

Defending the French Language: An Online Battle?

Emma Humphries

Submitted to the University of Nottingham for the degree of Master of Arts by
Research

December 2016

Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	i
List of Figures.....	iii
List of Tables.....	iv
Abstract.....	1
Introduction.....	2
Chapter 1 Literature Review.....	4
1.1 Language and Society.....	4
1.1.1 Standard Languages.....	4
1.1.2 Prescriptivism.....	9
1.1.3 Language Planning in France.....	10
1.1.4 Purism.....	12
1.1.5 Linguistic Insecurity.....	14
1.2 Recent developments in sociolinguistics.....	15
1.3 Computer-Mediated Communication.....	17
1.3.1 Twitter.....	19
1.4 Conclusion.....	21
Chapter 2 Methodology.....	22
2.1 Twitter as a corpus creation tool.....	22
2.2 Data Collection.....	26
2.2.1 Twilert.....	26
2.2.2 Search Terms.....	27
2.3 Preparing the corpus.....	29
2.4 Conclusion.....	32
Chapter 3 Attitudes towards non-standard language.....	33
3.1 Introduction.....	33
3.2 Spelling, grammar, conjugation and syntax.....	33

3.3 Content of the samples.....	40
3.3.1 The Object of Criticism	40
3.3.2 What has prompted critique?.....	46
3.3.3 Recurring ideas	54
3.4 Conclusion.....	62
Chapter 4 Attitudes towards non-standard verb forms	64
4.1 Introduction	64
4.2 <i>Croivent</i> and <i>voyent</i>	64
4.3 Content of the samples.....	69
4.3.1 Reactions	69
4.3.2 The Object of Criticism in <i>croivent</i> tweets.....	72
4.3.3 Recurring Themes	73
4.4 Conclusion.....	75
Chapter 5 #JeSuisCirconflexe – The Spelling Reform of 1990 and 2016 reactions.....	77
5.1 Introduction	77
5.2 Context.....	77
5.3 <i>Les rectifications de l’orthographe</i> – Official Report.....	79
5.4 #JeSuisCirconflexe	82
5.5 Content of the samples.....	85
5.5.1 Reactions	85
5.5.2 The Object of Criticism	88
5.5.3 Recurring themes.....	91
5.6 Conclusion.....	99
Conclusion	100
References	104

List of Figures

Figure 2.1 Example of a thread (Thread035)	31
Figure 3.1 Example of an online argument (Thread082)	42
Figure 3.2 Example of self-criticism (OR-0215)	44
Figure 3.3 Example of a critic's non-standard orthography (Thread079)	54
Figure 3.4 Thread discussing link between intelligence and standard orthography (Thread051)	57
Figure 3.5 Linguistic criticism during an online argument (Thread068)	59
Figure 3.6 Example of non-standard language as a choice 1 (Thread032)	61
Figure 3.7 Example of non-standard language as a choice 2 (Thread058)	61
Figure 4.1 <i>Croivent</i> meme	66
Figure 5.1 Cartoon by Hervé Baudry	90
Figure 5.2 Sur correction (1)	94
Figure 5.3 Sur correction (2)	95

List of Tables

Table 3.1 Total collected tweets and length of collection periods.....	34
Table 3.2 Composition of all four samples by original material and retweets.....	36
Table 3.3 Final compositions of all four samples.....	36
Table 3.4 Top five retweets in all four samples.....	39
Table 3.5 Composition of each tweet sample by type	45
Table 3.6 Abbreviation types - their frequency in <i>orthographe</i> threads, and reactions to them	49
Table 3.7 Graphic reduction types, their frequency in the threads, and reactions to them.....	50
Table 3.8 Most frequent instances of non-standard tense or mood usage in threads	52
Table 3.9 Summary of non-standard features (excluding verbs) in threads	52
Table 3.10 Non-standard features found in the tweets of critics in threads	53
Table 4.1 Composition of <i>croivent</i> and <i>voyent</i> samples by type	65
Table 4.2 Composition of tweets by original material and retweets	67
Table 4.3 Most retweeted tweets for samples.....	68
Table 4.4 Types of reactions to the use of <i>croivent</i>	70
Table 5.1 Top ten retweets (<i>#JeSuisCirconflexe</i>)	84
Table 5.2 Composition of reactions by type (<i>#JeSuisCirconflexe</i>)	86
Table 5.3 Types of reaction towards the reform (all samples, 2 hours).....	88
Table 5.4 Circumflex examples cited in <i>#JeSuisCirconflexe</i> tweets	93

Abstract

This study investigates the metalinguistic discourse of Twitter users in the French language. It is often claimed that France is a country in which standard language ideology and prescriptivism are deeply entrenched. In modern society, the internet seems to have become a popular space to share and enforce prescriptive ideas about 'correct' and 'incorrect' language. Given suggestions that the views expressed online are often more extreme than offline interactions, the internet, in this case Twitter, is a particularly interesting context for a study of metalinguistic discourse. Through analysis of a corpus of tweets, created using search terms such as *orthographe* and the non-standard verb form *croivent*, I investigate attitudes towards both usages which deviate from the prescribed norm and the speakers behind the deviations. The results show that Twitter users have clear ideas about what constitutes 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' language, and equate non-standard usages with low intelligence and status. There has been relatively little research on contemporary prescriptivism in France and computer-mediated communication in French has also attracted little interest to date. This study uses innovative research methods to provide the first analysis of contemporary French prescriptivism in action in the online sphere.

Introduction

The French language has long been associated with prescriptivism (Lodge, 1993: 234), which promotes adherence to the linguistic norm. This association is seen to be particularly strong in France, where the standard language is supported institutionally through language planning and bodies such as the *Académie française* and the *Délégation générale à la langue française et aux langues de France*¹ (Lodge, 1993: 236). Purism, a desire to maintain the purity of a language, has equally long roots in France (Lodge, 1993: 3), with purist tendencies often viewed as an intrinsically *French* attribute (Paveau & Rosier, 2008: 37). This study will consider the layperson's attitudes to non-standard language in French, more specifically the attitudes displayed online, using a corpus of tweets. Through an analysis of the metalanguage used on Twitter to describe 'unacceptable' language, it will explore prescriptivist tendencies in this online sphere, in particular the specific forms of 'unacceptable' language targeted and the recurring themes used.

There has been much work discussing prescriptivism, especially in the German context (see Jones, 1999; Langer & Davies, 2005, 2006). Yet, in spite of France's associations with rigid and explicit prescriptivism (Lodge, 1993: 234), relatively little research has been carried out in this area on the French language and less still concerning online folk-attitudes (Lee, 2013: 75). It is becoming increasingly important to conduct linguistic research in a computer-mediated communication (CMC) context as, with over three billion people using the internet (Davidson, 2015), an abundance of communication is now taking place online. This study, in looking at online

¹ Known as the DGLFLF, this government organisation, previously the DGLF, is responsible for implementing language policy and promotes the use of the French language.

metalinguistic discourse, contributes to research on contemporary prescriptivism in a Francophone context and CMC.

This research gives key insights into, firstly, the types of non-standard features considered 'acceptable'/'unacceptable' by native French-speakers. All mediums of speech and writing are governed by different norms; what is acceptable on Twitter may not be suitable for a cover letter. This project will highlight the non-standard features which appear to be 'acceptable' in Twitter communication. For instance, in the French language, negative clauses are bipartite, formed of the preverbal *ne* and a *pas* following the verb, but in spoken language it is usual to drop the *ne*, and use just the second part of the negative (Ayres-Bennett, 1994: 63). *Ne* deletion is also common in CMC (Van Compernelle, 2010: 447-48); analysis of reactions to this feature will demonstrate whether it is now considered acceptable online. Secondly, this study examines attitudes towards deviations from the linguistic norm on a public, online platform, thereby contributing to research on shared language ideologies.

Chapter 1 discusses the study's context, examining the linguistic concepts used, including standardisation, prescriptivism and purism, and the nature of CMC. Chapter 2 outlines the methodology used to create the corpus and considers the advantages and disadvantages of Twitter for corpus creation. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 analyse three different corpora of tweets which display the use of a metalinguistic discourse, using a number of search terms, such as *orthographe* and *croivent*. In particular, the analysis focuses on the use of non-standard language, reactions to non-standard language and the recurring themes presented. Finally, the conclusion outlines the implications of the study for future research.

Chapter 1 Literature Review

In order to explore current attitudes to deviations from standard French, it is necessary to outline the relationship between French society and its language. The first section of this chapter summarizes the key elements of this relationship, including standardisation, prescriptivism and purism and outlines how each of these terms will be used within the study. The current sociolinguistic landscape in France is then considered, to introduce the wider context of the research. Finally, the purported effects of CMC on language use are discussed, with a particular focus on the micro-blogging site Twitter, the chosen medium for this research.

1.1 Language and Society

1.1.1 Standard Languages

A standard language is a high prestige variety of a language considered to have the characteristics of maximum efficiency and minimum misunderstanding in communication (Milroy & Milroy, 1999: 19). Haugen identifies a framework for the process by which a variety becomes a standard language, otherwise known as standardisation, formed of four stages: '(1) selection of norm, (2) codification of form, (3) elaboration of function, and (4) acceptance by the community'. The hypothetical final goal of standardisation is a language with 'one spelling and one pronunciation for every word, one word for every meaning, and one grammatical framework for all utterances' (1966: 931-33). Naturally, this is not a one-off process, but rather an ongoing series of attempts to mould the language and maintain its 'standard' properties (Lodge, 1993: 230-31). The extent to which this ideological maintenance is plausible or desirable is questionable; a living language must be able to meet the requirements of an ever-changing society (Milroy & Milroy, 1999: 19). Despite this, the

standard language with “minimal variation in form” and “maximal variation in function” is an ideal which is seen as worth defending or as worth striving for’ (Vogl, 2012: 13).

A truly standard language is, as suggested above, eternally strived for, but ultimately beyond reach. Amongst laypeople, however, complete standardisation is often not viewed as unattainable, but rather as a natural, achievable, or even achieved, fact (Lodge, 1993: 12). This view is particularly pervasive in France where the standard is championed by the state and institutions who, unlike in most European countries, actively participate in language planning activities which support the standard’s primacy (Lodge, 1993: 236). This makes pressure to conform high and deviations from the norm a breach of cultural etiquette (Paveau & Rosier, 2008: 141). A new linguistic focus on language ideologies has changed the way in which standard languages are viewed amongst linguists (Woolard, 1998: 21). As Milroy and Milroy affirm: ‘it seems more appropriate to speak more abstractly of standardisation as an *ideology*, and a standard language as an idea in the mind rather than a reality’ (1999: 19).

Language ideologies are ‘sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use’ (Silverstein, 1979: 193). Linguists contend that, as well as being clearly linked to language, language ideologies are inextricably connected ‘to identity, to aesthetics, to morality, and to epistemology’ (Woolard, 1998: 3), and so must be studied within their source culture or society (Irvine, 1989: 255). They are also considered to be ‘partial, contestable and contested, and interest-laden’ (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994: 58). The academic study of language ideologies was previously dismissed by linguists and anthropologists alike because of this non-rational and non-scientific basis and, as a result, the potential influence of ideologies on language use was overlooked (Lodge, 1993: 12). Language

ideologies are now widely considered an important area of linguistic study for their potential impact on language attitudes and indeed language change (Blommaert, 2010a: 1).²

It has been suggested that language ideologies work on both a conscious and an unconscious level (Paffey, 2012: 16); awareness, therefore, has formed an important point of discussion (Kroskrity, 2004: 497). Conscious ideologies can be articulated by language users who are aware of their opinions about language; whereas unconscious ideologies are so embedded into society and culture that speakers are unaware that they shape their views on language. This lack of awareness means unconscious ideologies can be difficult to study, or even identify. Conscious ideologies are more simply studied through analysis of metalinguistic discourse (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994: 57-58).

