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Chapter 31
Second Language Acquisition and Sociolinguistic Approaches: The Case of L2 French

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Abstract

French is one of the major target languages on which L2 acquisition research has been carried out. SLA research on French highlights specific aspects of L2 acquisition. Codification and prescriptivism long associated with French have wider implications for L2 language ideology and attitudes. Research on L2 French acquisition which reveals the influence of '*la norme*', especially the acquisition of sociolinguistic variation and pragmatics, is discussed. Research methods particularly suited to illuminating these issues are outlined, including variation analysis, mixed methods research and network analysis. Current research themes include agency, identity, and individual variation

Keywords
French, SLA, variation, sociolinguistic competence, year abroad

Introduction

French is a major world language and has played a significant role in European and world history. It is also one of the more codified languages, with related language attitudes and prescriptive norms. Second language acquisition (SLA) research, insofar as it relates to French, benefits from an awareness of these particularly 'French' issues, whether as objective reality or constructs. They affect how we perceive, learn and study the learning of, French.

This chapter describes French as a second language (L2)[1] in light of those sociolinguistic issues which emerge as specifically 'French' focused, rather than more general aspects of L2 French research (for broader reviews, see Hawkins & Towell, 1992; Myles & Towell, 2004; Noyau & Véronique, 1986). Language ideology and norms play a significant role in the evolution of L2 French research and can range from perceptions of French as a language to education policy affecting French in the education systems in different countries. These issues have implications for broader areas of sociologies and epistemologies of knowledge and their cultural embeddings.

Prescriptive and protectionist policies have prevailed in France since the creation of the *Académie française* in 1635 at least, and probably as far back as the 16th century with the Edict of Villers-Cotterets under François 1, which ordained that all administrative or judicial matters be in French. Eighteenth century codification was increasingly accompanied by an attitude of purism, with French considered to have qualities of perfection, logic and clarity (Rivarol, 1784). The standard is celebrated, and variation ignored and/or denigrated.

As long as English remained the primary focus of interest in early SLA research, any conclusions which could be drawn regarding SLA in general were necessarily limited. It was only with cross linguistic evidence that we could begin, with confidence, to draw general conclusions regarding SLA theory. Conclusions previously based on English were sometimes confirmed, but sometimes revealed to be a feature of English L2 only, and needed re-

evaluation. French, as one of the earliest languages other than English to be studied, has played a pivotal role in the evolution of SLA research.

Sociolinguistic competence (see Chapter 3, this volume) reveals itself to be an important theme in L2 French research. This may relate to the importance of codification for L1 French speakers. Valdman (1998) studied linguistic norms, teaching and the learner, varieties of French, and register and formality. Codification and norms have highlighted varieties to be taught and learned, and consequently the social contexts in which this can happen. Hence this chapter focuses on sociolinguistic competence.

Historical Perspectives

After early sociolinguistic SLA research, based mostly on English, French began to be studied in the 1990s. Much of this research was variationist in approach. Therefore, acknowledging significant work on L2 French within other sociolinguistic paradigms, this chapter confines itself principally to outlining variationist research.[2]

Much of L2 French variationist research focused on the acquisition of what was not categorical but variable. The ability to use variable structures is a central element of sociolinguistic competence and permits the speaker to relate to different speakers in different contexts: an ability to manipulate variable speech patterns. The acquisition of native speaker variation patterns had been studied in relation to English L2 (Adamson, 1988; Bayley & Preston, 1996; Preston, 1989). Adamson and Regan (1991) refer to two continua (based on Corder's vertical and horizontal continua, and subsequently characterised by Mougeon et al. (2010) as Type 1 and Type 2 variation. The vertical one refers to the developmental path (variation between a target and a non-target form, i.e., *I don't go* vs *I no go*) and the horizontal one to the sociolinguistic knowledge of how to choose between two target forms (e.g., *I'm going to play* vs *I'm gonna play*). It seems L2 speakers can learn to choose between these forms, like L1 speakers. For L1 speakers, it is a matter of tendencies, the choice of a variant affected to a greater or lesser extent by multiple and simultaneous constraining factors, linguistic and social. How do L2 speakers learn this intricate variable system, this probabilistic grammar? Such ability seems to form part of overall sociolinguistic competence, and has been the focus of many studies of L2 French.

