

Taking the longer view: explaining Multicultural London English and Multicultural Paris French

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ABSTRACT

The article explores the perplexing outcomes of comparative research projects in London and Paris on language change in multilingual areas of the cities populated by large numbers of recent immigrants with very diverse language backgrounds. In London, as in many other northern European cities, language contact on such a large scale has resulted in the emergence of a ‘multiethnolect’: a repertoire of innovative linguistic forms used by young people of all ethnicities, including monolingual non-immigrant speakers. In Paris, however, there was no such repertoire. I propose four factors that are necessary for a multiethnolect to emerge and that explain why similar processes of population movement, immigration, and globalization have produced such different linguistic outcomes in London and Paris. These factors remind us that language evolution, like language use, is constrained not only by the social characteristics of individuals but also by the socio-cultural historical contexts in which individuals live.

(Keywords: language change, multiethnolect, comparative research, language and place, national ideologies)

L'article explore les résultats surprenants des projets de recherche comparative menés à Londres et à Paris sur le changement linguistique dans des quartiers multilingues de villes connaissant un taux d'immigration récente élevé et un contact de langues très diverses. À Londres, comme dans beaucoup d'autres villes d'Europe du nord, le contact linguistique à grande échelle a mené à l'émergence d'un 'multiethnolecte': un répertoire de formes linguistiques innovantes utilisées par des jeunes de toutes origines, y compris par des locuteurs monolingues non-immigrés. À Paris, en revanche, les résultats n'ont pas montré l'apparition d'un tel répertoire. Je propose quatre facteurs nécessaires à l'émergence d'un multiethnolecte expliquant pourquoi des processus similaires de mouvements de population, d'immigration et de mondialisation ont produit des résultats linguistiques si différents à Londres et à Paris. Ces facteurs nous rappellent que l'évolution d'une langue, tout comme son usage, est contrainte non seulement par les caractéristiques sociales des individus, mais également par le contexte historique socioculturel dans lequel ils vivent.

1. INTRODUCTION

In this article I try to explain the perplexing outcomes of a recent comparative research project on language change in multilingual areas of London and Paris populated by first and second generation immigrants from a wide range of linguistic backgrounds (*Multicultural London English/Multicultural Paris-French (MLE/MPF)*, Gardner-Chloros, Cheshire & Secova 2010-2014). I do so by taking what Hymes termed ‘the longer view’, analyzing how ways of speaking are linked to social, cultural and political history, and how they express and interpret larger forces for socialisation, institutionalization, and reproduction (Hymes 1996:19). These forces have far-reaching and sometimes unforeseen consequences: although we did not realise it at the time, they influenced fieldwork decisions made at the earliest stages of research concerning the selection of participants and the location of fieldwork sites.

The MLE/MPF project was one of many carried out in European cities during the last thirty years or so in response to the surge in global immigration and consequent increase in linguistic diversity.¹ Since the 1960s, immigration to OECD countries has more than tripled, accompanied by substantial growth in urban agglomerations in these countries and a dramatic increase in the number of languages spoken. This is particularly the case for European cities (Svendsen (2015:3). In Oslo, for example, more than 125 languages are now spoken in the schools (Svendsen and Quist 2010:xiii); in London, the number is over 300².

Research investigating the outcomes of this unprecedented amount of linguistic diversity is sometimes broadly categorized as practice-based approaches versus structural variety approaches (Svendsen 2015), reflecting the different aims and methodologies. Practice-based research is usually qualitative and often ethnographic. It has documented, for example, how in a single utterance speakers may combine elements from different ambient heritage languages with the host language, without necessarily being fluent in any of the

heritage languages themselves (e.g. Dorleijn and Nortier 2013:1). It has also explored how young people combine their varied linguistic resources with other semiotic resources to construct social meanings and negotiate identities in interaction (e.g. Quist 2008) and, more generally, a wide range of creative and dynamic language practices (e.g. Li Wei 2018). A plethora of terms, including ‘translanguaging’ and ‘polylanguaging’, reflects the challenge that these kinds of practices pose to conventional ideas of languages as fixed, bounded entities.

The structural variety approach tends to take a social dialectology perspective, aiming to understand processes of language variation and change within the context of large-scale linguistic diversity. The focus is on innovations in the host language that cannot be traced to direct language contact with any one language since the number of languages in the mix is so great. Instead, rather like the features of Creole languages, innovations emerge from a process of unguided second language acquisition (Winford 2003:235-7) as children with a range of different first languages grow up together and collectively acquire the host language from each other. Here too there is a challenge to conventional thinking. The new urban dialects can be considered a new typological variety of language with characteristics of both a contact variety and a local dialect (Cheshire, Fox, Kerswill & Torgersen 2013). New urban dialects of this kind include Multicultural London English (MLE) (Cheshire et al 2011) and *Kiezdeutsch* in Berlin (Wiese, Freywald, Schalowski & Mayr 2012). The comparative research project that is the focus here took the social dialectology approach.

Confusingly, perhaps, the term ‘multiethnolect’ is used to refer to both new urban dialects and the ways of speaking analysed in the practice approach. In both cases the innovative forms and practices are dynamic and highly variable. Much recent research analyses the language of urban youth (see e.g. Kern and Selting 2011, Nortier and Svendsen 2015) and it is not yet known to what extent the new features and practices may be age-

graded. Cheshire, Nortier & Adger's overview (2015) of the available evidence concludes that some, at least, are not. They often emerge in the informal spontaneous interaction of linguistically diverse multiethnic peer groups and are therefore best considered as characteristic of particular communities of practice rather than of a bounded speech community (a concept that in any case is a troubled one; e.g. Rampton 2010). A defining feature is that they are used by all members of a peer group, including monolingual speakers with no recent immigrant background. The term was coined in opposition to 'ethnolect', which generally refers to a variety of a majority language showing the effect of a period of bilingualism with one specific heritage language in a community (Clyne 2000). The term 'multiethnolect' seems more appropriate for linguistic features and language practices that are not restricted to one ethnic group nor to the effect of a heritage language, but it has been rightly criticized for implying a focus on one dimension of social variation, ethnicity, at the expense of other relevant dimensions. Some researchers prefer terms such as 'contemporary urban vernaculars' or 'urban youth speech styles', but these too are open to criticism (Cheshire et al 2015:4-5). I therefore continue to use 'multiethnolect' here, though since the MLE/MPF project took the social dialectology approach, in this article the term refers to new features of English and French. The incorporation of *-lect* in the term parallels other descriptive concepts such as *idiolect* or *dialect* (Quist 2008:8) which although often linked to an individual or to a particular geographical area or social group have always been seen by dialectologists in terms of a set of linguistic features rather than as a bounded entity.