Standard language ideology is possibly the most pervasive language ideology in Europe (Gal 2009: 14). It is, according to Lippi-Green, 'a bias toward an abstract, idealized homogeneous language, which is imposed and maintained by dominant institutions and which has as its model the written language'. Internal consistency of the standard is presumed by the ideology (1997: 64), which in turn reinforces a hierarchical view that non-codified languages are 'irregular' and 'primitive' (Joseph, 1987: 129). Manipulated and supported by state institutions, standard language ideology leads to a number of further ideologies, such as links between the standard and nationhood, education and upward social mobility (Lodge, 1993: 12). This ideology encourages prescriptive language behaviours and a view that there is one correct way, and in turn

² More recent language ideology studies focus on Nordic languages and the influence of the English language (see Graedler and Kvaran, 2010; Milani, 2007; Vikør, 2010).

many incorrect ways, of using language (Milroy & Milroy, 1999: 44). However, the idea of a standard language ideology is somewhat contradictory, as ideologies are 'subject to variation across time and space', a characteristic which is inconsistent with standardisation as a process (Johnson, 2005: 465).

A standard language, once in its position of high prestige, must be maintained by gatekeepers to sustain its primacy. Prescriptivism, defined by Lodge as 'a readiness to condemn non-standard uses of the language', is a key tool for this maintenance (1993: 3). Deeply entrenched in French society (Lodge, 1993: 3), it is supported on a state level by language planning and intervention, and institutions such as the *Académie française* which advise language users on 'correct' language use (Lodge, 1993: 236). Officially, prescriptivism manifests in textbooks and dictionaries which lay out the 'correct' standard orthographies and grammars of a language. These resources are rarely questioned by the layperson, but rather taken as an indisputable authority (Milroy & Milroy, 1999: 4). It is also seen in the metalinguistic discourse of keen language enthusiasts who maintain the standard through correction of others (Moschonas & Spitzmüller, 2010: 23). Linguists, in contrast, usually avoid prescriptivism and instead favour descriptivism, describing and observing language use (Milroy & Milroy, 1999: 10). Comprehensive studies on historic French prescriptivism have, nonetheless, been produced (see Ayres-Bennett & Seijido, 2011). The boundary, however, between prescriptivism and descriptivism is perhaps not as clear cut as once suggested, with each containing elements of the other (Hodson, 2006: 60).

The establishment of a standard relies naturally on an opposing non-standard. Theoretically, it is necessary to set out, before analysis, what is meant by non-standard and how this differs from an 'error'. An *erreur* is defined by Larousse online as a 'Chose

fausse, erronée par rapport à la vérité, à une norme, à une règle'³ and therefore carries an immediate negative value judgement. Non-standard, on the other hand, is defined in terms of its relationship with the standard: 'Qui ne répond pas aux canons d'un modèle habituel, aux norms courantes d'un appareil'⁴. This study will use Androutsopoulos' following definition of non-standard as a reference:

a general heading for spellings that diverge from standard (codified) orthography and/or do not occur in formal writing. In this sense, it is meant to include both the transfer of spoken language features to writing, and formal modifications of a sign that are not related to spoken language facts.

(2000: 514)

The term non-standard will be used throughout to refer to any deviation from the norm. There are features of CMC, such as use of emoticons and for instance, *ne* deletion, which are arguably now standard for the medium, as shown by Van Compernelle (2010: 447-48), and as demonstrated throughout this study. Where relevant, these features will be highlighted during the analysis.

When analysing non-standard usages, an attempt is made to distinguish whether the feature is orthographical, grammatical or conjugational. For instance, one sample tweet uses the future tense *j'aimerai* where the conditional *j'aimerais* is the standard conjugation. As both conjugations are phonetically identical, this may be an example of non-standard orthography. Alternatively, the user may believe that the first person conditional tense ending for an *-er* verb is *ai* rather than *ais* in which case it is a non-

³ <http://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/erreur/30846?q=erreur#30759> [Accessed 23/09/2016].

⁴ http://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/non_standard/54937?q=non-standard#54558 [Accessed 23/09/2016].

standard conjugation. Without further context, conclusions made regarding the origin of non-standard features are purely speculative. Besides, in CMC, which is usually produced via a keyboard, there is always the possibility that non-standard spellings are typographical errors, caused by a mistake in the typing process rather than a lack of knowledge of the standard spelling. This is an issue rooted in psycholinguistics which cannot be fully theorized within the limits of this study.

1.1.2 Prescriptivism

Milroy and Milroy's influential work 'Authority in Language' (1999) explores prescriptivism and the 'complaint tradition' which stems from a culture of prescriptive language practices. They postulate that complaints about language use will generally fit into one of two categories. Type 1 complaints are 'legalistic' and 'attack "mis-use" of specific parts of the phonology, grammar, vocabulary of English'. Type 2 complaints, on the other hand, are 'moralistic' and 'recommend clarity in writing and attack what appear to be abuses of language that may mislead and confuse the public' (1999: 30-31). Prescriptivism, and standard language ideology, are an intrinsic influence on this tradition (Langer & Davies, 2006: 46). Milroy and Milroy (1999) study English exclusively, but the same system may be applicable in France, where the 17th century rhetoric of *bon usage* is still influential (Bourhis, 1982: 36). Public comment on language is omnipresent in France and the internet is a popular platform for airing such comments (Paveau & Rosier, 2008: 97). It even seems that language criticism is a worthy counter to an argument (Chapman, 2012: 194).⁵ A complaint tradition is alive and well online.

Cameron (1995), who also works with English, coined the phrase 'verbal hygiene' as a term intended to avoid the binary choice between prescriptivism/descriptivism.

⁵ This study was conducted in the English language.

Cameron states that, as using language is a social practice, making judgements about language is 'an integral part of using it' (1995: 3-6). She critiques the linguists who place little significance on prescriptivism and advocate descriptivism yet accept language planning (1995: 8). Cameron argues that this contradicts the descriptive/prescriptive construct which considers descriptive language behaviours as a source of natural language change and prescriptive language behaviours as unnatural and dangerous to a language (1995: 20). It is clear that standard languages go hand in hand with prescriptivism and, as Cameron suggests, commenting on language is natural and expected.

The distinction is often made in linguistics between spoken and written language. Milroy and Milroy outline the differences between the two mediums as follows: written language is visually received and manually produced, it is a solitary activity, and is generally planned and lasting; spoken language is received aurally and produced orally, it is social, usually unplanned and often ephemeral (1999: 54-55). Western societies place a greater emphasis on the written medium and, consequently, it is commonly assumed that the written medium is superior and more complicated than the spoken word (1999: 55). Nevertheless, both mediums are subject to norms (Vachek, 1982: 37). The corpus in this study considers attitudes expressed through the written medium, but these attitudes may be based on either written or spoken language; which one will not always be decipherable.

1.1.3 Language Planning in France

Centuries of state-level language planning and policy have maintained the primacy of the standard language in France (Bourhis, 1982: 34). For Schiffman, language policy concerns 'decision-making about language', be this the formal, legal decisions about language, or the grass roots, unofficial decisions from below (i.e. decisions of the

‘people’ rather than official institutions), which he argues, are too often ignored (2009: 112). Successful policy-makers must consult the attitudes and ideologies of the people, as a policy which counters the salient ideologies of a society will struggle to be accepted (Ricento, 2009: 9). Furthermore, language policy debates are ‘always about more than language’ (Ricento, 2009: 8); social, political and economic motives abound. In modern French history, there are two key moments of legal language intervention: the *loi Bas-Lauriol* of 1975⁶ and the *loi Toubon* of 1994⁷.

The *loi Bas-Lauriol* declared the use of French obligatory in areas such as advertising, user manuals and television and radio broadcasts, and prohibited the use of foreign terms in any instance where an equivalent French term existed (Article 1). This second requirement suggests a purist motivation to protect the language from exterior influences, as well as social/political motivations. The *loi Bas-Lauriol* had little success and was followed in 1994 by the *loi Toubon* (Walsh, 2016: 36). This law stated that French was to be the language ‘de l’enseignement, du travail, des échanges et des services publics’ and explicitly linked the French language to the country’s heritage and culture (Article 1). As in the earlier *loi Bas-Lauriol*, the law opposes the use of foreign terms in any circumstance where an equivalent French terms exists (Article 4).⁸ The exploitation of the link between language and nation and the prohibiting of foreign words again highlights a purist tendency in the official legislation. Neither law focuses on internal variation, i.e. regional varieties, instead targeting external

⁶ Known formally as ‘*Loi n° 75–1349 du 31 décembre 1975 relative à l’emploi de la langue française*’. Accessible here: <http://goo.gl/eP2AJo> [Accessed 23/09/2016].

⁷ Known formally as ‘*Loi n° 94–665 du 4 août 1994 relative à l’emploi de la langue française*’. Accessible here: <http://goo.gl/AqUBUO> [Accessed 23/09/2016].

⁸ This stipulation was later adapted to apply only to public servants after it was deemed in breach of the *Déclaration des droit de l’homme et du citoyen* (Walsh, 2016: 37).

variation, suggesting that this is the perceived contemporary threat to the purity of the standard language.

1.1.4 Purism

Purism is closely linked to standard language ideology, although it has been suggested that it can exist even in societies with no standard language (Boeder *et al.*, 2003: x). Thomas defines the phenomenon as ‘a desire on the part of the speech community [...] to preserve a language from, or rid it of, putative foreign elements or elements held to be undesirable (including those originating in dialects, sociolects and styles of the same language)’ (1991: 12). Paveau and Rosier suggest the scope is greater still with the following definition: ‘[Purisme] veut prémunir la langue originelle contre ses mauvais usages (et usagers)’ (2008: 23). Others contest that purism seeks only to remove the foreign elements of a language (Trask, 1999: 254). This study will follow Thomas’ definition of purism, but will also consider the desire to protect against language users as an integral part of purism.

Thomas’ (1991) work provides a theoretical framework for purism. He suggests that purism is motivated largely by non-rational factors, such as aesthetics or nationhood, but acknowledges that often motivations cannot be as clearly delineated as a binary suggests (1991: 35-36). Thomas distinguishes between two types of purism: internal and external. External purism is ‘xenophobic purism’ (connotations of racism from xenophobia not present) and targets foreign elements in language, such as loanwords (1991: 81). In the French language, anglicisms have often been targeted (Ricento, 2009: 120); the DGLFLF, for example, publish annual terminology lists which recommend French alternatives for loanwords, e.g. *mot-dièse* to replace ‘hashtag’. Internal purism argues that linguistic change and/or error within French is

contaminating the purity of the language, e.g. non-standard spellings. This study focuses on internal, rather than external, purism.

