

Center for Multilingualism in Society across the Lifespan
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Expressing identity in London and Paris: ethnicity, class and youth

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COMPARING CAPITALS

LONDON

Linguistic innovators: the English of adolescents in London (2004–7)

(865,000 words)

Multicultural London English: the emergence, acquisition and diffusion of a new variety (2007–10)

(1.5 million words)

**Jenny Cheshire, Paul Kerswill,
Sue Fox, Arfaan Khan, Eivind
Torgersen**

LONDON & PARIS

Multicultural London English/Multicultural Paris French (2010-2014)

(639,000 words)

Penelope Gardner-Chloros, Jenny Cheshire, Maria Secova

2010-2012: Collaboration with Modyco, Paris X-Nanterre

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Youth language in Europe: the multiethnolect construct

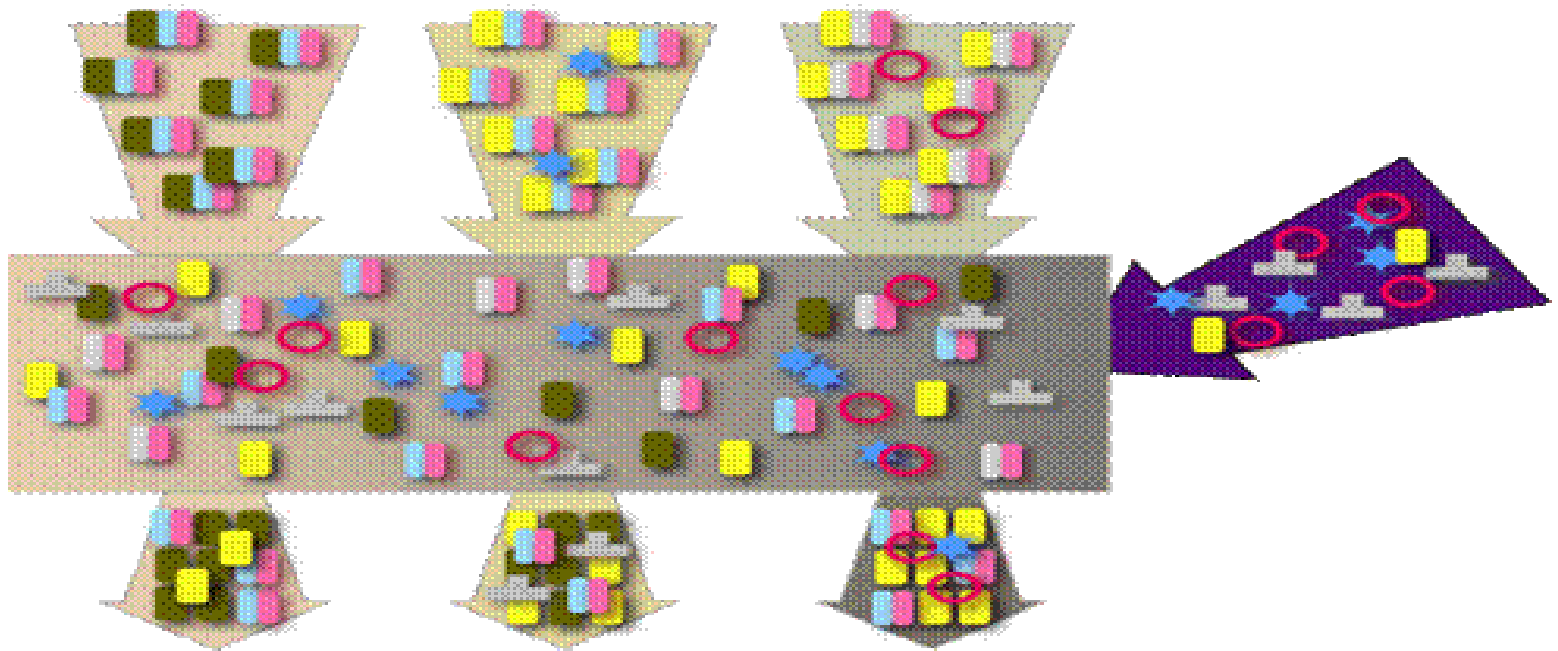
Multiethnolect: a new variety, or pool of variants, shared by more than one ethnic group living in an area (Clyne 2000)

As an analytical starting point:

- Shared across minorities, but also by members of majority groups
- Non-ethnic in its indexicality
 - true at least in the community in which it is spoken
 - outside its own community it may sound distinctly 'ethnic'
 - It is variably **vernacularised**:



Competition and selection in the feature pool (Mufwene 2001)



