

Institution: University of Exeter
Unit of Assessment: UOA 28: Modern Languages and Linguistics
Title of case study: Linguistics research in Modern Languages and its impact in the community
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Research in Modern Languages linguistics at Exeter explores language use and variation, especially in spoken varieties of French and Italian. It has impacted on educational practices (Impact 1), helped encourage social cohesion (Impact 2), and enhanced public appreciation of language (Impact 3). The French-based research has informed language learning in H.E. and schools, and featured in online training resources and the mass media. It features significantly on University courses (UK and abroad). Aspects of the research have contributed to shaping educational and policy initiatives in Italy and France, aimed at immigrant communities or designed to improve social cohesion.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Four Modern Languages colleagues research on linguistic variation and contact: Dr Afonso (Lecturer in Portuguese, appointed September 2013), Dr Boughton (Senior Lecturer in French, appointed 2001), Dr Coveney (Senior Lecturer in French, appointed 1996), Dr Goglia (Senior Lecturer in Italian, appointed 2005). Their focus is on real language in its social context, paying particular attention to non-standard and immigrant speech varieties, and drawing on extensive corpora and experimental types of data. An important aim is to enhance the public perception of such varieties and of multilingualism, and to combat the negative stereotypes and stigmatization that are often associated with them and the communities concerned.</p> <p>Aspects of the research also aim to make information about the nature of real, everyday language available to those involved with the teaching and learning of these languages. Important findings from the research concern the systematic nature of non-standard and contact-based varieties, issues of social mobility and cohesion, and the integration of immigrants into communities. The relevance of the research to real-world issues is reflected in, for example, the invitation to Goglia, referred to in Impact 2.</p> <p>In the field of language variation, Boughton's research focuses on diversity and processes of uniformisation in social-regional accents within France, and how the accents are perceived. She has demonstrated that accent levelling in north-west France is greater than in the north-east (3.1) and that the use of authentic speech stimuli in tests of accent identification and evaluation reveals discrepancies between real and imagined difference, thereby undermining stereotypical, potentially harmful, attitudes towards accents (3.2). Coveney's main focus is on variation in the grammar and pragmatics of spoken French, especially forms and structures that have strong communicative and social significance (e.g. 3.3). His work on interrogatives, negation, subject doubling and subject pronouns has demonstrated the frequency with which non-standard forms are used in everyday speech in France, together with aspects of their social differentiation, and the linguistic and pragmatic factors influencing speakers' choices. Coveney's monograph on French articulatory phonetics (3.4) analysed instrumental evidence for variations in articulation (including intersegmental coordination), and reviewed social and regional variation at different points in the phonological system.</p> <p>Research on contact linguistics and multilingualism in Italy is conducted by Goglia, who has investigated communicative strategies (including code-switching) in Italian spoken by Igbo-Nigerian immigrants in Padua, as a case of non-guided adult language acquisition (3.5). He has also worked on the project 'Emerging Multilingualism in Italy', examining language use among children with immigrant backgrounds. This study is among the first to explore the role of Veneto dialect (a regional language), alongside Italian and immigrant languages in the linguistic repertoire of children of immigrant origin. These projects in contact linguistics have attracted several grants (3.ii</p>

- 3.vi).

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Evidence of the quality of the research:

(3) and (4) are widely cited monographs and received positive reviews in several journals: e.g. *Language in Society*, *Modern Language Review*, *JFLS*, *French Studies*, *Revue romane*.

(1), (2) and (5) underwent rigorous peer review, in accordance with the procedures of the well-established journals in which they appeared.

1. Boughton, Z. (2005). Accent levelling and accent localisation in northern French: comparing Nancy and Rennes. *Journal of French Language Studies*, 15: 235–56.

2. Boughton, Z. (2006). When perception isn't reality: Accent identification and perceptual dialectology in French. *Journal of French Language Studies*, 16: 277-304.

3. Coveney, A. (2002). *Variability in Spoken French* (2nd edition with Supplement), Bristol: Intellect.

4. Coveney, A. (2001). *The Sounds of Contemporary French: Articulation and Diversity*. Exeter: Elm Bank.

5. Goglia, F. (2009). Communicative strategies in the Italian of Igbo-Nigerian immigrants in Italy: a contact-linguistic approach. *Sprachtypologie und Universalienforschung / Language Typology and Universals*, 62/3: 224-240.