2. LONDON AND PARIS

London and Paris are similar in physical size and population density. As capital cities and, arguably, the two major ex-metropolises, they both have a long history of immigration which, as in other European cities, has increased dramatically in recent years. Differences in the

collection of official statistics make exact comparisons difficult, but a rough comparison is that the Greater London area has 36 % of the total immigrant population of the UK (Vargos-Silva and Rienzo 2018) while the Paris region has 40 per cent of that of France (Sagot and Dupoizat 2011), in each case more than any other city in the country.

The emergence of MLE was explored in two research projects in multilingual areas of London (Kerswill, Cheshire, Fox & Torgersen 2004-2007, 2007-2010). We found that young people from diverse language backgrounds did not mix features from different ‘languages’ (in the first sense of the term multiethnolect) but instead used a variable repertoire of innovative English features, including near monophthongs in place of the diphthongs traditionally characteristic of the local London area (e.g. in the FACE, PRICE and GOAT lexical sets), a staccato rhythm, a new pronoun (*man*), and a new quotative expression (*this is +speaker*); Cheshire et al 2013. These features were part of the speakers’ ‘vernacular’ in Labov’s sense of the term: their basic, unmarked, unreflecting, unmonitored way of speaking.

Gardner-Chloros et al (2010-2014) used the same research design, as far as possible, to explore the language of young people in multilingual areas of Paris, expecting to find evidence of a multiethnolect there too. However, although young people in Paris used new linguistic forms relative to older speakers, the new forms were either common in young people’s French elsewhere in France, whether or not the speakers were part of a multiethnic community (for example *genre* and *être là* as new quotative expressions) or they were used only by specific social groups – usually young males with North African backgrounds – and also attested in other French cities (for example, affricated initial /t/ and /d/ before high front vowels, also attested in Marseille, Grenoble, Perpignan and elsewhere (Jamin, Trimaille and Gasquet-Cyrus 2006)). There was nothing in the Parisian data that could be considered part of a multiethnolect. Paris, then, is an anomaly amongst European urban cities with a high rate of recent diverse immigration.

The fact that what appear to be similar processes of population movement, immigration, and globalization have produced such different linguistic outcomes in similar areas of London and Paris calls for an explanation, and this is what I attempt to give in this article. In section 3 I briefly describe the research design of the London and Paris projects. Section 4 shows how differences in the classification of citizens in England and France reflect national ideologies with a sociopolitical origin. Section 5 considers how these national ideologies are reflected in the histories of the education systems of the two countries, and how they affect the material circumstances of language development for children of recent immigrant origin. Section 6 deals with sociohistorical reasons for the physical location of multiethnic neighbourhoods in London and Paris, and for the beliefs and attitudes of young people from these neighbourhoods towards their city: in other words, to their social construction of place. Where space permits, the discourse of the participants in the London and Paris projects is used to illustrate and justify the arguments. Throughout, we see that young people in both London and Paris use language to show who they are and how they relate to the wider society, and that the specific linguistic resources they use for this purpose are shaped by larger forces for socialization and institutionalization, which differ in Britain and France. Section 7 discusses enregisterment in the wider society of the two different ways of marking what can be seen as a specific type of urban identity. The final section considers the implications for our wider understanding of why and how multiethnolects can emerge.

3. COMPARATIVE PROJECTS IN LONDON AND PARIS

As mentioned above, the MLE/MPF project replicated in Paris the research design of the London projects, though funding restraints necessitated a smaller number of participants in Paris than in London. In each city, a fieldworker recorded participants with one or more

friends in informal semi-spontaneous conversations. There were 77 participants in Paris, aged between 8 and 19; in the second London project there were 73 participants from the same age range and in the first London project a further 51 aged 16-19³, with roughly similar proportions of males and females in each city. The participants included a mix of first and second generation immigrants from a diverse range of countries and language backgrounds: 39 young people from 17 countries in Paris, including e.g. Mali, Algeria, Argentina and Portugal; and 63 from 14 different countries in London, including e.g. Ghana, Jamaica, Colombia and Albania. In Paris there were also 23 monolingual 'Franco-French' speakers from families not of recent immigrant origin, and 15 young people of mixed parentage; in London there were 46 'Anglos' and 15 speakers of mixed origin. In terms of their parents' occupations, all participants could be considered as from the lower end of the social class spectrum. In both London and Paris the semi-spontaneous speech of older speakers aged 70 and above was used as a comparison, to identify potential innovations.

In each city, the young people were asked to list ten friends with whom they spent their time. We then gave them a multi-ethnic friendship network score between 1 and 5, with 1 indicating that all their friends were of the same ethnicity as themselves, 2 that up to 20 per cent were of a different ethnicity, and 3, 4 and 5 indicating, respectively, that up to 40, 60 and 80 per cent were from a different ethnic group. In London, no speaker scored less than 3, so between 60 and 100 per cent of their friends were from a different ethnic group to their own, and as many Anglos as non-Anglos had scores of 4 or 5. In Paris, 75 per cent of the speakers (58) had a score of 3 or more, but only the non-Franco-French had scores of 4 or 5. For the Franco-French speakers scores of 1 or 2 predominated, and none had scores higher than 3. Multiethnic friendship groups were typical of the young people in both cities, then, but more so in London than in Paris.

Where the two projects differed was in the fieldwork locations. In London, the research site was selected on the basis of the 2001 Census data, the most recent Census at the time. There was no language question in that Census, so data on the ethnic diversity of an area served as a proxy for its multilingualism. Hackney, an inner city borough (and, for the second project, the additional neighbouring borough of Islington) was chosen as the main fieldwork site because more than half the population there consisted of very diverse ethnic minority groups; ‘white British’ speakers, then, were in the minority. Figure 1 shows the location of Hackney (with a bolded outline) and its proximity to the City of London (the small white rectangle in the centre of the Figure).



