ‘correct’ Polish but a heavily accented one, as they come from the country in Poland and not the city. As Elena says:

*‘ils continuent à écouter la musique polonaise ils ont – ils ont leur accent qui est très fort parce que c'est souvent les gens des villages qui venaient donc*

‘They continue to listen to Polish music – they have – they have a very strong accent because it's often the people from the villages who came (to France) so’.

Also,

*c'était pas le Polonais le plus correct, c'est l'accent disons parfois villageois – ça dépend, on entend un fort fort accent selon les régions*



‘It wasn’t the most correct Polish, it’s the accent let’s say from the village – it depends – you hear a strong accent according to the region’.

Elena and Daniel seem to feel that they themselves made an effort to have contact with people other than their compatriots from Poland. They also perhaps perceive themselves to be people from the city in Poland and so already more orientated towards prestige language norms.

Despite their considerable efforts, becoming integrated in France is not necessarily easy, especially for the first generation of arrivals. Elena points out that a colleague at work once ‘reminded her of her origins’ and comments that, for migrants, it is the second generation who really integrate.

The husband (a low deleter) is familiar with the detail of the educational programmes, talks about how his daughter hesitated between London and Poland as part of her studies, and hopes she’s made the right choice. Both parents consider a career in translation might be appropriate for her. Elena says “*parce que c’est le français sa langue natale maintenant c’est pas le polonais*” (‘Because French is now her native language – not Polish’). Daniel says she feels “*plus Francaise que Polonaise*” (‘More French than Polish’), and Elena “*peut être moitié moitié - je ne sais pas*” (‘Maybe half in half I don’t know’) (I would translate this as half-and-half. ) and Daniel “*c’est la question qu’on a*” (‘That’s the question we have’). This is a question they are in the habit of debating between themselves. They discuss with great admiration their daughter’s attitude to the two cultures, and her ability to adapt, Daniel filling in word gaps for his wife and completing her sentences. As well as the joint emigration enterprise journey apparent in the dialogues described earlier, they have a joint project to assure the integration of their daughter to the point of seeing her actually ‘become’ French, and this is equally reflected in their joint

narrative about the process.

They have, themselves, invested hugely in the French ‘project.’ The husband noted with a certain pride that, after a month in his new workplace, he was filling in cheques for people, because even the French didn’t know how to do this. It is as if they have adopted wholesale a discourse on ‘correct’ language which they perceive is used by French people in France. It is a popular discourse of linguistic prescriptiveness supported by the French education system. The Polish speakers have adopted this discourse and remade it a vehicle for integration for their daughter; she will succeed with her new identity as a native French speaker: “*pas de fautes d’orthographe*.” (‘no spelling mistakes’), “*sans accent*” (‘no accent’), “*elle parle parfaitement*” (‘she speaks perfectly’), and her mother talks about her own learning process, “*apprendre le français en écoutant la télé, en répétant les mots et en faisant les exercices de prononciation*” (‘learning French by watching TV by repeating words and doing pronunciation exercises’).

The adoption of this discourse of prescriptive language in French was bolstered by similar notions of norms for their L1 Polish. Daniel wanted to speak ‘correctly’: “*j’ai fait maximum d’efforts pour parler correctement*” (‘I made the maximum possible efforts to speak correctly’), but says that, though he tried to learn also how to write as well as speak French, he does not write well. He says it is too late for him, but not for his daughter. They are invested in their daughter’s not only speaking French but writing good French as part of the cultural capital which will contribute to her success, material and cultural; it will help her to take her place in France, or at least a notional France which exists in the literature, history and culture she has studied within the French educational system. Here the French used is a formal French which maintains prescriptive standards defined by linguistic and cultural institutions, where *ne* is not often deleted, (in principle and according to prescription), and where care is taken to use prestige

variants.

### **Conclusion**

Quantitative and qualitative analyses have revealed some interesting aspects of the acquisition of sociolinguistic variation patterns by L2 speakers. The initial Rbrul analysis of these Polish migrant speakers in France showed constraint ordering patterns in relation to *ne* deletion which were strikingly similar to those of a group of speakers who were different in many respects; Irish English Year Abroad students in France, and both groups had similar patterns to those of L1 French speakers.

Despite the fact that the Poles were naturalistic learners with little previous formal secondary school classroom learning and that the English learners were primarily formal, apparently with different contexts of acquisition, they show very similar variation patterns. Equally despite the fact that the two L1's in question are significantly different, L1 influence does not seem to have played a major role in the variation. In addition, both groups seem to be similar to L1 speaker patterns, the Year Abroad after the stay in France (and even a year later) and the naturalistic Polish speakers after living and working in France for several years.

It seems as if, with sufficient contact with native speakers, all learners can acquire L1 variation patterns and are able to approximate native speaker constraint ordering, and even rates, despite differences in context of acquisition, or L1 influence. However rates do vary with L2 speakers, as one would expect. In this group, the rates were a cause for pause and an attention to the more qualitative aspects of the data.

Language ideology and language attitudes can be a driving motor for people's lives. How people think about language often plays a central role in their life decisions, their interactions

with other people, their investment in the future and even broader identity construction. As Dick and Arnold point out, “the study of language beliefs and practices is an especially useful tool for tracking how people create links between their present lives and broader, more enduring processes” (2017, 402). In this case, the notion of ‘French’ is a propelling one, given its historic importance, the role it plays in education and in work life in France, the importance of its acquisition in all its guises, especially its various registers (particularly the formal ones).