In research on the acquisition of French variation patterns in the 1990s the most studied variables included *ne* deletion, *nous/on* alternation, */l/* deletion, *tu/vous* alternation.[3] It was not by chance that these variables reappear consistently. The next sections discuss their frequent appearance in L2 French variationist research.

Ne Deletion

In modern French, *ne* is the first of two particles which form negation and comes between subject clitic and the following constituent (e.g., *Je ne vois pas*). L1 speaker deletion rates have increased and, in spoken French, *ne* is deleted variably by all members of French-speaking communities. It is a sensitive sociolinguistic variable and an indicator of formality, power and solidarity, style and register. It co-occurs with the other sociolinguistically

sensitive variables mentioned above. L1 French research shows that verb type, clause type, presence or absence of a clitic, lexicalized phrase are influencing linguistic factors. Social factors include age (young people delete more), gender (women delete more), social class and style (people delete more in informal than formal speech). This is true across most French varieties.

Regan's (1995, 1996) longitudinal study of *ne* deletion in Irish learners over three years: the first phase, 'before and after' study abroad (SA), one academic year in a Francophone country, the second phase on year three, on return to the traditional university classroom, showed:
- overall deletion rates doubled
- constraint orderings remained similar from Time 1 (before SA) and Time 2
- constraint orderings were similar to L1 speakers' and approximated them more after SA.

Contrary to the hypothesis regarding 'de-colloquialisation' back in the classroom, deletion rates were retained and their role in French vernacular usage apparently understood. Other, cross-sectional, quantitative studies on *ne* deletion (e.g., Dewaele, 1992; Dewaele & Regan, 2002, regarding Dutch learners), showed that proficiency positively affected native-like awareness of variation patterns. High proficiency speakers were more sensitive to these than early learners. Donaldson's (2017) variationist analysis investigated *ne* deletion in near-native proficiency adults. Although some speakers retained *ne* more than their interlocutors, others produced *ne* at rates indistinguishable from native speakers. Near-native speakers largely acquired native speaker constraints. This contributes to our understanding of near-nativeness, especially for sociolinguistic competence in adults.

Noun/On Alternation

Nous and *on* both mean 'we' in English. *On* means, in general, 'one' but now also means 'we' in spoken French, both in the Hexagone (Coveney, 2000) and other regions. particularly Canada. Like *ne* deletion, *nous/on* alternation is a long-standing variable in French. Classroom French normally presents *nous* as the appropriate form. In today's spoken French, however, *nous* is the formal variant and *on* the informal one. One more likely hears '*on va au cinema*' than '*nous allons au cinéma*'. Lemée (2003) studied *nous/on* variation in Irish learners during SA. Women used the informal variant more and length of time abroad correlated positively with its acquisition. Post SA students were more aware of L1 sociolinguistic patterns.

/l/ Deletion

/l/ deletion is a feature of French since the Middle Ages. It exists in continental and Canadian French. It deletes more in informal speech and women delete more than men. Like *ne* deletion, /l/ deletion is frequent in the input. Unlike *ne*, and *nous/on*, /l/ is an example of phonological variation.
/l/ deletion occurs in subject clitic pronouns *il, ils, elle, elles;*
Il va [ilva]—[iva]
Il also occurs in full lexical items, for instance, before a glide and intervocally (*table* and *escalier*), less often word-initially in pronouns *le, la, les, lui and leur,* and definite articles *le, la* and *les.*

Regan et al. (2009) found Irish SA learners increased /l/ deletion significantly. Gender had a greater effect than style, similar to Major (2004) and Adamson and Regan (1991) for English. Sax's (2003) study of 30 female American students found SA and high proficiency were predictors of variation. She found SA increased use of informal variants and range of stylistic variation. She found a hierarchy: *ne* deletion showed the greatest range of stylistic variation, next /l/ deletion and *nous/on* alternation the least. Patterns approached native norms, with SA. Kennedy Kerry (2017) used a mixed-effects model and social network analysis for 17 SA Anglophone learners; phonological variation patterns were acquired in a predictable order and social networks were predictors of acquisition of phonological variation patterns. Mougeon et al. (2001) and Thomas (2003) found Canadian immersion learners produced the formal variant at near-categorical levels, indicating significant differences between SA and the classroom.