Figure 1. Location of Hackney

The French national census, similarly, does not ask about language, but it does not ask about ethnicity either. Instead, citizens are classified by nationality, operationalised as a division into *Français* ('French') and *étrangers* ('foreigners'). Many of the former French colonies are DOMs, *départements d'outre mer*. These are overseas French territories,

administered as part of France, so first or second generation immigrants from, say, French Guiana, who may well speak French Creole and/or one of the at least ten languages other than French spoken there, will be classed as ‘Français’ and be indistinguishable in the statistics from a monolingual French-speaker born and brought up in mainland France. The category of ‘foreigners’ is equally misleading from a linguistic point of view. Foreigners are people who live in France but were not born there, so first generation immigrants from Mali, say, who may well be bilingual in French and an African language, would be included in the category of ‘foreigner’; but their children, who may also know the home heritage language, would automatically obtain French citizenship at the age of 18 and thus be classified as ‘French’, and their bilingualism would be hidden⁴.

Thus the UK classifies its citizens on the basis of ethnicity, France on the basis of nationality. These differences are not simply an inconvenience for social scientists looking for publicly available information in order to determine suitable fieldwork sites; as we will see, they reflect culturally and historically-based national ideologies that affect social policies and practices and that, in turn, are one reason for the different outcomes of language contact in London and Paris.

In the absence of publicly available information on the linguistic or ethnic composition of different Parisian neighbourhoods, we chose fieldwork sites in several different *banlieues* (‘suburbs’) known to have a high concentration of recent immigrants. Figure 2 shows the sites where we worked. Although there are some expensive, leafy *banlieues* on the outskirts of Paris, the term is mostly associated with the tower blocks of poor housing estates (*cités*). Their location in the periphery of the city contrasts with London, where the most ethnically diverse areas tend to be inner city areas. This difference in the physical location of linguistically diverse areas in London and Paris reflects the different cultural and political histories of the two cities, as we will see later, and affects the way the

young people in London and Paris orient to the city. It is a further reason for the different outcomes of language contact in the two cities.

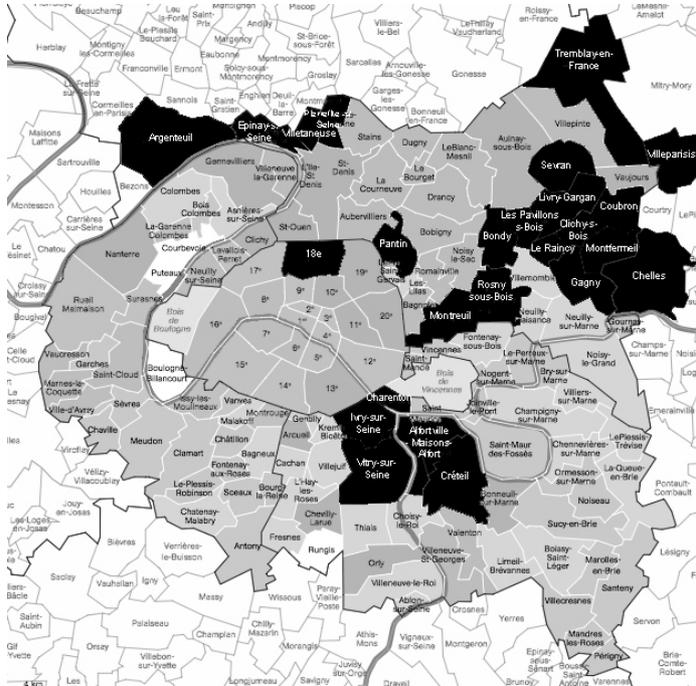


Figure 2. Fieldwork sites in Paris

4. NATIONAL IDEOLOGIES: INTEGRATION AND ASSIMILATION

Paradoxically, the classification of citizens in England and France, though very different, has in each case the same aim of working towards social equality. In France, using nationality as the basis for classifying citizens stems from the Republican ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity. The Constitution affirms the legal equality of all citizens irrespective of their origin, race or religion (Constitution du 4 octobre, 1958, article 2), so it would be illegal for the Census to ask about these factors (Gilbert and Keane 2017). There is no language question in the French national Census because it is assumed that everyone should speak French, in line with the prevailing national ideology of ‘one language - one people’.

In England, the Census question about ethnicity dates from 1991, as part of the drive to combat racial discrimination in society (Bonnet and Carrington 2000). The concept 'ethnic minority' was introduced to monitor equality and diversity in different spheres of life such as employment, the criminal justice system, access to health services, and education. The categories used have of course been criticized, not least for being based on what should be an irrelevant combination of skin colour and geography, but they continue to be used for monitoring equality and diversity, a process that is not allowed in France. The focus on difference that the categories entail goes hand in hand with a recognition of cultural diversity, summed up in a well-known quote from Roy Jenkins, a former Home Secretary: integration, he claimed, is 'not a flattening process of uniformity, but cultural diversity coupled with equal opportunity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance' (Jenkins, 1967:267).

Thus although both France and Britain classify their citizens on the basis of a national ideology founded on the principle of equality, the French approach is one of assimilation to a nation of universal French citizens, such that everyone is assumed to be the same, whereas in England the approach is integration within a nation made up of different cultural groups. In France, the result is the suppression of difference; in Britain, on the contrary, there is a positive orientation to ideologies of multiculturalism.

4.1. National ideologies and young people's discourse

A logical outcome of the UK national ideology might be for young people in London to celebrate their diversity by using many different ethnically related ways of speaking. In fact, however, the young participants in Hackney all spoke MLE, albeit to different extents (simplifying somewhat, MLE features were used more often by 'non-Anglo' speakers and by those Anglos with multi-ethnic friendship groups; Cheshire et al 2011).