Grants:

Boughton:

i. 'Social and Regional Variation in the Phonology of Standard French', AHRC Research Leave, £23,698, 2008-09.

Goglia:

ii. 'Language Contact in Immigrant Communities', British Academy, £3,840, 2008.

iii. 'Linguistics Research', University of Exeter Project Development Grant, £12,800, 2009.

iv. 'Emerging Multilingualism in Italy', British Academy, £5,150, 2011.

v. 'Language Contact in the Immigrant Context: The Case of Igbo-Nigerian Immigrants in Italy', AHRC Fellowship (Early Career), £36,333, 2012.

vi. 'The role of the Veneto dialect in the linguistic repertoire of children of immigrant origin in the Veneto', The Gladys Kriebel Delmas Foundation (University of Warwick), £1,200, 2013.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Impact 1: Educational Practices and Policy

Boughton's and Coveney's research has helped shape educational practices and policy, specifically with regard to the teaching of both French Linguistics (in H.E.) and practical French Language (H.E. and schools).

Partly because of the social and/or communicative significance of the topics they analyse, several research publications by Coveney and Boughton feature prominently on syllabuses and reading lists for advanced undergraduate/graduate courses in French Sociolinguistics at universities in the UK and abroad (5.1). Coveney's research has also impacted on major textbooks for French linguistics and of general sociolinguistics, which have been widely used in 2008-13. He is the third most frequently cited researcher in *French: A linguistic introduction* (Fagyal et al., C.U.P., 2006), and has more publications in the bibliography than any other French specialist, apart from Fagyal herself; he is the most extensively cited researcher on European French in *Sociolinguistics: method and interpretation* (Milroy & Gordon, Blackwell, 2003); his results on *ne*-omission are the principal example of quantitative research on French presented by F. Gadet in her popular textbook, *La variation sociale en français* (2nd ed., Ophrys, 2007). Coveney's impact in teaching resources is further exemplified by the reading and correcting he has done for major textbooks (as

confirmed in the Acknowledgements or Prefaces), which have continued to be widely used throughout 2008-13: *Exploring the French Language* (Lodge et al., Arnold, 1997), described as “accessible to students while at the same time providing a wealth of sound, up-to-date information on linguistic principles and methods” in *French Review* (the journal of the American Association of Teachers of French); *The French Language Today* (Battye, Hintze & Rowlett, Routledge, 2nd edition 2000), which the reviewer on *Linguist List* considered to be “an excellent introduction to French linguistics”; and *Sociolinguistics: method and interpretation* (Milroy & Gordon, Blackwell, 2003), described by a reviewer on Amazon as “a valuable resource not only for students but also for experienced researchers”.

The web pages of the Committee for Linguistics in Education, a resource for the training and support of teachers of Modern Foreign Languages (launched in 2007) includes a link, in the section on ‘French: variation and sociolinguistics’, to a *Guardian* article on Boughton’s research on social-regional accent variation. Coveney contributed a significant amount of the other material on French linguistics and sociolinguistics to this web page, which had 6,518 hits between 1.1.08 and 31.7.13, according to StatCounter.com. (For corroboration, see 5.2.) The influence of Coveney’s work on French phonetics (3.4) is acknowledged in a significant DVD resource for French pronunciation practice, available in both French-language and English-language versions, aimed at learners in H.E. and schools, respectively (5.3). The resource’s website states that Coveney (2001) was one of the main scholarly sources used in the development of the course. (The author of the DVDs reports that 1,100 sets of them were sold up to 31.7.13.)

A 2009 assessment of language teaching practices (Etienne & Sax, ‘Stylistic Variation in French: Bridging the Gap Between Research and Textbooks’, *The Modern Language Journal*, 93/4, 584–606), discusses how stylistic variation is treated in current French language textbooks, concluding that insufficient attention is paid to non-standard variants (such as *on* for ‘we’, and *ne*-omission). The authors argue for greater focus on stylistic variation, referring extensively to Coveney’s research (e.g 3.3), thereby confirming its impact in the field of language learning.

Impact 2: Social Cohesion through Language

Linguistic research has policy implications for social cohesion and well-being, language contact situations, and immigration. As a result of his on-going research (leading to 3.5, for example), Goglia was invited in 2008 to advise on linguistic aspects of a pilot programme on African culture for children of African immigrants in the Veneto, Italy (5.4). His expertise in language contact in immigrant communities helped inform public educational policy as part of a scheme to enhance social cohesion through improved educational attainment among disadvantaged immigrant groups. He advised specifically on the most appropriate medium of instruction, resulting in the eventual choice of English over Italian or West African pidgin English.