Purism draws upon a number of images to express opinions on language use (Thomas, 1991: 19). Paveau and Rosier (2008: 57) categorise French metalinguistic imagery as follows: aesthetic arguments (*beau/laid*); political arguments (*langue de la liberté*); pseudo-linguistic arguments (*clarté de la langue*); and metaphorical arguments (*langue en bonne santé*). Thomas' model also includes aesthetics, but in a broader sense encompassing values such as 'correctness', 'wholeness' and 'pristineness' (1991: 39). It is of note that these arguments focus on the language itself, and not the user, as a point of criticism. Douglas' work 'Purity and Danger' (2002) discusses the imagery of purity in a wider context, outside of linguistic purism, linking the concept to negative connotations such as dirt, danger and disgust.

Paveau and Rosier (2008) provide an in-depth study of, primarily internal, purism in France. Discussing the history of purism and its manifestations in modern society, the work touches on purism in CMC but does not analyse the metalanguage used online in detail. They assert that purist commentary on language is natural and normal: 'chacun de nous est un peu, beaucoup, à la folie, passionnément puriste, particulièrement en ce qui concerne la langue' (2008: 73). If we are all to some extent purist, there may be a wealth of lay purist attitudes displayed on Twitter. Walsh (2016), in her comparative study of internal and external purism in France and Quebec, explores purist attitudes at an official, group and individual level in the two Francophone territories. The metalanguage of language societies is considered but this is not examined on an individual level. This study compliments these works by focusing on CMC and the purist imagery used by individuals; an area thus far little studied. Outside of a Francophone context, historical and contemporary purism in

Germany have been widely researched (Jones, 1999; Langer and Davies, 2006, 2011; McLelland, 2009).

1.1.5 Linguistic Insecurity

Linguistic insecurity is, according to Ager (1999: 9), 'a recognised phenomenon, usually found in speakers of a dialect of language used by a social group of low prestige'. In France, where standard language ideology prevails, it is easy to see how speakers feel pressure to conform to the high prestige standard language. This pressure can lead to language shifting, contextual based change from dialect to standard and vice versa, and eventually, to the loss of the dialect or low prestige language (Ager, 1999: 9). Speakers are left feeling that their language use is substandard (Lodge, 1993: 251-52) or even not 'real' French (Ager, 1999: 9). Language contact can equally be a cause of linguistic insecurity. In France, the English language is the source of many linguistic worries, as reflected in the *loi Toubon* and its clause against the use of foreign terms. This heightened sensitivity to one's own language use, alongside a perceived need to maintain the standard language, creates a complex landscape where standard language use functions as cultural capital.

The French language is difficult, for natives and foreigners alike (Paveau & Rosier, 2008: 60). In fact, a recent study found that 73% of native French speakers find the French language difficult and 47% admit to regularly making spelling mistakes (Dargent, 2016). Mastery of the spelling system is strived for in France; the popularity of dictations as a didactic tool and the annual televised *Dictée Nationale* are just two examples of this societal celebration of orthographic prowess. On the other side of the spectrum, making spelling errors in France is a cultural faux pas which carry societal

consequences, such as reduced potential for social mobility (Paveau & Rosier, 2008: 141). Standard orthography is praised and celebrated in a society where skill and confidence are low, giving increased status to those who do manage to conquer the difficulties of the non-phonetic orthography, and the standard language more generally. A number of points can be extrapolated from this: non-standard spellings are common, widely condemned and linked to status.

Recently, orthography hit the headlines in France after newspapers announced that a spelling reform dating from 1990 would be enforced in schools from September 2016. The reform⁹ affects the spelling of over 2,000 words, as well as the morphology of verbs ending *-eler* and *-eter*. Widely discussed online, the hashtag *#ReformeOrthographe* was the most popular topic of conversation worldwide on Twitter following the media's publication of the changes (Bowman, 2016).¹⁰ A similar German reform in 1998 led to protest that the changes breached the constitutional rights of the German people (Johnson, 2000: 116-17). This 'puristic uproar', Langer states, justifies the statement that purism is a political rather than linguistic phenomenon as orthography is a manmade creation, not a natural system (2001: 18).

1.2 Recent developments in sociolinguistics

New forms of diversity within societies, such as greater migration and new media, are beginning to challenge the dominant framework of monolingual standard language societies (Blommaert *et al.*, 2012: 8-9). For instance, immigrants to a country with a

⁹ Accessible here: http://www.academie-francaise.fr/sites/academie-francaise.fr/files/rectifications_1990.pdf [Accessed 23/09/2016].

¹⁰ A selection of tweets from this period will be analysed in Chapter 5.

new language can connect regularly with their native tongue thanks to the widespread availability of the internet and online communication platforms such as Skype and Facebook (Blommaert, 2010b: 7). The internet is therefore an environment of new forms of linguistic switching and styles. Modernist linguistic ideologies would class such variation as impure, but Blommaert *et al.* argue that a revision is due (2012: 9). The new linguistic landscape needs an updated framework to reflect the changing society and technologies. Some of the reactions displayed in this study are to features considered typical of CMC language use. Analysis of reactions will show whether or not individuals view such features as impurities or standard/acceptable for the medium.

A process of dialectal and phonological levelling has been observed in numerous European countries, including France (Hornsby, 2007; Armstrong & Boughton, 2009). Armstrong and Boughton define the linguistic levelling as 'a reduction in the number of variable linguistic features distinguishing the various social categories that make up a speech community' (2009: 9-10). In his paper comparing regional dialect levelling in France and the UK, Hornsby suggests that the dialects of France are more levelled than in the UK, with 'little evidence of regional accent diversity' aside from the north/south distinction (2007: 68). As such, an increased importance of the standard language in France is suggested which may lead to greater defence of the prestigious variety in metalinguistic discourse.

Prescriptivism certainly seems to have a significant online presence in France, with various websites, blogs and Twitter accounts devoted to the subject. The website *Bescherelle ta mère*¹¹ highlights the grammatical and orthographical errors made by

¹¹ <http://bescherelletamere.fr/> [Accessed 23/09/2016].

companies, famous figures, and the public. It has over 574,000 Facebook members¹² and, in 2014, was awarded the *Meilleur Espoir* prize at the Golden Blog Awards¹³. A second popular site is *Langue sauce piquante*¹⁴, written by two sub-editors from newspaper *Le Monde*. The blog discusses 'correct' language and suggests ways to improve one's French-language capacities. Purism also has a presence online. *Dire, Ne Pas Dire*¹⁵ is an offshoot of the *Académie française* website which addresses the errors and language issues its writers perceive to be common in French society. The subsection *Néologismes et Anglicismes* reaffirms the Academy's position concerning foreign influences in the language, suggesting that they pose a significant threat. The internet has undoubtedly offered the layperson an environment for language discussion as Osthus (2002) confirms: 'En fait il ne faut ni être linguiste ni académicien pour juger sur le bon usage et les normes. Il suffit de se brancher sur Internet'.

1.3 Computer-Mediated Communication

The internet has become almost unavoidable in Western society, with an estimated 78% of the European population regularly connecting (Davidson, 2015). Early linguistic research attempted to classify online communication in terms of a new language and gave rise to what Dürscheid (2004) termed the *Mythos Netzsprache*: the idea that CMC is distinct from 'traditional' communication and unique in its features (Crystal, 2001: 18). Since this 'first wave' of CMC research, attempts have been made to move the field away from these myths to study CMC as a stand-alone concept, without preconceived ideas about its characteristics (Androutsopoulos, 2006: 420-21). Behaviour online differs from equivalent offline behaviours, and so conclusions drawn

¹² Correct as of 23/09/2016.

¹³ <https://www.golden-blog-awards.fr/laureats-2014.html> [Accessed 23/09/2016].

¹⁴ <http://correcteurs.blog.lemonde.fr/> [Accessed 23/09/2016].

¹⁵ <http://www.academie-francaise.fr/dire-ne-pas-dire> [Accessed 23/09/2016].

from one type of communication cannot be generalised to the other (Joinson, 1999: 433). Consequently, online and offline language attitudes must be researched separately.

The internet has evolved significantly since its advent, with technologies and trends rapidly changing. Web 2.0 was a term introduced to incorporate the change from a 'read-only' web (Web 1.0) to a web of user-generated content (Thomas, 2009: xxii). The rise of social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, alongside multimedia sharing sites YouTube and Instagram, can be described as examples of Web 2.0. For Thomas, 'whereas Web 1.0 connected *information* together..., Web 2.0 connects *people*', and it was this change that made the internet and CMC a useful resource for applied linguistics (2009: xxii-xxiii). The switch to user-generated content will be consequential for language use and evolution as the stronghold of the mass media's ability to control cultural output is weakened significantly (Androutsopoulos, 2013: 49), creating a space for language creativity and assertion of identity (Androutsopoulos, 2000: 529).

Much research has questioned the effects that a lack of face-to-face cues can have on communication. The internet allows for both complete anonymity and quasi-anonymity – disguising yourself as someone else (Jane, 2014: 543). What follows, research suggests, is heightened self-disclosure (Misoch, 2015: 536), an increase in hostility (Joinson, 1999: 433) and loss of inhibition (Marcoccia, 2003: 44). In the context of metalinguistic discourse, this may lead to greater conflict between users and the sharing of more extreme views.

A long standing area of discussion in CMC centres on the spoken/written language binary. Crystal (2011: 21) classifies the language of CMC as a language 'pulled in the direction of speech' but suggests that we should strive to define the medium in its own

terms. Herring (2010: 1-2) posits that the lay-language used to discuss CMC supports this suggestion; online language is often described as being 'said' and 'heard' rather than 'written' or 'typed', giving the written medium a spoken quality. As a speech-like form, the language of Twitter may be considered low prestige in comparison to the desired standard language, as standard language ideology places greater legitimacy upon written varieties (Lodge, 1993: 252). For this reason, we could expect similar attitudes online as those used to critique oral variation. Androutsopoulos suggests that our research focus must shift from medium-specific to user-specific patterns of language, in order to demythologise what previous 'first wave' research instilled in the field (2006: 420-21). In short, research on CMC language use should avoid relying on comparisons to other CMC mediums and to the spoken/written binary, and instead treat each medium, in this case Twitter, as a separate entity and focus on the users.

1.3.1 Twitter

Twitter¹⁶ is 'a microblogging service that allows people to communicate with short, 140-character messages that roughly correspond to thoughts or ideas' (Russell, 2013: 7). As of September 2015, Twitter had 320 million active users each month, communicating in over 35 languages¹⁷, and analysis of its content has become a prevalent field of research (Bazo *et al.*, 2013: 2). Each message sent out by a user, known as a tweet, can contain various elements:

- Usernames (or twitter handles) are unique identifiers chosen by users which begin with '@', for instance '@fhollande' corresponds to François Hollande's

¹⁶ <http://www.twitter.com> (Accessed 23/09/2016).

¹⁷ <https://about.twitter.com/company> (Accessed 23/09/2016).

account¹⁸. Any users wishing to address Mr Hollande in a tweet simply add '@fhollande' to their tweet.

- Hashtags are words or phrases preceded by a '#', used to link tweets on similar topics. Clicking on a hashtag will load all related tweets.
- To retweet (also noun) is to share someone else's tweet with your followers. Clicking on a tweet will display the number of retweets.