The fieldworker asked most participants directly about their ethnicity, but for the majority the question was irrelevant. Dom's⁵ response in (1) was typical: he clearly does not understand the question, giving first the country where he was born, and then interpreting the question in terms of race. National origin, race and ethnicity are of course intertwined, but Dom's final point shows that none of these are important to him; what counts, instead, is getting on with people in his mixed community. In the extract, FW is the fieldworker. Overlaps are shown by square brackets, additional information is given in angled or curled brackets, a full stop indicates a short (less than 0.5) seconds pause and a question mark indicates an utterance interpreted as a question.

Extract 1

FW: how would you place yourself in terms of ethnicity?

Dom: what's ethni what did you say?

FW: ethnic group [Dom: yeah] sorry

Dom: what's that?

FW: erm you know which erm whether you're Asian or English or British or how

Dom: Colombian

FW: you would describe yourself as [Colombian

Dom: [Colombian as I know like . a lot of black boys

FW: yeah and and where do you see yourself fitting in with other groups?

Dom: don't know {unclear} so far like I'm good to get along with I'm friendly

Some speakers, on the other hand, were aware of the ethnic categories used in institutional discourse. In (2), Tina and Mark discuss the fact that Tina's ethnicity may help her realise her ambition to be a police cadet.

Extract 2

FW: mm are the police recruiting from this area?

Tina: no not yet

Mark: but they want ethnic minorities though innit

Tina: yeah I'm half Indian

Mark: yeah that's what I'm saying you'll get in

Tina: so you know I should get in [FW: mm] . there's nothing religious about me though
but you know <laugh> I might get in . no I'll get in . hopefully

The evidence gleaned from the London recordings, then, suggests that the national policy of integration has achieved the desired effect, at least in the ethnically mixed area where the research was carried out. Other than occasional spontaneous mentions such as in (2), race and ethnicity were discussed only when the fieldworker asked about them. The dominant discourse was inclusive and mainly anti-racist (Kerswill 2013:159), as in (3), where a white British speaker contrasts attitudes in Hackney with those she believes are held in towns outside London (Chelmsford has a 90 per cent white British population⁶).

Extract 3

Jess: like . Chelmsford and places like that . no offence I'm not saying they're all racist but most of them are . I'll be honest and I can't stand racism . most of them are like . "are you going out with an asian boy?" yeah . "what a girl's going out with a black boy?" mate . we're not in the eighteenth century anymore . get a grip

This suggests, then, that for young people in Hackney, speaking the same dialect, MLE, might express a multiracial, multiethnic identity that they see as different from that of people living in less multi-ethnic neighbourhoods (such as Chelmsford). We will see later how this multi-ethnic identity is constructed in relation to place.

What about Paris? We might expect the French national ideology to lead young people to speak the same way as each other, whatever their linguistic or ethnic origin, reflecting their assimilation into a unified national culture. However, as noted in section 2, there were some linguistic differences between different ethnic groups. Furthermore, the accents of young people recently arrived from other countries were sometimes mimicked, albeit teasingly, and, unlike London, in Paris there was open recognition of racial and ethnic diversity. The participants spontaneously referred to different ethnic groups in their discourse, mainly using *Verlan* terms. *Verlan* is a well-known type of French back-slang, where the syllables of a word are reversed: a few examples from our participants are *renoi* (from *noir*, 'black'), *rebeu* (double *Verlan*, from *Verlan beur*, itself *Verlan* from *arabe*, 'Arab'), *noich* (from *chinois*, 'Chinese'), and *céfran* (from *français*, 'Franco-French'). Few of these terms are new; Doran (2007) saw them as a way for young speakers in the *banlieues* to resist the national discourse of assimilation and to express their cultural diversity in their own way, with their own language.

Mainstream French terms referring to ethnicity sometimes occurred in playful discourse, as in (4). Here Sami arrives late for the recording session, and is accused by his friends of acting like 'a real Arab'. Sami takes no notice, and simply apologises for being late.

Extract 4

Nazir: *t'as couru . je savais que t'allais oublier toi*

you've been running . I knew you'd forget

Abdel: *t'es un vrai arabe toi*

you're a real Arab

Nazir: *toujours en retard cet arabe*

always late that Arab

Sami: *bonjour . excusez moi . j'étais en train de jouer à un jeu là*

hello . sorry . I was in the middle of playing a game [on the playstation]

In (5), similarly, Sami makes a joke that repeats another negative stereotype of mainstream French culture – that people from *les banlieues* are likely to shoplift. The joke involves word play on *voler*, which means both ‘to fly’ and ‘to steal’. Abdel anticipates the punchline but then plays along with the joke, apparently interpreting *vole* as ‘flies’, and allowing Sami to eventually interpret it as ‘steal’ in the sense of shoplifting, with the joke on himself.

Extract 5

Sami: *hé j'ai une autre blague . c'est qui qui vole comme euh super héros c'est qui qui . qui vole .*

hey I've got another joke . who is it who flies/steals like er super hero who is it who . who flies/steals

Abdel: *les arabes*

Arabs

Sami: *non qui vole dans les airs*

no who flies in the air

FW: *l'avion*

a plane

Sami: *non . non mais en super héros c'est Superman*

no no but a super hero it's Superman

Abdel: Superman

Sami: *c'est qui qui (.) qui aime les chauve-souris?*

who is it who loves bats?

Abdel: *c'est Spid-*

it's Spid –

Moustafa: *Batman*

Abdel: *euh c'est Batman*

er it's Batman

Sami: *qui vole dans les magasins?*

who flies /steals in shops?