In comparing the two couples, it is clear that both husband and wife in the second couple (Elena and Daniel) exhibit similar perspectives, shared social contacts, and identical aims for their future and that of their daughter. In contrast, while the wife in the first couple (Gaby), seems to share many of these same aims and perspectives with the first two speakers, her husband seems much less focused on the internal French educational and cultural norms and more focused outwards on the world beyond France and even beyond Europe. He also differs from the other three speakers (his wife, and Elena, and Daniel) in using a significantly less formal French, at least in terms of *ne* deletion. His wife seems to adopt the prescriptive codes used by the other couple (who are also invested in French cultural and educational norms), and all three use a more formal French, as indicated by their *ne* deletion rates.

Since the deletion rates for the second couple (Elena and Daniel) are similar, gender does not necessarily seem a satisfactory explanation for the divergent deletion rates between husband and wife in the first couple (Gaby and Henri). Perhaps, then (as indicated by the relatively large amount of time they talk about language), the issue is differing attitudes towards language and education attitudes. What might have been interpreted as a gender difference seems, when we tune into the voices of these speakers, to be a question of language ideology and attitudes. These voices tell us about their relationship with the French language, with prescriptive norms, with

their conviction of its important role in the education and success of their daughter(s) and in the process of their becoming integrated, becoming French citizens in a notional French nation state.

This link between language ideology and linguistic practice is, of course, a dynamic one. Usage of *ne* is a part of a wider semiotic system used by these L2/multilingual speakers as they dip into their knowledge of French and its resources to index something relating to their lives, futures, and their childrens' future. The things indexed for these multilingual parents in their experience of migration are not necessarily the things they might have indexed for parents in France in earlier times. They have 'borrowed,' possibly temporarily, significations, and may abandon them, or at least focus less on them, when they are no longer necessary or centre stage. (and not necessarily in the way that L1 tends to 'wax and wane' in relation to the linguistic market at different lifetime stages).

In light of such issues of language norms, attitudes, and ideologies, it may interesting to compare these Polish speakers in France with Poles in other parts of the Polish diaspora. In relation to Polish people in Ireland (Diskin and Regan 2017; Regan 2016; Regan and Nestor 2010; Regan, Nestor, and Ni Chasaide 2012), it appears that those who wanted their children to have the opportunity of a future life trajectory outside of Ireland were more likely to use the global variety of English, as opposed to the local Irish variety (as represented by the use of discourse 'like'). Irish English (even though an 'inner circle' English) is nevertheless a recognizable 'variety' in relation to so-called 'standard English.' The Polish speakers in Ireland who wanted their children to 'fit in' to Irish society and wished to continue living in Ireland used the less formal variants, contrasting with the French Polish couples who wanted their children to 'fit into' France and settle there and used the more formal variants. The two contexts (Ireland and France) and their linguistic situations present an interesting contrast for the different stances

adopted by the Polish immigrants in each country and for their relative appropriation of variation patterns.

The centrality of the nation state (France, Ireland, and so on) as the primary political and economic unit is now frequently seen as problematic. But although this old 19<sup>th</sup> century conception of the nation state has been eroded, the notion is still strong in the minds of many and, in this instance, these four Polish migrants. As a symbolic entity or identity, they have appropriated notions of 'good' French and linked 'good' French with achievement and future advancement, especially through the education system. They refer at times also to Polish, the Polish education system, and related prescriptive language, 'good Polish,' The Polish speakers seem to realise they can use elements of the language to suggest alignment with an education system which still strongly promotes prescriptive linguistic norms. The nation state may not, in fact, be a real point of reference (whether in Poland or in France) but what is 'real' for these immigrant speakers, is the way this is incorporated in their ideology, as evidenced by the narratives of the participants.

Furthermore, to judge by their language practices, this ideology manifests itself in their speech. It has been pointed out in much recent research that, for migrants, the present is impacted by other places and spaces, and that people are affected by multiple discourses, whatever physical context they find themselves in. For these participants, this present, in France, seems to be impacted by Poland and the Polish language norms and attitudes with which the speakers grew up. Thus the adoption of prestige norms by the French Polish speakers may be different from the practice of the Irish Polish speakers who adopt the local less prestigious norms, because both groups have understood the differences in context. Both groups want to 'fit in' and thrive in their new contexts, but the different contexts affect the modes of doing this.

The status of English and French, although both are prominent powerful world languages, is very different in complexion. English, as perhaps a more global language with a particularly wide range of regional variation, may perceive ‘correctness’ differently from French with its strong history of codification. Those Polish people living in France have understood French linguistic norms as a cultural capital issue, whereas those living in Ireland have equally understood that Irish English vernacular patterns are generally favourably perceived by the L1 speakers with whom they are interacting. It may be that these Polish couples are aligning their Polish ‘identity’ in relation to language attitudes and ideology with their French one, so that the issue of belonging is de-dramatized. They are positioning themselves as aligning with and not differing on these issues, as they see it, from the receiving ‘French’ society. They know the importance of ‘Good Polish’ as of ‘Good French’. Their language attitudes, ideologies and practices even help create social spaces around them which underline boundaries between those who are ‘acceptable’ and those who are not. The second couple pointed out the physical space between themselves and those other Poles ‘from the villages,’ who refused to make an effort to learn French and stayed within Polish groups of speakers only. They made a spatial distinction between themselves consequently, and those other Poles, based on their differing attitudes to French.

Variationist analysis has demonstrated that these migrants are broadly adopting L1 speech patterns, while it draws attention to two couples who are outliers. Complementary qualitative analysis has shown that the differences in the speech of these two outlying couples relate to differences in their language attitudes and ideology, and suggests that differences in language attitudes and ideology are manifest in these different speech patterns. Language ideology plays an important role in second language acquisition, and it has been the

complementary quantitative and qualitative analyses which has revealed these broad aspects of second language acquisition, migration and superdiversity. Such analysis helps capture some of the 'geological' complexity of the intricate vertical and horizontal layers of the migration experience.



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