LANGUAGES IN THE TWO CITIES

London

London Jamaican

Portuguese, Spanish

Twi, Yoruba

Turkish

Sylheti, Bengali

Hindi

Moroccan Arabic

Postcolonial Englishes, etc

Paris

Haïtian Creole, other French
Creoles

Portuguese, Spanish

Bambara, Lingala, Soninké

North African Arabic

Antillais

Farsi

Turkish, etc



INNOVATIONS IN INNER-CITY LONDON

phonology

- trajectories of some diphthongs have become shorter e.g. PRICE, FACE and GOAT are almost monophthongs (Kerswill, Torgersen & Fox 2008)
- initial /h/ is pronounced
- /k/ is backed to /q/ in the environment of nonhigh back vowels e.g. *car, college, talk* (Cheshire, Fox, Kerswill & Torgersen, 2008)



Youth and identity categorisation

- Use of certain lexical items reflects particular values of the community (Wierzbicka 1997)
 - For multicultural young speakers, this is likely to involve:
 - place
 - affiliations – self and other
 - respect/disrespect, morality
 - Categorisations are often binary (e.g. Eckert's *Jocks* and *Burnouts*)
- Complex and situation-dependent

Research questions: lexis, style and categorisation

- Finding salient lexis in the speech of young people
 - Particular words may index a particular style
 - They may include words used to categorise people, places, culture, language
- Finding differences in lexical use between subgroups of young people
 - This gives an indication of cultural or social differences in categorisation

Combining quantitative and qualitative analysis: four stages

1. Taking the MLE and MPF transcripts as **texts** which can be compared with other British and French **reference corpora**
2. Dividing the MLE and MPF corpora into subgroups and comparing them
3. Making a list of candidate words potentially used in categorisation
4. Qualitative analysis of candidate words in the MLE and MPF conversations

Quantitative analysis using corpus analysis software

- WordSmith Tools 6.0
- Keyword analysis: A *keyword* is a word that occurs in a text *proportionally more frequently* than in a reference text
 - It gives an indication of topic and style
 - A keyword is statistically significant (chi-square)
- We look for:
 - keywords in the semantic fields of **people, personal/social characteristics, language** and **place**
 - keywords which are **slang** or **taboo** terms

Keywords in MLE: London data (1m words) compared to British National Corpus (Sampler Corpus, spoken part) (1m words) (Kerswill 2013)

LIKE
INNIT
AIN'T
BLACK
STUFF
MATES
WHITE
BRUV
COCKNEY
SHIT
ASIAN
BLUD
CHAV
SAFE
FUCK

- Informal style (LIKE, STUFF)
- Nonstandard forms (AIN'T, INNIT)
- Taboo (SHIT, FUCK)
- High proportion of youth slang (BRUV, BLUD, SAFE)
- Words for people (BLACK, WHITE, ASIAN, COCKNEY)

Keywords in MPF: MPF data (400K words) compared to the Corpus de Français Parlé Parisien, adolescent speakers only (100K words)

GENRE - like

MEC – guy

OUAIS – yeah

TRUC – thing, whatsit

SUPER – (in compounding, e.g. *super-mec* ‘great guy’)

GRAVE – (intensifier)

PUTAIN – fucking (exclamation)

FRANCHEMENT – ‘you know what I mean’

WESH – (greeting (from Arabic); ‘wassup’)

MERDE – shit

POTE – mate, friend

MEUF – woman (*verlan* for *femme*)

- Informal youth style (GENRE)
- General informal French (OUAIS, TRUC, SUPER, MERDE, POTE, MEC)
- Slang (WESH, GRAVE)
- Discourse marker (FRANCHEMENT)
- Taboo intensifier (PUTAIN)
- Use of *verlan* (MEUF)

- **These items are almost all informal French or youth language unmarked for ethnicity**
- **The corpora are smaller, so patterns are less clear than for the London data. Yet this is consistent with other findings in France.**

Comparing within MLE: Inner vs. outer city (Hackney vs. Havering)

- Inner and outer city districts correspond to some extent to ethnicity (multicultural Hackney vs. largely White British Havering)
 - The White British in Hackney are more aligned linguistically with their non-Anglo peers than with Havering
 - In London, we use place as a proxy variable for ethnicity
 - In Paris, we use ethnicity
- Two subcorpora, both c. 500K words

Comparing within MLE: Inner vs. outer city (Hackney vs. Havering)

GUY
MAN
BLUD
BRUV
BROTHERS
OLDERS
MATE(S)
CHAV(S)