Abdel: *Spiderman*

Sami: *Musulmans* <rires>

Muslims <laughter>

Moustafa: *qui qui qui qui*

who who who who

Abdel: *Musulmanes* <rires>

Muslims <laughter>

Sami: *elle était pas mal celle-là* <rires>

that wasn't bad that one <laughter>

Many researchers have analysed the use of humour around race and ethnicity in interaction, noting among other functions its ability to mitigate the effect of stigmatizing, exclusionary and hurtful mainstream discourses (van de Weerd 2019:252). There is a vast amount of interactionist work on the (re)production of boundaries and the use of terms

associated with ethnicity and race in the dynamic construction of identity and social relations among friends (e.g. Jaspers 2011, Madsen 2012; many more could be cited). The Paris recordings certainly merit this kind of analysis. Here, though, I simply note that this kind of discourse is the reverse of what was found in London: instead of talk that is explicitly anti-racist and inclusive, here there is an explicit focus on racial and ethnic difference. Yet in both London and Paris the discourses create solidarity amongst the young people, albeit in different ways. Despite the ideals of multiculturalism and tolerance in England and equality and liberty in France, in both cities our participants had experienced racial prejudice and negative stereotyping. There is talk in both sets of recordings about young people who are not white being stopped and searched by the police, and being followed by store detectives when visiting department stores. In Hackney, group solidarity is constructed by speaking a new, multiethnic dialect. In Paris, a discourse that reinforces awareness of ethnic diversity in the face of a national ideology that erases diversity, performs the same function. In both cities, then, the language behavior of the young people can be contextualized within national ideologies that result from different historical approaches to the achievement of social equality (an aim that has not been achieved in either city).

5. EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS

English and French national ideologies are reflected in the social institutions and language ideologies of the two countries. I focus mainly on education here, since the ages of the participants mean that for them the school is an important social institution. Educational policies and practice differ greatly in England and France, and these differences have important outcomes for the way that bilingual children acquire English in London and French in Paris, and for the potential for linguistic innovation.

The French education system, in harmony with the national ideology, insists that all children must be treated the same, taking no account of social, religious, ethnic or political background (Helot and Young 2002: 97). In state schools a centralised education system has existed for at least 200 years, though some flexibility was introduced in 1989 (Raveaud 2003:2). A National Curriculum covers all disciplines and all class levels from nursery school to the final year of secondary school, until recently supported by standard textbooks (the availability of digital resources is causing some changes; see Geudet, Bueno-Ravel, Modeste and Trouche 2017). It is not too much of an exaggeration to say that all children in France, as well as in the overseas French *départements*, follow the same curriculum at the same time, using the same books. Traditionally, more of the school day is devoted to whole class teaching (Broadfoot, Osborne, Planel and Shape 2000). There is a focus on written French – for example, teachers still give dictation exercises to their pupils – and the approach to language is highly normative (Helot and Young 2002:98). Spoken French is part of the National Curriculum, but it is taught only in order to help acquire the written language (*Bulletin officiel de l'éducation nationale* 2018).

In contrast, education in England was not centralized until 1999, when the National Curriculum was introduced for secondary schools. Official advice still tends to be framed in terms of 'good practice' rather than as a directive that must be followed (Costley and Leung 2013: 29). The main philosophy of education assumes that children learn at different speeds and in different ways; they cannot, therefore, be treated the same. Unlike in France, the school is considered responsible not only for the intellectual development of the child but also for physical, moral, social, spiritual and cultural development (Raveaud 2003). The National Curriculum for English insists on the importance of spoken language, which is said to play a role in pupils' development across the entire curriculum – cognitively, socially and linguistically (DfE 2013:1). Teaching practice changes frequently, in line with changes in

government policies, but it is still the case, as found by Broadfoot et al (2000), that children are expected to learn more often than in France through work sheets, problem solving and investigations, receiving attention from the teacher in small groups. There is therefore more talk in English classrooms between students, as they work on their projects and investigations.

These different education systems result in different approaches to the education of children who arrive at school not speaking the national language. In France, newly-arrived immigrant children aged 6 or above are assessed for their ability in French and, if deemed necessary, sent to government-funded classes where they receive daily instruction in French. They are given two years at most to become proficient in French and to then be integrated into mainstream classes where they follow the same National Curriculum as their peers. This means that they acquire French at school through formal second language instruction, with a clear target model of French – the language of the teacher.

In England, early responses to increasing numbers of non-English-speaking immigrant children were similar to that just described for France, but this began to change during the 1980s when, in the context of the official drive towards equal opportunities, withdrawal from mainstream classrooms was seen as unacceptable social segregation. Linguistic diversity in the classroom is now presented as a way of promoting sociocultural understanding that will eventually impact positively on the wider society (Costley 2014: 284). Since 1999 the national strategy has been for children who arrive at school not speaking English to be included right from the start in the mainstream classroom. The official guidance is to adapt the curriculum, use bilingual teaching material and have bilingual teaching assistants who speak the children's home language, and to encourage children to collaborate with other pupils. Thus newly arrived immigrant children acquire English more informally in

school than in France, not only from their teacher but also from bilingual teaching assistants and, importantly, from other children. Since the English spoken by their interlocutors is very varied (including, for the participants in the London projects, Indian English, Nigerian English, Jamaican English, traditional London English and very many different learner varieties), the idea of producing a target model of English has little relevance (even if a single target model had been available).

National ideologies of language seem to have also penetrated the social institution of the family. Some young people in Paris mentioned that their parents insisted on their speaking French at home rather than their heritage language. This is borne out by figures from a 2008 *Ined* (Institut national d'études démographiques) and *INSEE* (Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques) survey showing that 53 per cent of children in families with two immigrant parents from the same country acquire French from their parents (Condon and Régnard 2010: para 8). In London, in contrast, several participants mentioned speaking their heritage language at home, and some said they acted as interpreters for parents who could not speak English. The outcome in London for bilingual children growing up in families such as these is that their English will be influenced by their peer group at an earlier age than children in more monolingual families. Since the peer group is linguistically diverse, norms are flexible and there is a great deal of linguistic variation, some of which crystallizes into the features of MLE as the children reach adolescence.

In Paris there is less scope for the cognitive and communicative processes that drive linguistic innovation to have a free rein; if innovations do emerge the normative ideologies surrounding the French language in school (and beyond) make them more likely to be replaced by standard French forms as the children grow older. Some of the younger non-Franco-French children in the Paris project, in fact, do use forms typical of untutored

informal language acquisition, such as regularized plurals (e.g. [nɔʁmal], *normals* rather than [nɔʁmo], *normaux*), but they are not used by older participants.

In summary, different possibilities for acquiring the host language during spontaneous spoken interaction stem in large part from the different language ideologies in England and France. These, in turn, reflect the different political histories, national ideologies and language ideologies of the two countries, which create different material contexts for the acquisition of French and English in the communities researched in London and Paris. In London the context creates the possibility for a multiethnolect to emerge; in Paris it does not.