Tu/Vous Alternation

Tu/vous alternation is important for L1 French speakers. Studies using varying approaches found young learners overuse *tu* (for example, Lyster, 1994), and late immersion learners overuse *vous* (Swain & Lapkin, 1990). For SA, Kinginger and Belz (2005) show intensity and variety of social interactions are important. Regular contact, and an L1 possessing an address form system, encouraged *tu* usage (Dewaele, 2004).

For all variants, contact and teaching materials prove important. Chamot et al. (forthcoming) for Irish SA learners found a hierarchy for three variables; *ne* deletion, /l/ deletion and /ə/ (schwa) deletion (in '*je*').[4] Addressing Coleman's (2015) questions ("Who do they eat with? Who do they drink with? Who do they sleep with?"), Chamot's study examines SA 'quality'. Some students gained more than others. Gains were linked to contact, with implications for language socialisation.[5] Gains also related to whether the variable was incoming or stable, whether morphosyntactic or phonological, to speaker attitude and view of the experience. Morphosyntactic *ne* deletion is acquired before phonological /l/ or /ə/ (schwa). Advanced learners become more sociolinguistically aware, whether with classroom exposure to input or SA.

To sum up, these particular variables reappear with regularity in SLA French studies mainly because they are sociolinguistically powerful and their acquisition is central to sociolinguistic competence.

Critical Issues and Topics

Thus, acquisition is positively correlated with SA. So, context (i.e., where acquisition of sociolinguistic competence happens), and the related role and nature of input, are explored now.

Acquisition of Sociolinguistic Competence: Variation Patterns

As noted, variationist studies suggest that L2 speakers intuit the intricate probabilistic grammar of a language. Humans have some innate awareness of probabilities (Adamson, 2009). L2 speakers learn the frequencies of usage appropriate to the situation, with those constraining factors which affect L1 speech, including age, gender, social class; they acquire those fine-tuned frequencies in the production of alternating forms.

The sociolinguistic variables described earlier are frequent in input and are also sociolinguistic indicators providing information regarding speaker and social situation.[6] This information is crucial for the learner for production and perception. Research suggests speakers are aware of its importance and they have greater or less success in its acquisition, according to context.

How L2 acquisition relates not only to language variation but also to language change in the L1 is a complex issue (see Bayley & Regan, 2004; Starr & Wang, in press), relating to whether and how L2 speakers perceive this stability. Do they understand the variability involved in this unstable situation in the L1? Further, do they use it, do they relate to it like L1 speakers, or choose to exploit this sometimes febrile situation in the evolution of the language? Form function relations are not always similar in L2 speech to those in L1. Chamot et al. (forthcoming) found that classroom norms and prescriptivism affected acquisition. Like other studies, variables less salient in the input (phonological ones) were acquired less easily than those the speakers noticed in classroom input, including language materials.

Context of Acquisition

It seems context of acquisition is critical. Contact with L2 speakers (e.g., during SA), seems to be central. Variation pattern acquisition requires significant amounts and kinds of input. Quantitative research on SA Erasmus programmes and Canadian Homestay showed that they positively impacted variation pattern acquisition. For instance, Kinginger and Farrell (2004) on *tu/vous* alternation, Cohen and Shively (2007), on requests and apologies in French and Spanish, found that SA improved speech act performance, and SA alone without instruction seems sufficient.

For historical reasons (to do with the position of French in Europe), learners studied have tended to be those in formal settings, classrooms, or semi-formal contexts (e.g., SA), privileged environments. However, this is changing. In the U.K. the take up of French as a 'first' foreign language has declined dramatically since a European language is no longer obligatory. However, research is now appearing relating to less 'privileged' learners. Véronique's study of Arabophone speakers in Southern France (Giacomi & Véronique, 1986) is an early example. Recent work in naturalistic settings includes Regan (2013) on Polish migrants in France and Blondeau et al. (2002) on Anglophones in Canada.