The language of Twitter has been widely discussed (e.g. Hong *et al.*, 2011; Zappavigna, 2012; Crystal, 2011), with attempts made to determine the medium's place within a CMC spectrum (Hu *et al.*, 2013: 1). On the one hand, the character limit (140 characters per tweet) has led to suggestions that 'people use acronyms, make spelling mistakes, use emoticons and other characters that express special meanings' (Agarwal *et al.*, 2011: 32). In this way, the language of Twitter closely resembles that of SMS and synchronous chat rooms (Hu *et al.*, 2013: 1). On the other hand, Hu *et al.*'s study (2013: 2) found that the language used on Twitter was actually 'more conservative, formal and less conversational than SMS and online chat'. They suggest that this is due to the public nature of Twitter and its tendency to cover a wider range of topics than, for instance, SMS communication, which is usually limited to interaction between friends, family, etc. (*ibid*). The study was conducted using English-language tweets and may not be generalizable to other languages, given suggestions that the usage of common Twitter conventions varies from language to language (Hong *et al.*, 2011: 521). As a large proportion of studies focus on English language use, similar studies in other languages are necessary (Herring, 2010: 6).

¹⁸ All definitions in this section adapted from <https://support.twitter.com/articles/166337> (Accessed 23/09/2016).

Humour seems to be an important feature on Twitter and the restricted character limit of tweets lends itself effectively to punch lines (Molyneux, 2015: 929). It has been suggested that there are three main theories of humour: incongruity theory (the unexpected as humorous), relief theory (humour to relieve psychological tension), and superiority theory (humour based on perceived superiority/inferiority) (as summarised in Sherman & Švelch, 2014: 320). Given that prescriptivism relies on the polarity of correct/incorrect, it seems likely that the superiority theory of humour will be most relevant when analysing metalinguistic discourse. Meyer argues that there are two principal functions of superiority humour: 'Human society is kept in order as those who disobey are censured by laughter, and people are made to feel part of a group by laughing at some ridiculed others' (2000: 315). This is reminiscent of the dichotomy of correct/incorrect language users created by standard language ideology and the superiority associated with use of the 'correct' language.

1.4 Conclusion

Research has been conducted on both lay linguistics and language use on Twitter for the French language, but to my knowledge the present study is the first to consider metalinguistic discourse on Twitter in French. The literature has highlighted both a lack of confidence in using standard orthography amongst native speakers and a tendency to use CMC as a space for language creativity, thereby suggesting that non-standard language will abound online. A strong prescriptive and a milder purist presence have been observed both online and offline in France, and it is expected that this will be replicated on Twitter, perhaps in a stronger form given the tendency for extreme expression of views online. A tendency for non-standard language use combined with a tendency to criticise makes, I argue, CMC an interesting field of study.

Chapter 2 Methodology

Twitter, and social networks in general, have become a popular tool for corpus creation; the advantages and disadvantages of this application are discussed in this chapter. The process by which data was collected and the corpora were formed is then outlined. A mixture of general and specific areas were chosen for analysis to gain a more well-rounded view of the types of metalinguistic discussion taking place on Twitter.

2.1 Twitter as a corpus creation tool

Twitter is a popular social networking site (McMinn *et al.*, 2013: 409), used in wide-ranging areas of research (see, Ritter *et al.*, 2010; Zappavigna, 2011; Himelboim *et al.*, 2013). It is a particularly useful tool for corpus linguistics with the large amounts of linguistic data, in the form of tweets, ready to be exported and analysed. The technical setup of the site lends itself to corpus creation, with numerous online applications available for quick and efficient data harvesting. Used by a wide variety of people all over the world (Russell, 2013: 5), a suitably constructed corpus of tweets goes some way to ensuring the findings represent a balanced cross-section of the society, country or language community studied.

The scope for researchers to create a Twitter corpus is arguably much greater than that of other social networks. Twitter users, when creating an account, agree to the sharing of their data with third parties meaning that all public Twitter data is ethically available to researchers. Research on other social networks, such as Facebook¹⁹, where a mutual connection is often necessary to access data, requires consent from

¹⁹ www.facebook.com [Accessed 23/09/2016].

all users studied. Twitter gives easy access to all public data; a clear advantage for corpus creation. Twitter uses a 'following' relationship model – users can follow any other user with a public account, with no mutual connection necessary (Russell, 2013: 7). This differs from Facebook where a mutual online connection is often needed (*ibid*). Twitter's relationship model means a variety of communication types are found in a corpus of tweets: tweets intended for the general public; and communications between both friends and strangers. A corpus which contains this variety of communication is undoubtedly rich and potentially very revealing.

Tweets are sent in real time (Russell, 2013: 5), allowing researchers to track direct reactions to events and news stories. This also means that the date of a collection period shapes the data collected. On a small scale, this can mean spikes in usage of a search term as seen in Chapter 4 of this study. A television personality used the non-standard verb form *croivent* during an episode of a television program and the following hour saw a spike in the number of tweets containing the word *croivent*. On a larger scale, in February 2016, the spelling reform of 1990 began to trend on Twitter²⁰. This allowed for the collection of direct reactions to a governmental linguistic intervention.

The real time aspect of Twitter communication means that often 'tweets happen at the "speed of thought"' (Russell, 2013: 5). This seems to suggest that Twitter users compose messages with the same levels of reflection and self-editing as shown in spoken language. It could thus be speculated that tweets are a form of conceptual orality, a written medium with spoken language qualities (see Koch & Oesterreicher, 1990). Such claims are not undisputed; the Twitter accounts of companies are managed with care, social media manager roles are now commonplace and research

²⁰ The most discussed topics on Twitter at a particular time are called trending topics.

has suggested that Twitter language is in fact dynamic and often formal (Hong *et al.*, 2011: 522).

While social networks certainly have their place in sociolinguistic study and corpus linguistics, there are disadvantages to the use of CMC and Twitter. Real time responses can falsify the validity of the corpora. In contrasting two non-standard verb forms, for instance, a high-profile use of one form leading to a spike in online discussion paints a misleading picture of the frequency of usage. Rescheduling collections is an option but the same issue could arise again. This does not mean Twitter is an ineffective tool for corpus creation, but it is a variable which much be acknowledged.

Minimal context when harvesting tweets, makes distinguishing between types of communication difficult. It would be implausible in this study, for instance, to distinguish between tweets sent between friends and those sent between strangers. Threads²¹ can provide further context but are only available, when using an online tweet collection program, by reinserting singular tweets into the search function of Twitter. This is a laborious task which, to my knowledge, must be conducted manually. Complete threads are also not always available; either because users delete their contribution, because Twitter moderators remove tweets, or because one contributor has a private account. In Chapter 3, which analyses threads, this meant that only 133 complete threads were collected from a possible 371. In the context of metalinguistic discussion, and in particular heated debates which descend into linguistic criticism, users may delete their tweets to avoid further criticism. Methodologically, this may mean that more extreme criticisms and discussions are unavailable as, arguably, these

²¹ A Twitter thread is a series of tweets which form a conversation, usually between multiple users.

are the most likely to be removed or deleted by users. Unless researchers can create instant offline records of threads as they are posted, this is unpreventable.

The anonymity allowed by the internet means CMC research often lacks reliable demographic and geographical data (Herring, 2001: 621). A Twitter account need not necessarily correspond to a real-life identity, giving users free reign to create or mimic any persona they wish (Russell, 2013: 8). Twitter can record the geographic location of users, but this is an 'opt-in' feature which few users, in my research, seem to use. For this reason, it has not been employed in this study. It is unclear, then, from which country the tweets collected were sent. It seems unlikely that Twitter, despite its popularity, is used by members from all strata of society; data collected cannot therefore be considered fully representative of society. Androutsopoulos suggests an ethnographic approach or an analysis of users' screen names and profile information can give rise to such data (2006: 425). However, these methods still cannot guarantee complete accuracy and are beyond the temporal scope of this project.

CMC is a diverse medium, and one which changes rapidly (Crystal, 2011: 10-11). Generalisations cannot be made to CMC as a whole, but rather only to the medium studied (Crystal, 2011: 10) and research must reflect upon this heterogeneity. Fleeting popularity of CMC modes is also undeniable and as such, the relevance of research on the medium may be transitory. Even so, a researcher cannot dismiss a type of communication based on its potential longevity. The relevance of Twitter may be momentary but this does not make it less revealing of current society. When working with online data, it is necessary to store the corpus offline. Users and Twitter moderators can delete or remove a tweet at any moment causing the corpus to change regularly. An inconsistent corpus would be difficult to handle and adversely

affect analysis. Offline corpus storage allows for an unchanging, standardised corpus. This study stores all samples of tweets in offline data-protected files.

2.2 Data Collection

2.2.1 Twilert

Tweets were collected using the online service Twilert²², an application that sends hourly notification emails of tweets in a chosen language, containing a selected search term. The service is a paying service, but for this study I was able to utilise the company's free trial. The application simply needs access to a Twitter account, created with an email address and password. It is not necessary to follow users to gain access to tweets — all collected tweets are public. Once the notification email is received, data can be transposed into a spreadsheet and manipulated into a standardised format. This allows for the collection of large numbers of tweets without the need to manually scour Twitter. As the density of tweets collected per hour varies greatly between search terms, variable collection time limits were adopted.

Where possible, collection periods for search terms were staggered to try to avoid duplication of tweets in samples. If a tweet contains two search terms and the collection is not staggered, the same tweet will be counted in both samples. In practice, full staggering was not possible because of the length of the free trial, nor was it appropriate. When collecting tweets about the spelling reform in February 2016, it was important to collect in the days immediately following the heightened media attention. News stories are often only 'newsworthy' for a limited time period and, particularly on Twitter, popular topics can change drastically in hours (Wang &

²² <https://www.twilert.com/> Information about the company available here: <http://goo.gl/RAoUVJ> (Accessed 23/09/2016).

Lin, 2014: 570). A staggered collection on this subject would have risked missing the main burst of data. Retweets can also cause duplication of tweets, even with full staggering. If a tweet containing two or more search terms is retweeted during both collection periods, the tweet will be counted twice. Retweets were deliberately not excluded as they indicate the online popularity of tweets (Highfield, 2015: 2714). Some duplication between and within samples was then unavoidable; where relevant, this overlap is highlighted in analysis.

2.2.2 Search Terms

The choice of search terms was crucial to the study. Pilot searches were conducted for each analysis chapter in order to ascertain what constituted a ‘successful’ search term and to decide the most productive form for each term, i.e. the highest proportion of relevant to irrelevant data. Searches do not distinguish between characters with and without accents, collecting both variations regardless, e.g. the search term *reform* *orthographe* will collect tweets containing *reform orthographe* and *réform orthographe*. This is useful as often in French CMC, accents are omitted (Anis, 1999: 86). Three areas of language and the metalinguistic discussion surrounding it were chosen for analysis.