6. PLACE

There are historical reasons for the different locations of multiethnic areas in London and Paris. Most of the housing estates in the Paris suburbs were built in the late 1940s and early 1950s to ease a housing shortage created by war damage and exacerbated by immigration from rural areas of France and from elsewhere in the world, plus the need to house migrant workers living in shanty towns around the edge of the city. The concentration of low cost housing in the suburbs continued a long tradition of separating the richer and poorer sections of the population of Paris (Rosello 1997). Today, the centre of Paris is the preserve of the richer sections of the population, and contrasts vividly with the bleaker environment of the *banlieues*. Media and public discourse exaggerates the proportions of immigrants living in the *banlieues*, such that the term ‘has become a byword for areas inhabited by minority ethnic groups and particularly by ‘foreigners’, Muslims and, most especially, ‘Arabs’ (Grewal 2007:46). The *banlieues* are typically portrayed as dangerous and violent, and the young speakers in Paris were acutely aware of these stereotypes.

Many of the central London boroughs are also home to privileged sections of the population. However, despite a longstanding tendency for richer people to move out of the city to leafy suburbs or rural locations further afield, commuting from there to London to work (Britain 2011), other inner city boroughs have always been more socially diverse (Cheshire 2009: 356). As in Paris, war damage reduced the available housing stock, and government policies relocated poorer sections of the population to areas outside the city. Some of the original population remained, however, later encouraged by the 1980 Housing Act which allowed social housing tenants to buy their homes at a discounted price, and they were joined by immigrant populations looking for cheaper housing. More recently, many inner London boroughs have become still more socially mixed, as affluent young people buy cheaper houses and gentrify them. For sociohistorical reasons, then, the participants in London lived in a more socially mixed neighbourhood than the participants in Paris. They may not interact much with the middle classes who live nearby, but they are not physically separated from them, as the young people in Paris are.

6.1. Place in young people's discourse

Perhaps as a result of these different histories, participants in London and Paris expressed very different attitudes to their cities. Many young people in Hackney considered themselves Londoners. In (6), for example, Serena, a 16 year old female speaker of AfroCaribbean origin, reflects on a recent terrorist incident in central London when a bomb exploded on a London Transport bus. She is aware that some people may be conscious of racial difference but, for her, London is a multiracial, multiethnic city of "different types of people", and she has a place amongst them.

Extract 6

when disasters happen like public and national things happen that's when people come together and no longer see it as a . as us being a different race because at the end of the day . people that were on the bus were all different types of people so therefore got affected by the same thing . so natural and national disasters that happen in Britain . everyone feels it . and sometimes I think like religiously speaking . sometimes I think . like them things . should happen . but there is still a benefit from like disasters . because people do come together and we realise that people do get affected . so yeah . so I'm definitely a Londoner.

The centre of London is only about 5 miles from Hackney. Many young people talk about going there, for example to nightclubs, for shopping or for work experience while at school. It was generally mentioned in positive terms, as safer than Hackney, where local travel within the neighbourhood and to other inner city suburbs was presented as dangerous because of rivalries between gangs staking territorial claims to their own local areas (Travis 2013). The participants' view of their neighbourhood corresponds to the image presented in the media: Hackney is sometimes named 'murder mile' because of the amount of drug and gun-related crime that occurs there (Ilbury 2018). Yet despite the perceived dangers of living in their inner city neighbourhood, many speakers make it clear that they prefer Hackney to elsewhere. In (7), for example, Dave recalls visiting his sisters in outer London, which he found too quiet.

Extract 7

Dave: I'm used to all the noise all the drunks coming up the back of my road and that . too used to it now so kinda miss them when I go away <laugh>

Young people in Hackney, then, see themselves as Londoners, but as ‘new’ Londoners who, unlike previous generations, belong to an inclusive multiethnic community, albeit one that is ‘tough’ and dangerous to travel around in.

There is no indication from their discourse that the young people in Paris thought of themselves as Parisians. For them, ‘Parisian’ refers to (white) people living in the centre of Paris. Secova, Gardner-Chloros & Atangana (2018) describe how young people construct their identities in opposition to these Parisians. Their discourse shows their awareness of the stereotypes of their neighbourhoods as populated mainly by Arabs: in (8) for example, Melinda describes how young people talk in her *cit * by quoting some Arabic words, *wesh* and *hamdoullah*, and some slang (*ma gueule*), and she describes young people from the *cit s* with the term frequently used in the media, the *wesh-wesh*.

Extract 8

Melinda: alors c’est “wesh ma gueule   va hamdoullah” oui enfin c’est vraiment  
c’est vraiment la cit  c’est vraiment les weshwesh

*so it’s “wesh ma gueule   va hamdoullah” yes it’s really that it’s really the
cit  it’s really the weshwesh*

The participants are equally aware of stereotypes of their neighbourhoods as violent and dangerous but, unlike the young people in London, they maintain that their own neighbourhood is safe, that there are too many prejudiced views about the *banlieues* and that if you behave sensibly there will be no problems. Stressing that their experience of living in *les banlieues* is different from the views held by the wider society is a further way of expressing their separation and divergence from that society.

It is sometimes claimed that young people living in the Paris suburbs rarely leave their own neighbourhood, partly because of poor and expensive public transport (Hornsby & Jones 2013:103). However, the young participants in Paris were less rooted in their neighbourhood than those in London. They mention travelling to Paris and to other suburbs, for example to play football against neighbouring teams or to visit *Fnac* (a chainstore selling video games and electronic equipment). Relative poverty is a factor here: although the London speakers sometimes travelled beyond London on shopping expeditions or to visit relatives, they rarely went away on holiday and there was little talk of travel abroad other than to visit their families' country of origin. Most of the Paris speakers, on the other hand, had travelled beyond the city and even beyond France on school trips or for holidays. Again, ethnicity is often a spontaneous part of their discourse on these topics: one speaker says, for example, that his future holiday in Spain means that he will miss Ramadan this year because he will not be expected to fast while on a plane; another mentions a recent trip to Amsterdam where he saw Algerians like himself.