In comparison with SA, Canadian immersion classrooms, generally so effective (Genesee, 1987; Swain & Lapkin, 1982) seem less effective in relation to aspects of sociolinguistic competence (e.g., variation patterns). Mougeon et al. (2010) and Rehner et al. (2003) found less than half the variables were used as L1 French speakers did, in rates and constraint ordering, different from SA. Immersion students' use of informal variants, even mildly stigmatized, was significantly less than SA learners' who had more contact with L1 speakers. Results for Canadian immersion classrooms were also true for 'traditional' classrooms (for instance Dutch classroom learners, Dewaele & Regan, 2002). In contrast, in another context (naturalistic) Blondeau et al. (2002) found that Anglophones in Francophone Canadian cities were much closer to L1 speakers on rates and constraint ordering than either immersion or SA learners. Regan (2010) found a cline in the production of three groups; immersion classroom, SA and naturalistic, from lowest to highest rates of informal variants and closeness to L1 speaker rates and patterns. Although the groups of learners were different

(Irish and Canadian anglophones), the studies were comparable in (variationist) methodology, treated the same variable(s) and so provide indications for the role of context.

Research on all three contexts pointed to the need for more detailed information on input. Early studies made only cursory references to it, but recent research investigates the precise input available to, or sought by, SA participants. Recent network studies, discussed later, are making significant contributions.

Another issue which emerges consistently is that of individual differences. On the one hand, speakers acquire and use similar patterns and constraint ordering in relation to variants. Regan (2004) discusses the relationship between group and individual in L2 French and finds that individual and group patterns are very similar. However, individual speakers can have different rates, and qualitative research, based on detailed ethnographic observations, can provide a fuller picture of many L2 situations. Studies which find individual variation in L2 French speakers include Freed (1995), Kinginger (2009), Mitchell et al. (2017), and Regan (1995). Studies focussing on causal factors include Mitchell et al. (2017), Regan et al. (2009), and Terry (2017). Factors can be internal (psychological factors, motivation or aptitude), or external such as amount of contact with the L2 (Dewaele, 2009).

Current Contributions

Current contributions range from innovative methodologies, specific areas of French, and new approaches emerging from the 'social turn' in sociolinguistics.

The area of pragmatics is currently particularly rich in relation to L2 French. Earlier work includes Bardovi-Harlig (1999) and Kasper (2001). Research on Scandanavian speakers has been particularly rich (Lundell & Erman, 2012; Peterson, 2010). Recent examples include two studies on Swedish and Finnish L1's. Arvidsson (2019), studying 'idiomaticity', investigated factors (cognitive, motivational and affective) which facilitate its development in SA in Swedish speakers, focusing on individual variation. Idiomaticity, 'linked to the natural and conventional quality which characterizes native speakers' language' is underpinned by multi-word expressions (e.g., *en fait*, *ça y est*, *à mon avis*). Arvidsson's mixed methods, including network analysis and interviews, demonstrate that varied contact, with positive psychological orientation and/or social networks providing personally engaging conversations, promote idiomaticity. Also, a 'passive' exposure was not sufficient; active engagement was necessary, suggesting SA is beneficial.

Holttinen (2020) examines requests in L1 Finnish speakers[7]. Finnish and French differ morphosyntactically and pragmatically yet share features. Until recently, pragmatic competence was investigated mostly in languages typologically closer to French (e.g., Spanish). Holtinnen compares L2 French requests with L1 French and L1 Finnish, in low to advanced proficiency participants focusing on developmental patterns, L1 influence and comparisons with other L1s and L2s. Qualitative and quantitative analyses showed L1 played a significant role in request openers and external modifiers, especially in high proficiency speakers. Finnish speakers have difficulty acquiring *s'il te/vous plaît* despite its syntactic simplicity and pragmatic efficiency. While some features of this aspect of pragmatic competence are general to all L2 acquisition (e.g., overgeneralisation), some are specific to French and Finnish, and L1 influence is important. Thus, speakers of certain languages

(typologically distant from French or with different sociolinguistic competence/pragmatic habits) find this area of L2 acquisition of French more problematic than those closer; either typologically closer, or which have T/V structures.