The first step in the study was to examine general attitudes towards ‘bad’ language²³, using the four search terms *orthographe*, *grammaire*, *conjugaison*, *syntaxe*. It was considered important to use these relatively broad search terms to gauge attitudes to perceptions of ‘bad’ language more generally, before investigating attitudes to specific non-standard features. These four particular terms were chosen, given their importance to standard written language and the rigidity of prescriptive attitudes

²³ ‘Bad’ language is used throughout this study to mean ‘unacceptable’ language, thus echoing the sentiment shared in tweets discussed. It does not refer to swearing.

towards them in standard language ideology. The term *morphologie* was also tested, but was rejected as it emerged that it was used on Twitter primarily to discuss bodily form. For these search terms, a collection period of either 72 hours or 1,000 tweets, whichever was reached first, was set. This avoided collecting an unmanageably large amount of data for frequently used terms *orthographe* and *grammaire*, whilst, at the same time ensuring sufficient tweets for the lesser-used terms *conjugaison* and *syntaxe*. Searches for the terms *orthographe*, *grammaire* and *conjugaison* were conducted from the 15th-22nd November 2015 with a slight overlap in collection periods. The *syntaxe* search was conducted from the 8th-11th of August 2016.

After this initial exploration, two salient non-standard verb forms were chosen for examination: *croivent* and *voyent*. *Croivent* is a non-standard form of the third person plural present tense of the verb *croire*, where the standard conjugation is *ils/elles croient*. It seems likely that the non-standard *croivent* is formed by analogy with the conjugation of *boire*: *ils/elles boivent*.²⁴ The second term *voyent* is a non-standard form of the third person plural present tense of the verb *voir*; the standard conjugation is *ils/elles voient*. *Voyent* is a non-standard form which cannot be heard, unlike *croivent* which is phonologically different to its standard conjugation. Research on Twitter, *Bescherelle ta mère* and online best/worst lists²⁵ highlighted the two non-standard forms as common ‘errors’ amongst native French speakers. Non-standard spellings *comme même*, rather than *quand même*, and *tampis*, for *tant pis*, both phonologically identical, were also highlighted, but were not often critiqued on Twitter, despite being used frequently (1,714 uses and 575 uses in one week respectively). Both searches

²⁴ *Dire, ne pas dire*, ‘Croivent pour croient’ (<http://www.academie-francaise.fr/croivent-pour-croient>) [Accessed 23/09/2016].

²⁵ E.g. <http://goo.gl/y8X6Ae> or <http://goo.gl/Zv2yzD> [Accessed 23/09/2016].

were conducted for non-overlapping seven day periods from the 12th-26th of April 2016.

The third, and final, focus of the study was reactions to the media re-emergence of the French Spelling Reform of 1990. On 4th February 2016, the hashtag *#JeSuisCirconflexe* began to trend on Twitter and was, for this reason, chosen as a main search term. Two further search terms, *ognon* and *reform orthographe* were also used to enrich the data. *Ognon* was chosen as the decision to change the spelling of *oignon* to *ognon* was latched onto by critics of the reform; *reform orthographe* was considered a necessity for its neutrality, in comparison to the main search term which suggests a negative response to the reform. Trial searches were not conducted as these searches were not initially planned but rather took advantage of tweets in reaction to a news story. All searches were conducted from 4th February 2016 for 48 hours. A collection period of 48 hours was used because tweets using the hashtag, *#JeSuisCironflexe* became less frequent over the following days, and the sample size was considered appropriate for the scale of the project.

2.3 Preparing the corpus

Once tweets were collected and standardised, the samples were prepared for analysis. All usernames were removed from tweets, both of the user who posted the tweet and any tagged account within the tweets, to ensure anonymity. If the tweet tagged a 'verified' account²⁶, this was not removed as it was clear from the context of the tweet who was being addressed. In a second phase, the collected data was manually sorted

²⁶ A verified account is an 'account of public interest', usually the account of a well-known figure, e.g. a politician or a musician.

for relevance to the study. Irrelevant tweets were discarded. This included spam tweets, ‘#friendsday #DPDA #JeSuisCirconflexe #GroundhogDay’, tweets which use the search term with a different meaning, for instance if a tweet using the term *ognon* was a recipe for soup, and tweets which use the search term in reference to a language other than French: ‘SI T'ÉCRIS EN FRANÇAIS BC TA PEUR DE FAIRE UNE FAUTE D'ORTHOGRAPHE EN ANGLAIS’. When it was unclear whether a tweet was relevant or not, the tweet was classified as unclear and again removed from the sample. Ideally, this weeding out phase would have been performed during the collection to ensure equally sized samples of relevant tweets, but time restrictions made this option impossible. However, the method used means that one can clearly see the proportion of ‘on-topic’ and ‘off-topic’ usage of the terms in Twitter communication. The frequency of spam tweets also indicates how popular a search term is on Twitter; the more spam tweets, the more likely the term is used frequently. Retweets were then manually separated from original material, to avoid duplication and falsification of results. Retweets are mentioned where relevant but, for the most part, the analysis focuses only on original tweets.

Once the final samples had been compiled, all tweets and threads (used in Chapter 3) were given a unique identifier in the following formats: search term, number (CR-001) or thread, number (Thread001). In threads, users are referred to as User A or User B, for instance, to distinguish interlocutors, as shown in Figure 2.1. All tweets are reproduced exactly as collected, preserving original spelling, grammar and punctuation. Acronyms and structures which are not intuitive are explained in the analysis. Emoticons are reproduced exactly as presented by Twilert, either as a pictorial representation, e.g. :(or ☹, or a textual description, e.g. Face with tears of joy.

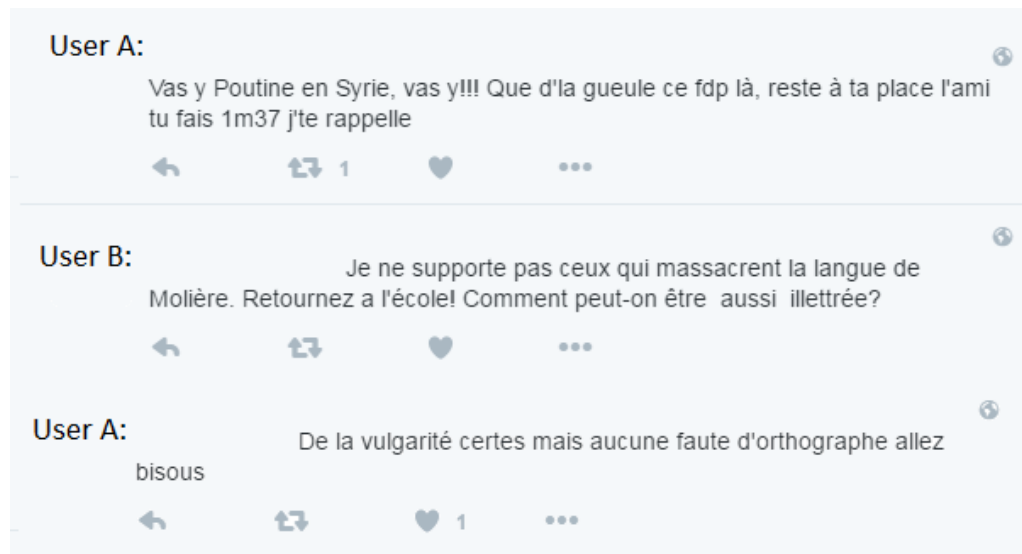


Figure 2.1 Example of a thread (Thread035)

Qualitative and basic quantitative analysis in this study was conducted manually, rather than through the use of algorithms²⁷. In light of this, samples needed to be a manageable size for one researcher to read and classify every tweet individually. Results are then just a snapshot of the discussions taking place on Twitter, but, given the methodology used, should be representative. This study received ethical approval from the University of Nottingham Research Ethics Committee, whose guidelines have been carefully followed throughout the study.

²⁷ When analysing tweets, it is possible to construct algorithms which can classify tweets 'according to the meaning of the Tweet, and on the basis of the text they contain' (Miller *et al.*, 2016). This method is time-consuming to set up, but eventually allows for automatic analysis of large amounts of data. This was not a viable option for this study, given time constraints. Moreover, the subtle nuances of language are often difficult for even a human researcher to differentiate. Analysis involving algorithms would therefore have needed a human to check for accuracy.

2.4 Conclusion

We have seen that Twitter gives researchers access to large amounts of linguistic and metalinguistic data, which are publically available and without ethical issues. For a sociolinguistic study, the lack of reliable demographic and geographic information on Twitter is a limitation, although a study with greater scope could attempt to gain such data. Another methodological concern is the potential for unexpected spikes in the use of particular search terms. With these limitations in mind, we turn now to the study itself.

Chapter 3 Attitudes towards non-standard language

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines general attitudes towards the use of non-standard language on Twitter. Given suggestions that hostility is heightened online (Joinson, 1999: 433) and that the internet has provided a space for metalinguistic discussion that was previously taking place in face-to-face interaction (Paveau & Rosier, 2008: 97), and was consequently hard to track, we may expect to find a high level of prescriptivism online. Section 3.2 provides an outline of each sample of tweets examined, detailing the search terms and sample compositions. Both the subject of the linguistic criticism and the element which has prompted criticism are analysed, and an overview of the recurring ideas and motifs used within metalinguistic discussion on Twitter is then provided. Using the following search terms; *orthographe*, *grammaire*, *conjugaison* and *syntaxe*, this chapter considers the attitudes shown towards ‘bad’ language as a general entity, before the two following chapters delve into more specific areas; non-standard verb forms and governmental linguistic intervention.

3.2 Spelling, grammar, conjugation and syntax

Four search terms are used in this chapter: *orthographe*, *grammaire*, *conjugaison* and *syntaxe*. These four terms were chosen as they are considered important elements in written standard language, with two broad, umbrella terms, *orthographe* and *grammaire*, alongside two more specialist terms, *conjugaison* and *syntaxe*. It has been proposed that orthography in France is ‘considered to be absolute law’ (Anis, 2007: 89), leading me to hypothesise that spelling will be targeted more forcefully than the other three areas. Furthermore, as it is difficult to determine the cause of non-standard features, I expect the two umbrella terms, *grammaire* and *orthographe*, to

be used at a greater frequency than the more specialist terms, *conjugaison* and *syntaxe*. Early on in the collection period, it became clear that comments on spelling and grammar were more prolific than the specific terms *syntaxe* and *conjugaison*. To accommodate this variance, the collection period was 72 hours or a maximum of 1,000 tweets, whichever top limit was reached first. Ideally, collection periods would have continued until 1,000 tweets were collected for each term, but this was not possible given time constraints. Table 3.1 shows the number of tweets collected and the length of the collection period for each search term. Each tweet was given a unique identifier in the following format: OR-0001 (search term *orthographe*); GR-0001 (*grammaire*); CO-001 (*conjugaison*); SY-001 (*syntaxe*). All future reference to tweets will be made using unique identifiers to ensure anonymity. Tweets are reproduced exactly as collected, including all non-standard features and punctuation.

Search term	Total collected tweets	Collection Period	
		Hours	Mins
<i>orthographe</i>	1,000	24	32
<i>grammaire</i>	1,000	60	14
<i>conjugaison</i>	304	72	0
<i>syntaxe</i>	70	72	0

Table 3.1 Total collected tweets and length of collection periods

As Table 3.1 shows, the terms *grammaire* and *orthographe* occur much more frequently on Twitter than *conjugaison* and *syntaxe* which, in 72 hours, were used 304 and 70 times respectively. This is in comparison to *orthographe*, used 1,000 times in just over 24 hours, and *grammaire* with 1,000 uses in approximately 60 hours. Twitter users, it seems, are more likely to mention general areas of language, such as spelling and grammar, than more specialist areas like conjugation and syntax. This may be because it is often difficult to pinpoint whether a feature is, for instance, conjugational or orthographical, causing users to stick to the general rather than risk error themselves. Spelling is mentioned almost three times more frequently than grammar,

supporting the hypothesis that spelling is the most frequently criticised area of language.