Not only did the young people in Paris travel more often and further afield than young people in London, they also discussed events outside their neighbourhood and even outside the country. There is talk about politics (often with the familiar focus on ethnicity, mentioning, for example, that they hoped Marine Le Pen, leader of the rightwing anti-immigration *Front National* political party, would not be elected in the forthcoming Presidential elections). And while in both London and Paris there is talk about football, only in Paris is there discussion of international teams such as Real Madrid or teams in the English Premier League.

An understanding of place today must include cyberspace (Johnstone 2004:70). This is certainly relevant for the young people in Paris. One speaker has a Facebook friend in

Germany, whom she met on a school exchange visit. Others discuss videos and games that they watch on YouTube or play on their playstations – mainly American cartoons and films, but also Japanese *anime*. There is a historical dimension to these differences; *Youtube* did not take off seriously until 2005, and smartphones became widely available at about the same time (Pothitos 2016). The Paris project was carried out between 2010 and 2014, whereas the first Hackney project was between 2004-2007, when digital culture had scarcely got underway. This crucial timing contributes to young people in Paris having looser ties to their neighbourhood as well as a greater orientation to the wider world.

People's experience of physical and social place shapes both their linguistic behaviour and their language ideology (Johnstone 2012). This is confirmed by Secova et al (2018), who show how the ethnicised opposition between Parisians and those living in the *banlieus* is part of the language ideology of ethnically diverse students in predominantly working class schools in the northern suburbs. In response to audio clips from the Paris project, the students distanced themselves from one speaker whom they (wrongly) perceived as being from central Paris with comments such as "*c'est une Parisienne elle parle un peu trop bien à mon gout*" ('she is a Parisien she speaks a bit too well for my taste'). The speaker perceived as of immigrant origin, on the other hand, was seen as one of them: "*il parle normalement, mes amies et moi-même parlons comme ça*" 'he speaks normally, my friends and me talk like that'.

Young people in London, then, identify as Londoners, but as a specific type of Londoner: one from a tough multiethnic neighbourhood that differs from quiet outer city areas. They see themselves as speaking differently from others in their socially mixed neighbourhood, notably the middle classes who speak RP, and the traditional white Cockneys. Kerswill (2013) reports an occasion when one participant is reading aloud the word list that was part of the interview format. She plays about, using mock Cockney and RP

accents, and her friend berates her for not using her “normal” way of speaking. Clearly, both speakers are familiar with these two accents, and they see their own way of speaking as distinct from them. Young people also see their way of speaking as distinct from the English they hear outside London (for example, from their relatives). They refer to their own speech as “slang”, “urban speech” or, occasionally, as “gangsta”.

Young people in Paris also construct a multiethnic identity, but here it is often expressed as an Arab *cit * identity, in opposition to what they see as the posh white Parisians who live in the centre of Paris. Their frequent references to ethnic identity reinforce the binary opposition between the Parisians and themselves; for our participants, language, place and ethnicity are intertwined. Historical processes of town planning in both London and Paris and the growing relevance of cyberspace, then, play a large part in explaining the different orientations to the neighbourhood and the wider city.

It is relevant to note that the contrast between the two cities may reflect wider national contrasts. The town planning system that located immigrant housing in distant parts of Paris was part of a national plan that included Lyon and Marseille (Bernardot 1999). As in Paris, in Lyon and Marseille the multiethnic housing estates are located far from the central areas of the city; and, like the *cit s* in the Paris *banlieues*, the estates are represented in the media as dangerous and violent. Evers (f-c) describes how young people from one multiethnic housing estate in Marseille display their identity as members of the estate’s youth subculture by ‘layering’ the local Marseille accent with Arabic-sourced phonology and lexis from Arabic dialects and other local heritage languages. She suggests that this is an age-grading phenomenon: children first acquire local Marseille French as a first or early second language and are then socialized by their older peers during adolescence to use the youth variety. Evers argues that speaking in this way allows young people to present themselves both as from

Marseille and as ‘youth of colour’. It distances them from white French people living in the more affluent central and southern areas of Marseille, as well as from their parents’ generation, and challenges ‘anachronistic notions of there being one cultural, ethnic, and religious metric against which Frenchness is measured’. We have no evidence of age-grading in our Paris data as yet, but there are clear parallels between Evers’ findings and our own: in both Marseille and Paris the young people are separated from the wider city in both senses of ‘place’: as a physical entity, in that they live far from the centre, and also as a socially constructed concept in terms of their shared experiences and orientations. Perhaps, then, a significant contrast is not merely between Paris and London but between France and the rest of Europe (or, at least, those multiethnic European cities that have been investigated so far).

7. ENREGISTERMENT

A further set of relevant cultural-historical processes are those associated with enregisterment, defined by Agha (2003: 242) as processes ‘through which a linguistic repertoire becomes differentiable within a language as a socially recognized register of forms’. The socially recognized forms are often associated with place (Johnstone, Andrus & Danielson 2006) or with social groups, as in the case of RP (Agha 2003).

Both types of association are relevant to London and Paris. In both cities, the ways of speaking discussed here are associated in the wider society with place and social persona: in each case a ‘cool’ tough figure from a multiethnic urban neighbourhood. Ethnically diverse actors in cult films set in inner city London neighbourhoods, such as *Attack the Block*, a 2011 British science fiction horror film, adopt the linguistic features typical of MLE, as do ethnically mixed characters in more mainstream TV programmes set in multiethnic parts of London (e.g. *Phoneshop*, a Channel 4 sitcom). MLE is heard in advertisements to sell, for example, mobile phones (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VkJCgqckoejg>) or trainers

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MzjNntEKIX0>), spoken in each of these examples by young black actors. Grime music performers use MLE (Adams 2018); Grime emerged in East London but is popular far beyond London now and may be influencing young people's English in multiethnic neighbourhoods in other cities (Drummond 2018). There are anecdotal reports of MLE features being used for stylistic purposes by young people from less ethnically mixed neighbourhoods when they want to perform a tough urban identity.