Identity Issues

Issues like context, contact with native speakers, input, are currently no longer treated as axiomatic and unproblematic. They relate to issues like agency, affordances, and wider ones of cultural and other forms of capital. This research is influenced by 'the social turn' in linguistics (Block, 2003; Mackey, 2004); this social contact perspective aims to encompass the dynamic nature of language development and is linked with a 'multilingual turn' (for example, see Block, 2007; Norton & Toohey, 2002; Peirce, 1995). It adds, to earlier more essentialist approaches, a view of the 'learner' as multilingual, not monolingual, with agency and constantly changing identity(ies), within a context of constantly shifting power relations; targets are no longer seen as obvious and fixed, but multiple and dynamic. 'Community' is no longer obvious or simple; communities are complex, coalescing, intersecting, real and imagined. Motivation and attitudes are no longer immutable, but in flux, according to context; the notion of investment appears along with the more psychological one of motivation. Gender issues in L2 acquisition are explored more deeply and from new perspectives (e.g., Martyn, 2015). Agency and external social structures are closely related in a more complex relationship. Traditional sociological categories are re-examined and expanded in light of new human situations. Globalisation and migration in the twentieth and twenty first centuries require a multi-layered, more nuanced description of language acquisition.

With the 'social turn', more 'grounded' ethnographic approaches are used, with a focus on identity issues. With the increase in plurilingual language practices, the notion of norms, particularly native speaker norms as targets, is increasingly interrogated. This had been implicitly raised by early investigations of actual speech norms as opposed to prescriptive target classroom norms, where the grammar of the 'speech community' was seen as being acquired by the L2 speaker. Valdman (1998, 2000), for French pedagogy research, interrogated '*la norme*'. Recent research now queries whether a native speaker target is even desirable.

Identity issues play an important role in L2 speaker language behavior (for instance, in aspirations for the future or perception of relations with other L2 speakers). Identity research on French is increasing. Identity involves the individual's perception of their place in the world, how this is constructed across time and place and the person's projection of their future life. This approach sees the speaker relating to the context via social identity (Norton, 1997; Peirce, 1995). Norton conceives identity as complex and changing, and places power relations at the centre of identity construction, partly because these affect the all-important access to input. The whole enterprise of language acquisition is seen as a 'site of struggle'. It becomes 'a relational activity that occurs between specific speakers situated in specific sociocultural contexts' (Norton & McKinney, 2011, p. 79) and involves increasing participation in the L1 language community(ies), including 'imagined communities'. This theoretical approach tends to involve grounded ethnographic research methods, as these are the only way to obtain the relevant data.

Kinginger (2018) was among the first to focus on identity in L2 French. Her research describes an American woman who, through SA in France, 'reconstructed' her identity:

"Alice goes to France because of her desire to imagine herself anew in a context where her social options are broadened. Her choice of France is a bid for access to a life of cultured refinement" (p. 219). Becoming a French speaker is 'a way of reorienting herself in the world 'and her 'investment' results in acquisition of cultural capital. She redefines her previous identity with its limitations (her working-class identity), claiming a new identity which opens up multiple possibilities. This study highlighted the importance of the individual voice, individual particular circumstances and struggle with various communities, present or distant/imagined.

In a different context, Regan and Ní Chasaide (2010) investigated identity in French L3 in secondary school students with (Irish) English as L1, and Irish, L2. *Ne* deletion and *ouais/oui* alternation were related to issues of adolescent identity construction; these young multilingual speakers ranged across their linguistic repertoires in their three main languages to build the identity they wished to project, in constantly changing interactions. Blondeau (2010), describes young Anglo Montrealers and identity in a naturalistic setting representing bilingual language practices.

Main Research Methods

L2 French research methods tend to be quantitative and frequently variationist. Recent developments include social network analysis, mixed methods approaches, ethnographic methods, qualitative data as support for quantitative data, and post-modern approaches. This chapter has principally discussed research within the variationist paradigm (for discussion on variation methodology and tools see Chapters 16 and 1, this volume). Some contributions of variationist studies of L2 French are summarized before discussing recent methodologies.