Key for
Hackney

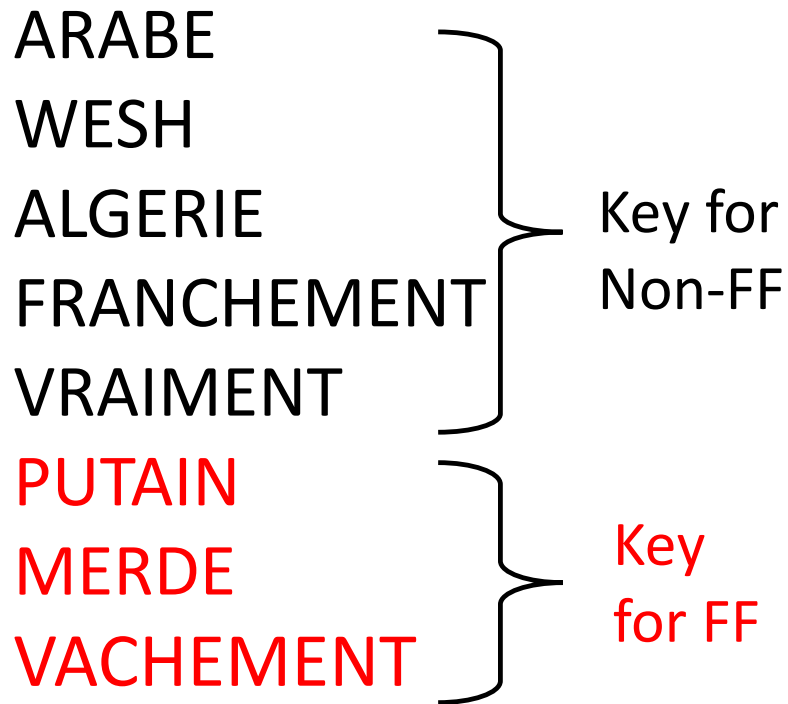
Key for
Havering

- Hackney uses words specific to inner-city slang (MAN, BLUD, BRUV)
- Hackney MAN is mostly a discourse marker
- Havering uses traditional word for 'friend' (MATE)
- Havering talks about working class white people (CHAV)

Comparing within MPF: conversations between 'non-Franco-French' vs. 'Franco-French'

- The project focused on the *banlieues*, which are outer-city areas now with substantial Maghreb and African-descended populations as well as Franco-French
 - Franco-French are still in a majority in the *banlieues*, but with concentrations of particular ethnicities
- Relatively few Franco-French speakers in the corpus
- In this analysis, we compare the non-Franco-French speakers with the smaller corpus of Franco-French speakers

Keyword analysis of non-Franco-French, with Franco-French as reference corpus



- Non-FF use more words for nationality/ethnicity (ALGERIE, ARABE)
 - Non-FF use local slang term more (WESH)
 - Use of standard discourse markers (FRANCHEMENT, VRAIMENT) – hard to interpret
 - FF appear to use more taboo (MERDE, PUTAIN)
- **Both FF and Non-FF use taboo and slang which are found across the country**

What have we learnt from the quantitative analysis?

1. We have a way of measuring style
 - Clear differences in lexical use between these young speakers and the published reference corpora
 - Differences in lexical use between the two subgroups in both London and Paris
 - Suggests cultural and/or network separation within each city
 2. We have found some candidates for words which might be used to categorise people
 - Successful for London, but less so for Paris
 - But the methodology has the potential to identify unsuspected lexical differences between groups
- We now look at the use of some of these keywords and other words which we have identified

Example from London: 'Cockney' and the construction of language and social groups in Hackney

- A Cockney: someone born within the sound of the bells of the Church of Bow in East London
- Cockney: the dialect of East London



- Int.: not too quickly!
- Mark: <reads word list>
- Tina: alright then right . all of these
- Int.: as naturally as you can
- Tina: do you know you actually sounded **Cockney** when you were saying the first words Mark and then you went into this deeper voice
- Mark: is it?
- Tina: yeah . alright, ready? <starts reading in mock Cockney voice>
- Mark: no that's not really her **normal way of speaking**!
- Tina: <laughing> alright alright <continues in a mock Received Pronunciation voice>
- Mark: neither is that . you got to say it **normal**!
- Tina: <continues in the mock Received Pronunciation voice>
- Mark: there's no point if you're not **doing it right**
- Tina: I am **doing it right** Mark, alright? <reads word list in her 'normal' voice>

- Cockney is not posh
- Cockney is not 'our normal way of speaking'