Collections for the search terms *orthographe*, *grammaire* and *conjugaison* took place in the middle of November 2015, whilst the *syntaxe* search was conducted at the beginning of August 2016. The date of the November search is particularly salient as tweets were collected days after a number of fatal terrorist attacks in Paris on 13th November 2015. Unsurprisingly, during the time of the collection period, the attacks were still being widely discussed and the theme of terrorism occurs throughout the samples.

The distribution of retweets to original material for all four samples, is shown in Table 3.2. There is a clear difference in the proportion of retweets to original tweets between search terms. *Grammaire* had the highest proportion of retweets, at 60.7%, while retweets in the other three search terms accounted for between 24% and 35.9% of the samples. One retweet (shown in Table 3.4) formed nearly half of the entire sample for search term *grammaire*, having been retweeted 474 times in the 60 hour period, and arguably skews the data. Tweets were then analysed for relevance to the study; unclear and irrelevant tweets were removed from samples. Table 3.3 shows the final composition of each sample of tweets.

Search term	No. of original tweets	% of sample	No. of Retweets	% of sample
<i>orthographe</i>	641	64.1%	359	35.9%
<i>grammaire</i>	393	39.3%	607	60.7%
<i>conjugaison</i>	231	76.0%	73	24.0%
<i>syntaxe</i>	53	75.7%	17	24.3%

Table 3.2 Composition of all four samples by original material and retweets

Search term	No. of original tweets	Irrelevant	Unclear	Final sample size
<i>orthographe</i>	641	39	11	591
<i>grammaire</i>	393	133	0	260
<i>conjugaison</i>	231	63	0	168
<i>syntaxe</i>	53	9	1	43

Table 3.3 Final compositions of all four samples

Table 3.4 shows the top five most retweeted tweets for each search term. This excludes tweets classified as irrelevant or unclear. The most retweeted tweet for the search term *grammaire* was on the subject of terrorism and Hassen Chalghoumi, the Imam of a mosque in a northern Parisian suburb, Drancy: 'L'imam de Drancy c'est le plus gros terroriste, mais de la Langue française ,Il fait des 11 septembre de Grammaire tout les jours cousin'²⁸. The tweet suggests that the religious figure commits linguistic atrocities every day through a reference to September 11th and, presumably, the terrorist attacks which took place on that date in 2001 in New York. What goes unmentioned is the author's own grammatical 'crime' – the use of the masculine singular *tout* rather than the standard plural *tous*. The popularity of this tweet, shown through the 474 retweets in the relatively short space of time, is surprising given that the tweets were collected just two days after terrorist attacks in France's capital. The linking of a deadly attack to someone's grammatical mistakes is exaggerated and

²⁸ The tweet has since been removed or deleted and so it is unclear when the original tweet was posted.

potentially distasteful in any context but in this proximity is even more controversial. The second most retweeted tweet for the same search term, *grammaire*, repeats this theme with a mock headline which reads: 'URGENT : nouvel attentat contre la grammaire et la syntaxe françaises. Suspect repéré à TF1, à Boulogne-Billancourt.'. This is accompanied by a photo of the 'suspect', former French President Nicolas Sarkozy, appearing on French television channel TF1; his exact crime is unclear. It appears that in online metalinguistic discourse, metaphors which draw on provocative topics such as terrorism are not only acceptable but readily shared by users, even in the aftermath of a deadly terrorist attack. This supports literature which suggested that the anonymity of the internet leads to hostility and the expression of extreme views.

The first, third and fourth most popular retweets in the *orthographe* sample all make implicit references to features specific to Twitter. The first contains a link to a photo of a draft tweet which is one character over the character limit. The tweet states: 'à ce moment, tu sais que tu vas devoir faire une faute d'orthographe et tu te demandes laquelle'. The user alludes to a struggle in Twitter communication; they want to use standard French in their tweet but the character limit means they must sacrifice one character of their text and, rather than redraft or split content between two tweets, use a non-standard spelling. The presentation of this situation as a struggle suggests that it is 'bad' to use non-standard spelling and that only standard language use is acceptable. The third and fourth tweets both use the hashtag *#LesVraisTrucsGrave*. The fourth states that seeing a spelling mistake in a hashtag is a *vrai truc grave*, again highlighting the perceived importance of standard language use. What is ironic, and commented upon by the third most popular retweet, is that the hashtag used, *#LesVraisTrucsGrave* is itself non-standard, with the adjective *grave* written without the standard plural agreement. These tweets suggest that Twitter users view non-

standard spelling as worthy of comment on the social media platform and their popularity, 139 retweets between them, shows that this is a widely-shared opinion.

<i>grammaire</i>		
No.	Tweet	No. of retweets
1	L'imam de Drancy c'est le plus gros terroriste, mais de la Langue française ,Il fait des 11 septembre de Grammaire tout les jours cousin	474
2	URGENT : nouvel attentat contre la grammaire et la syntaxe françaises. Suspect repéré à TF1, à Boulogne-Billancourt. https://t.co/ln6b8VW3HA	24
3	Grammaire - Règles et exercices de grammaire https://t.co/hEXx19kfmH #fle #French #français	7
4	Les regex et grammaires de Perl 6, une puissance expressive sans précédent, un tutoriel de Laurent Rosenfeld https://t.co/jdF9czQ0qy	7
5	Bouger. S'aimer. Sourire. Rire. Pleurer. Notre grammaire infinitive. Verbalise nos appétits.Pour la vie. L'ignorant enrage. De le savoir.	4
<i>orthographe</i>		
1	à ce moment, tu sais que tu vas devoir faire une faute d'orthographe et tu te demandes laquelle https://t.co/hFIQC06UHQ	118
2	Vu le nombre de fautes d'orthographe sur chaque tweet du hashtag #FermetureDesEcolesLundi je me dis qu'il faut même les ouvrir le we !	29
3	#LesVraisTrucsGrave C'est de voir un hashtag comme celui-ci avec une grosse faute d'orthographe.	11
4	Les # avec une faute d'orthographe #LesVraisTrucsGrave	10
5	Les 2000 savent que suivre les mouvements mais sont dans l'incapacité de débattre de manière raisonnée, y a qu'à voir l'orthographe déjà	10
<i>conjugaison</i>		
1	L'orthographe et la conjugaison c'est important ! "J'adore la rentrée" et "J'adore la rentrer" ne veulent pas dire la même chose 😊	9
2	#entrepreneur petit exercice de conjugaison innovez innovons etc... https://t.co/MInjzRAKFO	8
3	Hey @JessSafait , quand on prône la France aux Français, on maîtrise au moins la conjugaison. #BescherelleVaincra http://bit.ly/2bdwSSh	4
4	Les personnes qui confondent "on" et "ont", revoyez votre conjugaison svp, j'ai mal pour vous.	4

5	#AvantDeCreuver j'irai corriger cette faute de conjugaison démoniaque.	3
syntaxe		
1	Le #FN est fâché avec orthographe et syntaxe : son slogan "La France apaisée" signifie au fond "La France à baiser". #CQFD	7
2	#Combo de l'abruti #FN : Faute d'orthographe + faute de syntaxe. Juste énorme ! https://t.co/ehx6Nf4jZu	4
3	Illisible, bourré de fautes d'orthographe et de syntaxe, et ça se prend pour "l'élite de l'Islam". https://t.co/0mHuIjy9fJ	4
4	Comment enrichir la syntaxe des enfants de 3 à 6 ans? — RIRE https://t.co/G9KIHDanUk	2
5*	<i>*Three other tweets were retweeted once</i>	1

Table 3.4 Top five retweets in all four samples

3.3 Content of the samples

3.3.1 The Object of Criticism

Paveau and Rosier argue that the internet has provided a platform for linguistic prescriptivism in which the French were already engaging (2008: 97) and it certainly seems, at least in this study, that a phenomenon of correcting the language use of others is prevalent on Twitter. However, it was not always this way; the internet was 'initially developed as a space with no orthographic law' (Anis, 2007: 90). In the sample of *orthographe* tweets, 35 (5.9%) reflected upon a prescriptive presence on Twitter, through either their admission of correcting others online ('je suis un mec sur twitter. Je te juge sur ton orthographe' (OR-398)), or by criticising those who comment upon the language use of others ('un mec m'a corrigé niveau orthographe avec condescendance comme toujours ici' (OR-489)). These tweets present language correction as a frequent online behaviour, with one tweet stating that a comment on non-standard orthography is the 'insulte suprême' in online communication (OR-0680), suggesting not only high frequency but social importance.

Six tweets mentioned that often in CMC, an argument can descend into a critique of spelling: 'ta pas d'argument, donc tu parle de l'orthographe, pauvre tocard.' (OR-724); 'Déjà les meilleurs ici cest les gens qui ont plus rien à dire ils commencent à te parler d'orthographe' (OR-670); 'Mdr²⁹ à part attaquer sur mon "orthographe" tu as d'autres moyens ?' (OR-938). This supports Chapman (2012: 194) who observed a similar trend in US political discussions. Such a phenomenon was not mentioned in any tweets in the *grammaire* sample and in only one tweet in the *conjugaison* and *syntaxe* samples,

²⁹ *Mort de rire*, English equivalent 'lol'.

suggesting that non-standard spelling is more frequently the target of online criticism. This may again result from the difficulty of distinguishing between error types.

The descent of arguments or discussions into linguistic criticism was observed in 91 tweets discussing terrorism and religion (15.4% of the *orthographe* sample) and 29 tweets (4.9%) discussing politics. Figure 3.1 is an example of this. User A begins the thread with a tweet which compares Jesus with Muhammad. User B engages in this discussion, until User A, after three tweets, moves the discussion towards spelling: 'C'est toi qui est ridicule avec ton orthographe'. In an argument on Twitter, every utterance from all parties involved is recorded, as a tweet. A tweet containing a non-standard spelling can be used as a further point of critique, with the tweet forming undisputable evidence. Use of the standard language in France has become inextricably linked to high status and a high level of education (Lodge, 1993: 12) and this link is exploited, in linguistic criticism, to assert a sense of superiority.



Figure 3.1 Example of an online argument (Thread082)

The majority of tweets in all four samples contained linguistic criticism: 89.7% (*orthographe* – 530 tweets); 92.7% (*grammaire* – 214); 86.9% (*conjugaison* – 150); and 97.7% (*syntaxe* – 42). Criticism was typically aimed at one of four targets: 1. Self-criticism; 2. The general public; 3. Direct criticism of another Twitter user by tagging their account within the tweet; and 4. Indirect criticism of an untagged person.