For Paris, stand-up comics of North and Saharan African origins such as Thomas Ngijol and Jamel Debbouze play an important role in enregistering a particular type of discourse as associated with the *banlieues*. Vigouroux (2015) analyses how these comedians shift accents to portray a character as a first generation immigrant or to index an ethnic group or social background, how they mix *Verlan*, English, vernacular French, African French, and standard French, and how they make frequent references to ethnicity. They were popular with many of the young people in Paris, who watched them on YouTube. Vigouroux sees the comics' use of heteroglossic linguistic resources as the creation of a new urban persona that 'both encompasses and transcends racial or ethnic categories in France's socio-political context, where ethnicity and race are left out of the grand national narrative' (p.245). In other words, like MLE, this discourse is a way of indexing a young urban multiethnic identity⁶.

8. CONCLUSION: WHY DO MULTIETHNOLECTS ARISE?

I now return to the question posed earlier: why have similar processes of globalization, immigration and superdiversity resulted in different linguistic outcomes in London and Paris? The answer, I suggest, has wider implications for our understanding of the emergence of multiethnolects more generally. The previous discussion suggests four main factors that are necessary for a multiethnolect to emerge.

First, a precondition is that the ‘host’ language must be swamped by other languages. We saw in section 3 that in Hackney, white British speakers are outnumbered by other ethnic groups whom we assume have a first language that is not English. It is important for there to be several other languages and for no language or language type to be dominant; if there is only one main language other than English, the linguistic outcome is likely to be different (see e.g. Sharma’s (2011) research in another part of London, Southall). Recent immigration is said to have been less diverse in France, with many incomers from former colonies in ‘north and black Africa’ (Gadet 2013:170). This suggests that there could be less linguistic diversity in the Paris *banlieues* than in Hackney, though in fact the young participants in our Paris project were just as linguistically diverse as those in London.

Although swamping of the host language by a range of diverse languages is a necessary prerequisite for a multiethnolect to emerge, it cannot be the only relevant factor. A second necessary factor is a situation of spontaneous group second language acquisition, so that children acquire the host language in large part from each other, in everyday communication. In London, greater opportunities for spoken language in the classroom mean that untutored language acquisition may occur both inside and outside school. In Paris, although it may occur outside school among friends who speak different languages and different varieties of French, it is likely to be offset by strong normative French language ideologies and formal second language instruction in school. Different possibilities for acquiring the host language during unguided spoken interaction stem in large part from the different histories of the education systems in England and France. We have seen that these, in turn, reflect the different political histories and national ideologies of the two countries.

A third factor is the extent to which young people’s ways of speaking index positive attitudes towards their neighbourhood, understood as both a spatial and a social construct. In

London young people tended to identify as Londoners – in particular to what they see as a Londoner living in a socially mixed, multiracial, multiethnic community to which, though dangerous, they feel an attachment. Their way of speaking was one way of expressing this identity. There was no evidence, however, that the young people in Paris considered themselves to be part of the city. As far as they mentioned identity at all, it was of being from a *cité*, a person living on the outskirts of the city. We saw earlier that they had internalized mainstream society's (erroneous) view of their neighbourhoods as inhabited mainly by Arabs and as dangerous places (which they denied, at least for their own *cité*). Their ethnicised view of the banlieues was reflected linguistically in that some features were used exclusively by the non-Franco-French; and, as we have seen, for some speakers (mainly non-Franco-French) the salience of ethnicity in their discourse was very striking. Again, the differences between London and Paris can be explained by the sociopolitical histories of the two cities, this time in relation to housing policies and practices.

Finally, it is well known that dense social network ties maintain shared linguistic features within a community; these existed in London, and would seem a further necessary factor for a multiethnolect to emerge. As discussed in section 6, young people in Paris had looser ties to their neighbourhood. It is also relevant that more friendship groups in Paris consisted of friends of the same ethnicity (and, therefore, the same language background) than in London, and that the friendship groups of the Franco-French were less multi-ethnic than those of the Anglos in London. Linguistic features used by the non-Franco-French, therefore, are less likely to be taken up by Franco-French speakers.

Space limitations prevent discussion of other relevant factors. Music is one. The most innovative speakers in London were all involved in rapping, a highly valued activity in their friendship groups. In Paris, tastes in music were more eclectic. Another factor is the legacy

from colonial policies. This may explain, for example, why some bilingual families in Paris insist on their children speaking French at home, as noted in section 5. The French saw their language as a gift to the colonized. The education system in the French colonies was closely modelled on that of France, and the language of education was only French. The British, on the other hand, favoured a 'divide and rule' policy, such that although a potential administrative class was educated in English, school education was mainly in the mother tongue or the languages of the numerically or politically dominant groups in the country (for a fuller and more nuanced account, see Migge and Leglise 2007). But the four factors I have focused on are enough to confirm the importance of taking the longer view: considering the social, cultural and political historical dimensions of sociolinguistic phenomena. By 'reading back' (Blommaert 2010:138) from the synchronic aspects of language use in London and Paris towards the historical processes that have produced them I have proposed some explanations for the different outcomes of superdiverse language contact in two similar cities. They remind us that language evolution, like language use, is constrained not only by the social characteristics of individuals but also by the social and historical contexts in which individuals live.

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NOTES

¹The amount of linguistic diversity in many European cities (and cities elsewhere) has made them rich sites for analyzing sociolinguistic variation and has contributed to what Britain (2018) refers to as the ‘fetishization’ of the city as a research site in contemporary sociolinguistics. Note, though, that the divide between the city and the country is theoretically problematic, as Britain (op.cit.) reminds us. Rural areas have always had immigration too, and outcomes typical of high contact cities are typical of high contact scenarios anywhere.

² <http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/londonfacts/default.htm?category=2>, accessed January 26, 2018.

³The first London project also analysed the speech of young people from Havering, in outer London.

⁴ Simon (1999) discusses the frustrations of researchers on immigration who attempt to obtain relevant information from French Census data. See also INSEE (2017).

⁵All names are pseudonyms

⁶ <http://www.ukcensusdata.com/chelmsford-e07000070#sthash.191oybqR.dpbs>, accessed August 25, 2018.

⁷ Further research is needed to determine the extent to which the ‘tough’ street identities may be gendered. It seems likely that they are: the MLE features are used more often by male speakers, and in Paris male speakers use terms referring to ethnicity more often than female speakers.

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