- Int.: what do you mean it was racist then?
- Alex: no it was like. you got **sweet**. which is like the white boys like with collars up like . they don't wear the clothes we wear like. we got big Airforce trainers. they got like low cut Reeboks and like they got Reebok
- Zack: all the **sweet mate** wearing their Ha
- Alex: yeah . Hackett tops and all that
- Int.: why do you call them **sweet**?
- Alex: cos they say **sweet** they say.
- Zack: cos they're **sweet**
- Alex: like we'll come up and we'll say **safe** from **Hackney** but they're from (name of place) [Zack: (name of place)] so they'll go '**sweet sweet bruv cool you alright**' you know one of them like **Cockney** like
- Zack: we're safe like . you get me they. yeah them **Cockney** guys
- Alex: they're like **Cockney poshy** like
- Zack: they go to the pub on a Friday <laughs>
- Alex: but we're all. we're all cool with them.

- Our language and Cockney distinguished by vocabulary
- Cockneys are white
- We and Cockneys are also distinguished by dress and cultural practices
- Cockney might be 'posh'

London: summary

- Participants categorise social groups by:

- Age
- Place
- Social class
- Ethnicity
- Language

- Participants place themselves and others in a multidimensional space defined by these parameters

Cockneys
(Only Fools
and Horses)



Chavs



'Us'
(inner-city
kids)
(Kidulthood)



Posh kids

Example from Paris: The construction of a social type: *Les boug'zeers*

- *Les boug'zeers*: approximately 'loud young men from the banlieues who hang out around stations and street corners'
- *Renoi blingbling en gros (Dictionnaire de la Zone)*
 - Translation: 'Black person with lots of bling'

Les « boug'zeers »

-
- ODL: boug'zeers !
- CLO: les boug'zeers (.) les boug'zeers voilà .
- CLO: les boug'zeers .
- ODL: +< boug'zeers .
- ENQ: +< c'est quoi ça ?
- AIM: ça c'est genre (.) en fait c'est +/.
- ENQ: ah !
- ODL: la plupart du temps .
- AIM: +< c'est genre ceux avec les piercings et tout .
- ODL: +< des casquettes (..) les sacoches montées .
- AIM: +< les casquettes (.) genre les petites sacoches comme ça et tout .
- ODL: +< qui sont (..) qui sont en groupe et tout .
- AIM: +< énervés (..) toujours en bande et tout .
- CLO: +< qui font du bruit dans le train (..) ouais c'est ça .
- ENQ: +< ah ouais .
- ODL: +< et qui rackettent [= rires] .
- AIM: ouais (.) grave !

The *boug'zeers*

-
- ODL: boug'zeers!
- CLO: the boug'zeers (.) the boug'zeers yeah .
- CLO: the boug'zeers.
- ODL: +< boug'zeers.
- ENQ: +< what's that ?
- AIM: that's like (.) that's actually + /.
- ENQ: ah!
- ODL: most of the time.
- AIM: +< it's like the guys with the piercings and everything .
- ODL: +< the baseball caps (..) the shoulder bags.
- AIM: +< baseball caps (.) like little bags like that and all.
- ODL: +< who are (..) who are in a group and all.
- AIM: +< angry (..) always in a gang and all that.
- CLO: +< making noise on the train (..) yeah that's it.
- ENQ: +< oh yeah.
- ODL: +< and they rip you off [= laughs].
- AIM: yeah (.) totally !

Paris: social/stylistic dimension

- Peer-based hierarchies, e.g.
 - *les populaires* ('the populars') vs. *les bolosses* ('losers')
- Classification based on:
 - Styles of clothing (e.g. *les swag* 'smartly dressed')
 - Appearance (e.g. *les mécheux* 'boys with a fringe')
 - Common interests (e.g. *les cybers*)
 - Group-specific behaviour (e.g. *Les boug'zeers*, *les wesh-wesh* 'cool guys of North African origin who use the Arabic greeting 'wesh', *les racailles* / *les caillera* 'scum')



Mécheux



Swag

Paris: ethnic/cultural dimension

- Speakers draw on ethnic/racial categories more than the Londoners do
- All ethnicities have a *verlan* term (e.g. *babtou* 'white', *renoi* 'black', *keubla*, 'black', *rebeu* 'Arab', *noich* 'Chinese', *quetur* 'Turkish')
- Example of ethnic and cultural categorisation: the recent immigrant from North Africa:
 - *Le blédard* (person from 'the village' in North Africa)
- Opposition between *Paris* (the city centre) & *banlieue* (often reflected in coined phrases such as *jeune de banlieue*, *langage de banlieue* etc.)
 - Strongly overlaps with the ethnic and social/stylistic dimension (Parisians = white, affluent and '*bourges*', i.e. bourgeois or middle class)