Detailed analyses provided data not previously available on the role of variation at different acquisition stages. As noted, a longitudinal variationist study (Regan, 1996) provided a picture of evolving grammar which would have been difficult with other methods or cross-sectional data, contributing to product/ process debates. Other quantitative studies of L2 French variables highlight different linguistic levels: morphosyntax (*ne* deletion), phonological (*/l/* deletion), schwa deletion (*/ə/*), lexis (*nous/on* alternation) and indicate that learners seem to acquire phonological variables later than morphosyntactic ones: use of polylexical phrases, (e.g., '*c'est ça*'), contributed to research on 'chunks'. Studies of request formulation contributed to cross cultural pragmatics and use of colloquial words (Dewaele & Regan, 2001) and register and style.[8] This significant body of work facilitates an overarching understanding of how the L2 speaker acquires and uses variation patterns. Variationist work on Canadian French provided comparisons between metropolitan and Canadian French. Quantitative empirical studies have also provided insights into individual factors such as extraversion/introversion and empathy (for example, Dewaele & Furnham, 1999).

One thread which runs through this research is the important issue of the role of input especially in sociolinguistic competence. How do we define, circumscribe and describe the input to which the learner has access? And which methodologies 'get at' this input? Another issue discussed earlier is that of identity which also prompted methodological responses. Several methodological approaches address these questions in French SLA and some examples are now discussed.

Mixed Methods Approaches

In addressing identity issues, mixed method approaches are increasingly used. A strongly anthropological tradition has always been present in variationist linguistics and developed in the 'second and third 'waves' (e.g., Eckert, 2000). Such approaches used in the past decade in L2 French now frequently relate to naturalistic learners (e.g., Ni Chasaide & Regan, 2010; Regan, forthcoming; Regan & Nestor, 2011).

Migration is a feature of French acquisition since the increase in globalisation. Identity is intimately related to globalisation. New research methods attempt to accommodate these increasingly central issues. A consequence of migrants' mobile lives in a globalized world is language practices and usage different from those of more traditionally situated speakers. Research now needs to take into account the trajectories of peoples' lives, and the subsequent variation in their use of language resources (Pennycook, 2012). Blommaert (2010, p. 21) suggests that mobility "is the great challenge: it is the dislocation of language and language events from the fixed position in time and space attributed to them by a more traditional linguistics and sociolinguistics. It is the insertion of language in a spectrum of human action which is not defined purely in relation to temporal and spatial location, but in terms of temporal and spatial trajectories."

A recent example of sociolinguistic work in L2 French that uses mixed methods with an ethnographic complexion is Regan (2013) which provides a fuller picture of Polish migrants' experience in France and, through their voices, how their language practices index identity issues. Regan (forthcoming) using quantitative and qualitative analyses, investigates language practices of Polish people in France. Qualitative and content analyses showed that differences in the speech within two couples related to differences in language attitudes, evaluation and ideology, indicating that language ideology plays an important role in variable speech patterns. Mixed methods provide a fuller picture of the language practices and, ultimately, the lives of the participants, than either quantitative or qualitative work alone.

Network Analysis

Not unrelated to identity is social network research. Many of the studies described indicate that contact with L1 speakers is important for sociolinguistic competence. Length of time in the TL community was a strong predictor of the acquisition of variation (Regan et al., 2009; Sax, 2003). Moreover, interaction with TL speakers outside the classroom is positively correlated with sociolinguistic variation in L2 French immersion programmes (Mougeon et al., 2010; Nagy et al., 2003). However, detailed data on precisely the amount and nature of contact with L1 speakers has been lacking. A recent breakthrough is social network analysis. Kennedy Terry (2012, 2017, and this volume) applied social network theory to acquisition of stylistic variation by L2 French learners during SA. Kennedy Terry studied three phonological variables: '/l/ elision' in subject clitic pronouns, 'schwa elision' in clitics, and word-final 'consonant cluster reduction'. Using a mixed-effects model (Rbrul), Kennedy Terry provides empirical data on the critical role social networks play in stylistic variation and confirms that L2 phonology, like L1 phonology, reflects extralinguistic social forces (see also Chamot et al., forthcoming, for a discussion of social networks and phonological variation). Mitchell et al. (2017) provides quantitative and qualitative data on language learning, social networking and identity development during SA, linking acquisition with individual agency, skill and identity negotiation.

Gautier (2016) used social network analysis to study learners of French during SA over nine months and from two different L1 backgrounds (American and Chinese), investigating use of liaison and *ne* deletion. American and Chinese participants belonged to different network types, linked with different motivations, different learning histories, and different conditions under which they lived and studied in France. The Anglophones, like those in other SA studies, tend to develop oral fluency, and acquire informal registers. The Chinese students had a greater commitment to academic French and achieving formal qualifications. This network study suggests that Anglophone attitudes to prescriptive norms in French were different from Chinese speaker attitudes.