A critique of the general population, in most cases formulated as *les gens*, was made by 13 tweets in the *orthographe* sample (2.5%) and two tweets in the *conjugaison* sample (1.3%): ‘les gens qui écrivent tjrs avec des fautes d'orthographe ça donne pas envie de continuer a leur parler’ (OR-374); ‘l'orthographe est une victime au quotidien’ (OR-0076); ‘Les gens qui font plein de fautes (orthographe, grammaire, conjugaison,...) vous vous rendez pas compte comment c'est chiant de vous lire’ (CO-47). The *grammaire* and *syntaxe* samples did not show this tendency but, as they are smaller samples, it is difficult to generalise. The use of a collective noun such as *les gens* suggests that non-standard spelling and conjugation are felt to be in abundance, and frustration or perhaps a smug superiority is expressed, for instance by CO-47 (above).

Criticism was not only reserved for others, with 62 *orthographe* tweets (10.5%) reflecting on the author's own spelling woes: ‘faut que j'arrête d'oublier l'orthographe’ (OR-0416); ‘j'suis grave con j'fais trop de fautes d'orthographe’ (OR-509); ‘Pourquoi dès que je me moque du nombre de fautes d'orthographe chez les autres je fais systématiquement des fautes moi-même’ (OR-0951). This self-criticism was also shown in 15 *conjugaison* tweets (8.9%), 15 tweets in the *grammaire* sample (5.8%) and two tweets from the *syntaxe* sample (4.7%). A recent study suggested that a lack of confidence in written French language is shared by over half of the French population (Dargent, 2015); the self-deprecating nature of these tweets may reflect this reported linguistic insecurity. This seems particularly pertinent for tweets which express a frustration at making spelling mistakes: ‘j'en ai marre de faire des fautes d'orthographe a chaque fois j'tweet’ (OR-0940); ‘j'suis grave con j'fais trop de fautes d'orthographe’ (OR-0509). Alternatively, given suggestions of online hostility (Joinson, 1999: 433), and tweets which have suggested that language correction is prevalent, Twitter users may be highlighting their non-standard spellings as a pre-emptive measure: ‘(Bon ok y'a une faute d'orthographe énorme dans mon tweet précédent sur

le bataclan mais c'est le message tu compte. Merci)' (OR-0202); '[!] Nous nous excusons pour les potentiels fautes d'orthographe et de frappes.' (OR-0852); '@MADAngouleme désolé pour l orthographe c'est pas mon fort' (OR-0713). Acknowledging their non-standard language removes the power from others to use it against them. In the context of an online discussion, this tactic keeps the conversation on topic, rather than allowing the exchanges to descend into linguistic criticism. As illustrated in Figure 3.2, a number of tweets whose authors corrected their own orthography, were on the topic of politics and/or terrorism, two controversial topics which can spark heated online discussion.

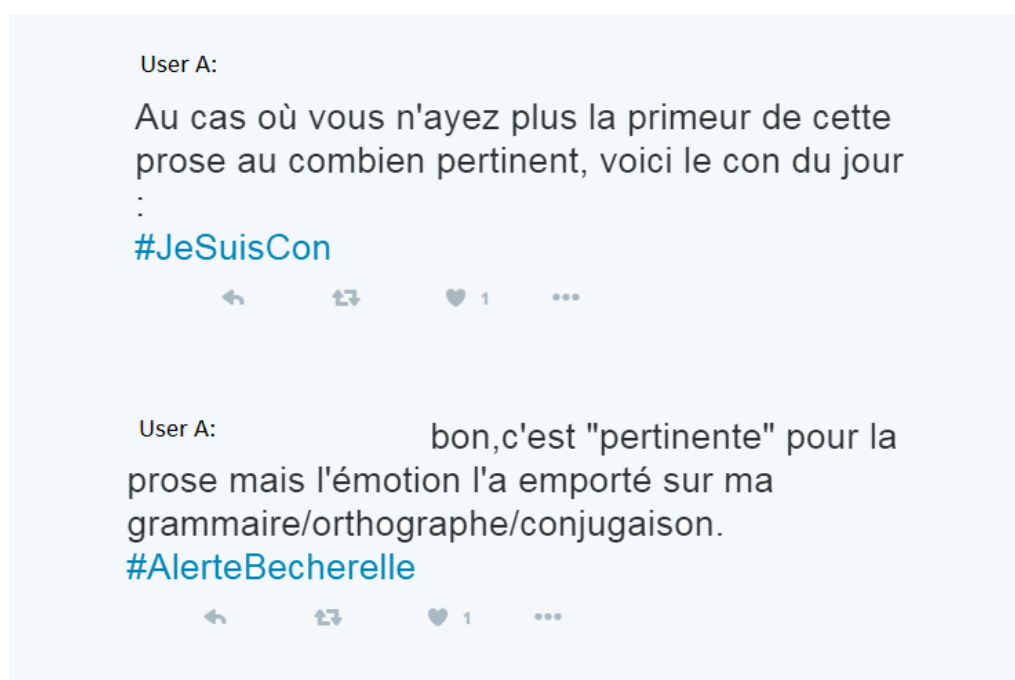


Figure 3.2 Example of self-criticism (OR-0215)

Some tweets did not criticise the language of others and instead fell into one of three categories: tweets which provide links to online language lessons; tweets which suggest that use of the standard language is not important; and tweets which reflect upon the prevalence of online language correction (as discussed at the beginning of this section). The composition of each sample by type is shown in Table 3.5.

	Criticise language use		Online lesson		Standard language as unimportant		Discuss an online correction phenomenon	
Sample	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<i>orthographe</i>	530	89.7%	9	1.5%	16	2.7%	36	6.1%
<i>grammaire</i>	241	92.7%	17	6.5%	2	0.8%	0	0%
<i>conjugaison</i>	150	89.3%	17	10.1%	0	0%	1	0.6%
<i>syntaxe</i>	42	97.7%	0	0%	0	0%	1	2.3%

Table 3.5 Composition of each tweet sample by type

The *conjugaison* sample had the highest proportion of tweets containing links to online lessons, 17 tweets (10.1% of the sample). Of these 17 tweets, five broached present tense conjugations (29.4%), two the subjunctive (11.8%), two the imperative (11.8%), and one the conditional tense (5.9%). *-ir* verbs were mentioned on five occasions (29.4%), particularly *-oir* verbs *devoir*, *pouvoir* and *vouloir*, whilst *-er* and *-re* verbs received only one explicit mention each (5.9% each). Of the 17 tweets which provided links to lessons in the *grammaire* sample, seven (41.2%) gave links to websites with a number of grammatical lessons and practice exercises, rather than one specific area of the grammar. Eight tweets (47.1%) referenced, or were posted by, FLE (*Français Langue Étrangère*), and were therefore aimed at a non-native audience, suggesting that grammar is considered the area of interest of a second language learner as well as a native. Nine tweets in the *orthographe* sample (1.5%) linked to lessons. However, of these, only four (44.4%) were strictly concerned with spelling. The remaining five tweets concerned grammatical elements, which are reflected in spelling: agreement of past participles, gender of nouns, and conjugation. This may suggest that non-standard grammar or conjugation are often presented as non-standard spellings, as most are inaudible and detectable only via their non-standard spelling.

The primacy of standard usage was rejected by 16 *orthographe* tweets (2.7%) and two *grammaire* tweets (0.8%): ‘C'est okay parfois de faire des fautes d'orthographe’ (OR-

0285); 'l'host à un milliard de trucs à gérer avant un start l'orthographe n'est largement pas la priorité.' (OR-0303). The tweets suggest that there are more important issues than standard spelling or grammar. What is unclear is whether these users view standard spelling and grammar as unimportant only in a CMC context, where playing with spelling and grammar is common (Herring, 2012: 2-3), or in all written language. Furthermore, users of CMC have been shown to vary their language use according to situational contexts and social variables (Herring & Androutsopoulos, 2015: 139). Perhaps, in a different written situation, these users would conform to standard language ideology and consider the use of the standard language necessary. Four tweets, one from the *grammaire* sample and three from *orthographe*, framed their dismissal in light of the terrorist attacks which had recently occurred: 'au lieu de combattre la grammaire ,combat l'extrémisme' (GR-0467); 'C est fou de se "disputer" pour des fautes d orthographe dans des moments comme ça Les gens ont vraiment des priorités bizarres !!! Pff' (OR-0883); 'l orthographe n es pas une chose grave; se qui vient de se passer les morts les blessés cela oui est grave' (OR-0534). These tweets respond to a continued presence of language correction, even in discussions of the terrorist attack. Indeed, in the *orthographe* sample, 91 instances of linguistic criticism arose in the context of discussions on terrorism and religion (15.4% of the *orthographe* sample).

3.3.2 What has prompted critique?

Analysing threads allows us to investigate what exactly prompted Twitter users to critique the spelling of others. 133 threads were collected of a possible 371. Manually collecting threads is time-consuming, and so only threads from the *orthographe* sample are analysed. All instances of non-standard language found in threads were documented and classified by type of non-standard feature. As noted in Section 1.1.1, classifying non-standard features is a complex task. Given the limited scope of this

study, the following categories were used to classify approximately the non-standard features found: non-standard use of verbs (either in tense choice or conjugation); non-standard spelling; and CMC features. Non-standard orthography of conjugated verbs was classified as non-standard use of verbs to acknowledge the possibility of conjugational ‘error’; although, as discussed, it is often difficult to distinguish accurately. In total, 463 non-standard features were identified in the 133 threads.³⁰ This number includes non-standard features in the writing both of the users being critiqued and the critics themselves.

Abbreviated forms, although a common feature in French SMS communication (Anis, 2007: 97), are generally viewed as misspellings or errors by prescriptivists (Thurlow, 2006: 668). Given the 140 character limit imposed on all tweets, one would expect abbreviation to be an equally salient feature in Twitter communication. Unsurprisingly then, 109 of the non-standard features in threads (23.5%) were abbreviations. 46 abbreviations (42.2% of abbreviations used), were found in the tweets of users making a criticism: ‘le premier zink il m'a tué et le deuxième il dit des vrais trucs mais son orthographe mdrrrrrrrrrr chu mort’ (OR-0608); thus suggesting that even within the context of metalinguistic discussion, such features are considered standard, or at least acceptable, for the medium.

Abbreviated forms encompass a range of abbreviation strategies. This study uses Anis’ (2003) categories of abbreviation types in SMS and chat situations to differentiate such strategies. These categories are applicable here especially as, when devised by Anis, SMS messages were, like Twitter, restricted to a character limit. Anis (2003: sec 3)

³⁰ Emoticons were considered an extra-linguistic feature and not analysed.

provides an extensive list of observed abbreviations³¹; six of which appeared in the analysed threads:

- Graphic reduction³² – a broad term which includes the loss of silent final letters, e.g. ‘pas’ to ‘pa’,³³ the compacting of boundaries between words, ‘je te rappelle’ to ‘j’te rappelle’, the simplification of vowel clusters, ‘chaud’ to ‘cho’, and letter replacement to move towards a phonetic spelling, e.g. the ‘que’ of ‘parce que’ to a ‘k’ in ‘prsk’;
- Consonant skeleton – an abbreviation in which the vowels are removed leaving, at least, the first and last consonant, but often others too, ‘quelque’ to ‘qq’ or ‘tout’ to ‘tt’;
- Syllabogram – recreation of phonology using letters or figures, e.g. ‘bien’ to ‘bi1’ or ‘c’est’ to ‘c’;
- Logogram – words which are reduced to their first letter with no phonetic link, ‘je’ to ‘j’, acronyms, ‘fils de pute’ to ‘fdp’ and the use of signs, ‘+’ to mean ‘plus’;
- Reduction with phonetic variation – changing spelling to reflect the phonology of vowel clusters (not seen in this sample) or écrasement phonétique, phonetic squishing, e.g. ‘je suis’ becomes ‘chui’;
- Truncation – the shortening of a word by removing part of the beginning or end, ‘anniversaire’ to ‘anniv’.