Ethnic and social segregation in Paris



Summaries

- London
 - Sense of ‘us and them’
 - linked to social class, with ethnicity a secondary classification
 - race remains significant
 - Language:
 - some ethnicity-exclusive lexis
 - all speakers take part in national or global linguistic changes, including BE LIKE + speaker quotative
- Paris
 - In the *banlieues*, young people have a strong sense that people are either ‘*français*’ / ‘*parisien*’ or ‘*banlieusard*’
 - If you are a *banlieusard*, then you are an Arab, an African, etc., even though numerically these ethnic groups are a minority (19%) even in the *banlieues*
 - Language:
 - the Franco-French speakers use *banlieusard* lexis much less than the non-FF speakers
 - all speakers use general colloquial French lexis at the same rate, including the new quotatives

Comparison

- Both cities:
 - Categorise people by ethnicity, place, language
 - Use mainstream colloquial features and slang
- The young Londoners additionally categorise by social class:
 - Cockney + MLE ('slang') as lower class and Received Pronunciation speakers as 'posh'
 - Accent is crucial as a social marker
 - Lexis additionally distinguishes the non-posh groups
- The young Parisians categorise strongly by place (*banlieue* vs. Paris)
 - Strongly linked to ethnicity, with class implicitly related to ethnicity
 - Accent not mentioned, but lexical usage important

French exceptionalism?

Immigration, settlement and language:

- London: highly multilingual immigrant/Anglo districts in the inner city, with high language and dialect contact. **MLE emerges**.
- Paris: immigrants, overwhelmingly North African but now also Sub-Saharan African and from elsewhere, live in the banlieues, with very poor transport links and limited access to Franco-French population. Even in banlieues, de facto ethnic segregation. **No MPF emerges**. But are there **ethnolects**?

Language ideology:

- England: relatively weak standard-language ideology, with little enforcement in speech
 - Regional variation in accent strongly maintained
- France: very strong standard-language ideology, enforced
 - Regional variation largely obliterated by standardisation (Hornsby & Jones)

References

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Spare slides

Keywords in Hackney (in black)

Keywords in Havering (in red)

Word	Frequency in Hackney Per million words (raw frequency)	Frequency in Havering Per million words (raw frequency)
GUY	413 (248)	62 (33)
MAN	1286 (772)	761 (404)
BLAD / BLOOD	255 (153)	43 (23)
BRUV	150 (90)	24 (13)
BROTHERS	416 (250)	192 (102)
OLDERS	67 (40)	2 (1)
MATE(S)	489 (293)	1020 (541)
CHAV(S)	90 (18)	171 (91)

Othering: a Hackney youth perspective

- Cockneys speak differently from us, and so do posh people
- Conflict: there are other groups (chavs/Cockneys) with whom we have to deal, whose behaviour potentially threatens us
- We are concerned to mark differences between ourselves and Cockneys by alluding to dress, language (words and pronunciations) and social practices
- Cockneys are older than us
- Uncertainty and ambiguity:
 - Group boundaries: in which respects might we be considered Cockneys or chavs (or members of some other social group)?
 - Cockneys (possibly) live somewhere else, but we don't all agree

Hackney: use of lexis to refer to types of people, language and places

- Terms for language appear restricted
 - The only term used productively for Multicultural London English in our data is **slang**
 - Discussion of social types, races, ethnic groups and people from other places did not yield a large vocabulary:
 - **Black, white, Asian**
 - **Chav, Cockney** (though 'Cockney' rarely came up without a prompt from the interviewer)
- But a number of ethnically restricted terms:
 - Mainly African-Caribbeans: **bredren** (friend), **mandem, boydem**, (man, boy) **blood** (as pragmatic marker), **ends** (place, postcode)
 - Anglos: **mate** (friend)

Paris: linguistic features

Widespread use of *verlan* (backslang) versions:

- **blédard** (also in *verlan*: **darblé**): someone who just came from the *bled* (village, home country = Maghreb), someone with a strong accent etc.; Eng. “fresh off the boat” (?)
- **renoi** for *noir* – n=24, non-FF 3.5x
- **keubla** (black)
- **rebeu** (beur – ‘Arab’), n=3, all non-FF
- **feuj** (juif – ‘Jew’) n=4, all non-FF
- **noich** (chinois – ‘Chinese’)
- **quetur** (turque – ‘Turk’) n=3, all non-FF
- **céfran** (les français, ‘Franco-French’)
- **babtou** (‘white’) n=2, both non-FF

Paris: multi-level dimensions of categorisation

- Social/stylistic
- Ethnic/cultural
- Geographical
- (also gender)