Recommendations for Practice

The long tradition of pedagogy research on L2 French focuses almost exclusively on the classroom. Valdman (1998) was one of the earliest researchers to directly address the issue of linguistic norms and teaching, and Lyster (1994) worked on sociolinguistic competence, and materials to address this in the classroom. He suggests authentic materials based on data bases and analyses of French L1. Others have proposed materials and methods for the classroom in light of their own research. Detey (2017), for example, proposes knowledge of variation in French speech for teachers. Chamot et al. (forthcoming) found that post SA students were more sensitized to norms and aware of degrees of acceptability for the classroom; the more proficient were the most positive about *ne* deletion, and social networks played a role in the development of this sensitivity. Variables highlighted in the classroom before SA were perceived differently from those of which they were not aware. Participants also commented on the difference between classroom norms and those encountered during SA. Dewaele and Regan (2002) suggest explicit teaching of linguistic variation in class, and Detey (2017) suggests doing this in a principled manner taking into account proficiency levels, goals and targeted teacher training. A particular issue for French in relation to classroom learning is the long-standing focus on standard French and the primacy of written language.

Future Directions

The digital revolution has made, and will continue to make, seismic shifts in language learning. Many of the old dichotomies may no longer be relevant. Native speaker/learner, written/spoken language, naturalistic context/formal context may no longer be valid distinctions in a new global economic order with altered power relations and differential access to cultural and economic capital. It may affect language ideologies and how languages are perceived. In particular, the dichotomy between written and spoken may become problematic due to the blending of the two in online discourse. In addition, the role of the teacher, once purveyor of the standard (written) language, must change radically in a world where students are accustomed to digitally mediated instructions on phones and computers and where speech can be synthetically created or modified. Communicative competence will mean adapting to a range of new communicative norms and patterns mediated by technology (Darvin, 2016).

New technologies will present a particular challenge for acquisition and teaching of French, given the strong French tradition of standardisation. Standard language ideology (see Milroy & Milroy, 1999), and its intolerance towards variation, has dominated thinking in France, especially in institutional settings. The written code is primary. As Haugen (1972) argues, the aim of standardisation is to achieve 'minimal variation in form' and 'maximal variation in function'. We may see more variation in form, to accommodate an exponential growth in function and it is likely there will be an imperative to accentuate variation. Increasing learner autonomy will mean an increasing awareness of non-standard varieties and the process of socialisation will likely change due to increased and wider access to spaces where language is used, on- and offline.

As noted initially, SLA research on French (as opposed to other world languages such as English) frequently includes issues of language ideologies, prescriptive norms and the long-standing primacy of the written language. Obviously, every language produces attitudes, evaluations and varying stances relating to these issues. But the perception of French in particular seems to highlight its identity as a language of 'culture' with strict prescriptive norms underpinned by 'top down' institutional precepts regarding language variation and change and language use. It remains to be seen how this perception will be impacted by new technologies.

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[1] While L2 is used throughout, it refers to any additional language that is not the speaker's first learnt language, unless specifically discussing second vs. third language and attendant issues.

[2] For discussions of other sociolinguistic approaches, see Chapters 2, 4 and 15, this volume.

[3] Other variables researched include liaison (Racine and Detey, 2015) subjunctive-indicative contrast (Gudmestad, A., & Edmonds, A., 2015) and future tense (Blondeau, H., Dion, N., & Michel, Z. Z., 2014).

[4] The loss of /ə/ (schwa) in rapid speech is another example, along with deletion of *ne* and elision of /l/, of variability in spoken French.

[5] Early studies noted that contact was important in sociolinguistic gains (e.g., Regan, 1996).

[6] Indicators are variables of which speakers are unaware as opposed to markers of which speakers are aware and stereotypes. Indicators show social variation but not stylistic.

[7] Requests are speech acts used constantly in everyday life, and so much studied by cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics.

[8] Of course some of these variables can be considered as belonging to more than one category.

Suggestions for Futher Reading

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