Coveney’s research publications led to him giving key advice and support for the initial phase (September 2006 to mid-2008) of a new sociolinguistic survey of Parisian speech (5.5). His letter of support for the project helped unlock funding of 12,000 euros from the Mayor of Paris’ public research initiative, aimed at improving social welfare and social cohesion: the website of this initiative specifies priorities such as cultural heritage, integration and solidarity. The sociolinguistic survey gave rise to a website with a substantial set of recordings and transcripts, in which a cross-section of Parisians speak of their experience of living in different districts of Paris. From its creation in May 2009, the project’s web-site had 16,071 visits (the site’s web counter).

Impact 3: Public Appreciation of Language Matters

Coveney’s research has also contributed to the enhancement of the public appreciation of spoken French. His work on interrogatives (e.g. 3.3) was referred to several times during a 2011 *Radio France Internationale* broadcast, on variation in French questions (5.6). The programme’s guest, a French Professor of Linguistics, explained that Coveney’s research has shown, for example, how different interrogative structures in French are not interchangeable for all communicative functions. *RFI* is the French equivalent of the BBC World Service, and in 2011 40.5 million people around the

world listened to it at least weekly (<http://www.rfi.fr/com/20100120-chiffres-cles-rfi>). The podcast of the programme has remained available since the broadcast. Coveney's work on subject pronouns has been referred to in the Canadian press (5.7).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. Syllabuses and/or reading lists of undergraduate modules featuring research by Coveney and Boughton are accessible on the web-sites of the following universities, among others: Cambridge, Florida, Illinois, Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle, Oxford
http://www.mml.cam.ac.uk/french/reading/new_fr2read.pdf
<http://www.languages.ufl.edu/syllabi/fall%202012%20syllabi/FRE4930-le-Français-au-21è-siècle-antes.pdf>

<http://www.french.illinois.edu/grad/specializations/linguistics/documents/linglist.pdf>

http://lib5.leeds.ac.uk/rlists/broker/?bbModuleId=201213_4409_FREN3390&bbListId=_1665260_1&sess=201213

<http://courses.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/undergraduate/module.html?code=FREN30701>

<https://rlo.ncl.ac.uk/index.php/modules/FRE2044/2012>

<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~fmml0059/TutorialF5.html>

2. CLIE online support for teacher education in Modern Foreign Languages:

<http://clie.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/ittfl-material.htm>

The link referring to Boughton's work is entitled 'Dialectic disarray', and leads to an article in *The Guardian* (17.02.04).

Coveney's contribution to the resource may be corroborated by the page's creator, an Emeritus Professor of Linguistics at University College London.

3. DVD set: *La prononciation française pour de vrai*, and an English-language version, *French Pronunciation – your key to success* (London: Birkbeck University of London, 2009). Website: <http://soundsfrench.co.uk/frenchp.html>.

The impact of Coveney's research on the development of this material can be corroborated by a retired Senior Lecturer at Birkbeck University of London.

4. The invitation to Goglia came from a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Education of Padua University, and can be corroborated by the same person.

5. *Programme de recherche de l'Hôtel de Ville de Paris* (the Mayor's office):

www.iedu.asso.fr/fichepdf.php?id=823

The site of the survey (*Corpus de Français Parlé Parisien des années 2000*):

<http://cfpp2000.univ-paris3.fr/CFPP2000.pdf>

Coveney's role can be corroborated by one of the project's leaders, a Senior Lecturer at the Université de Franche-Comté, in Besançon.

6. Detailed mentions of Coveney's research were made at minutes 9'30, 10'30 and 24'50 of the programme *Danse des mots* (7.2.11), entitled "Les formes de l'interrogation à l'oral : Différence entre l'écrit et la langue parlée", broadcast on *Radio France Internationale*:

<http://www.rfi.fr/emission/20110207-formes-interrogation-oral-difference-entre-ecrit-langue-parlee>.

7. Nancy Bauer, 'Usage of you, we, tu and vous', *The Telegraph-Journal (New Brunswick)*, 14

November 2009 <<http://www.lexisnexis.com/uk/nexis/docview/getDocForCuiReq?lni=7X39-G3W0-YB4C-719J&csi=397232&oc=00240&perma=true>> [accessed 03/08/2012]