Some abbreviations in the threads consist of more than one strategy, e.g. jvs, an abbreviated form of ‘je vous’ uses graphic reduction (‘je’ to ‘j’) and a consonant

³¹ The full list is accessible here: <http://rhrt.edel.univ-poitiers.fr/document.php?id=547> [Accessed 23/09/2016].

³² Categories in French as follows: *réduction graphique*; *squelette consonantique*; *syllabogramme*; *logogramme*; *réduction avec variantes phonétiques*; *truncation*.

³³ All examples are taken from the *orthographe* threads.

skeleton ('vous' to 'vs'). In these cases, each feature is counted separately. This takes the total to 116 abbreviations. Table 3.6 shows the frequency of each abbreviation type in the threads, alongside whether this feature was the target of criticism.

Abbreviation Type	No. of instances	% of all abbreviations	Subject of criticism	
Graphic reduction	45	38.8%	21	46.7%
Consonant skeleton	28	24.1%	16	57.1%
Syllabogram	24	20.7%	16	66.7%
Logogram	15	12.9%	11	73.3%
Reduction with phonetic variation	3	2.6%	2	66.7%
Truncation	1	0.9%	1	100%

Table 3.6 Abbreviation types - their frequency in *orthographe* threads, and reactions to them

Graphic reduction was the most common abbreviation strategy in the *orthographe* threads, with 45 instances (38.8%) forming 9.7% of all non-standard features found. The last two categories displayed, reduction with phonetic variation and truncation were the least frequent with three and one instance respectively (2.6% and 0.9%), suggesting that these are not widely used strategies in Twitter communication. For the most part, abbreviation types were split similarly between users being critiqued and the critics themselves; logograms showed the most marked difference (11 instances were critiqued in comparison to four uses by a critic)³⁴. Logograms, although visually similar to syllabograms, have no phonetic base, and so are arguably a less 'skilful' abbreviation strategy and harder to decode, which may explain the slightly higher frequency of criticism. Bearing in mind size of the sample, it is unclear whether this is a generalizable conclusion.

As graphic reduction was the most frequent abbreviation type, and as it splits into a number of sub-categories, Table 3.7 shows the 45 instances in more specific

³⁴ This excludes truncation for which there was only one instance.

categories. Two instances combined two types of graphic reduction and are therefore counted twice, e.g. ‘jsui’ has been compacted (‘je’ to ‘j’) and the silent final letter has been removed (‘suis’ to ‘sui’) (Thread084). This brings the total to 47 separate instances. The compacting of word boundaries was shown in 36 instances (76.6%), 22 of which were found in the written language of critics (61.1%). This is in comparison to the three other types of graphic reduction, which were all used more often by users being critiqued than critics. This seems to suggest that the compacting of word boundaries is the most ‘acceptable’ form of abbreviation on Twitter, appropriate even in the context of a discussion on standard/non-standard language.

Graphic reduction type	No. of instances	% of graphic reduction	Subject of criticism	
Compacting of word boundaries E.g. <i>je te</i> to <i>j'te</i> (Thread044)	36	76.6%	14	38.9%
Loss of silent final letter E.g. <i>pas</i> to <i>pa</i> (Thread069)	6	12.8%	4	66.7%
Moving spelling towards phonology E.g. <i>parce que</i> to <i>prsk</i> (Thread044)	4	8.5%	3	75%
Simplification of vowel clusters E.g. <i>chaud</i> to <i>cho</i> (Thread110)	1	2.1%	1	100%

Table 3.7 Graphic reduction types, their frequency in the threads, and reactions to them

Adding additional letters to mimic speech was also highlighted as a common feature of CMC (Anis, 2003: sec 3), but was only used on four occasions in this sample: ‘shériiii’ (Thread003); ‘quiiii’ (Thread011); ‘pluuuuuuuus’ (Thread077); ‘serieuxxxxx’ (Thread082). Three of these four instances were the subject of criticism. This supports the argument that language is adapted to fit the character restriction, as abbreviations are more frequently used than addition, and suggests that the innovative and productive use of abbreviation is acceptable, while the counterproductive, in a character-restricted context, addition of letters is less desirable.

The second most prevalent non-standard feature concerned the conjugation of verbs, with 108 instances of non-standard conjugation occurring. 99 of these were the subject of criticism (91.7%). Table 3.8 shows the top five tenses or moods which were conjugated, or at least spelled, in a non-standard form. 49 instances of non-standard spelling or conjugation were in the present tense, followed by 16 instances where the infinitive was used rather than the past participle and vice versa. Conjugations of verbs in the third person singular (*il/elle/on*) and the second person singular (*tu*) were the most common sources of non-standard conjugations by person, with 19 and 18 instances respectively. *–re* verbs proved the most problematic verb type (31 instances of non-standard conjugation), followed by 27 instances of *–ir* verbs and 14 of *–er* verbs. Of the 108 instances discussed, only 13 (12.0%) are audible as non-standard in spoken French, four of which concern the choice of tense rather than the conjugation or orthography.³⁵ The correspondence between one phonological shape and multiple possible spellings may therefore be the source of many non-standard spellings. A summary of other non-standard features shown in the threads is displayed in Table 3.9.

³⁵ Audibility was decided through a comparison of the phonological transcriptions of the non-standard verb form used and the standard form. Any variation between the two transcriptions was classed as audible.

Tense or Mood	Number of instances
Present tense E.g. <i>il dis</i> for <i>il dit</i> (Thread104)	49
Distinction between <i>er/é</i> E.g. <i>il es tomber</i> for <i>il est tombé</i> (Thread044)	16
Imperative mood E.g. <i>Confond pas</i> for <i>confonds pas</i> (Thread079)	6
Formation of Past participle E.g. <i>vut</i> for <i>vu</i> (Thread094)	6
Tense choice E.g. <i>Les français ne savant plus écrire</i> for <i>Les français ne savent plus écrire</i> (Thread099)	6

Table 3.8 Most frequent instances of non-standard tense or mood usage in threads

Feature	Number of instances
Non-standard spelling (not verb) E.g. <i>deffance</i> for <i>défense</i> (Thread002)	82
Adjectival agreements E.g. <i>des musulman terroriste</i> for <i>des musulmans terroristes</i> (Thread017)	35
Se/ce, sa/ca, etc. E.g. <i>sava</i> for <i>ça va</i> (Thread056)	29
Lack of Apostrophes E.g. <i>d abus</i> for <i>d'abus</i> (Thread088)	21
Ne deletion E.g. <i>elles sont pas fières</i> for <i>elles ne sont pas fières</i> (Thread048)	20
Accents (either missing or misused) E.g. <i>general</i> for <i>général</i> (Thread104)	19
Tout/toute/tous/toutes E.g. <i>tout les terroristes</i> for <i>tous les terroristes</i> (Thread006)	4

Table 3.9 Summary of non-standard features (excluding verbs) in threads

Despite the context of threads collected – i.e. linguistic criticism – 91 instances of non-standard language (19.7%) were made by the user making the criticism and went un-commented by all parties involved. Table 3.10 shows the types of non-standard features used by critics. Abbreviations were the most common non-standard feature amongst critics by a significant margin (47 instances, 51.6%), further evidence that abbreviated forms are considered an acceptable feature in Twitter communication. Adjectival agreements, on the other hand, were criticised on 35 occasions but were a non-standard feature which did not appear in the language of the critics. It seems that a hierarchy of non-standard features exists on Twitter, the exact nature of which is currently unclear.

Type	No. of instances	%
Abbreviations	47	50.5%
Non-standard spelling	11	11.8%
Ne deletion	9	9.7%
Misspelling/non-standard conjugation of verb	9	9.7%
Lack of apostrophes	7	7.5%
Accent (either missing or misused)	6	6.5%
Se/ce, sa/ca, etc.	3	3.2%
Additional letters	1	1.1%

Table 3.10 Non-standard features found in the tweets of critics in threads

Eleven instances of non-standard spelling were found in the language of users critiquing the orthography of other users. Figure 3.3 shows an example of such an instance.³⁶ Taken from a longer thread, it shows that User B critiques User A for the non-standard features used in their tweet, primarily abbreviations. User B, in a second response which continues the linguistic critique, writes ‘en faite’ rather than the standard *en fait*. This is possibly because, in spoken language, the final ‘t’ in *en fait* is often pronounced, unlike in most other instances where the ‘t’ is silent. This feature is

³⁶ User A, tweet 1: *Que Dieu me pardonne, ferme ta gueule, je parle à un parent ou quoi là.*
User A, tweet 2: *Putain ta gueule, c’est bon, tu m’as soulé, ton vieux smiley la en plus.*

not commented on by either party, despite being non-standard. One would imagine that a user, when engaging in linguistic criticism, would be particularly sensitive to their own writing. The presence of non-standard spelling in such contexts may be illustrative of the difficulty of standard written French language, and particularly, as illustrated in Figure 3.3, the relationship between phonology and spelling.

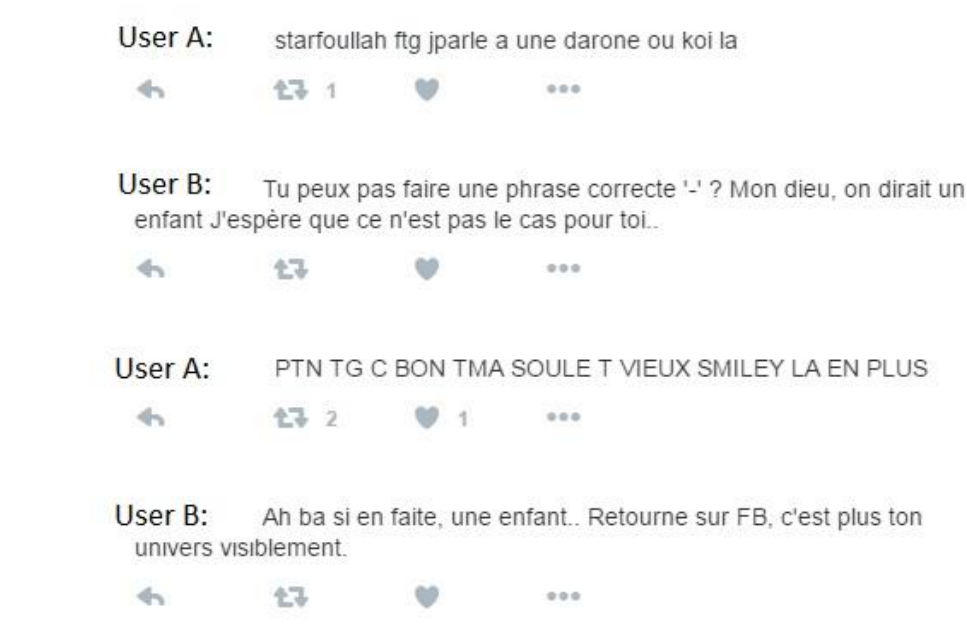


Figure 3.3 Example of a critic's non-standard orthography (Thread079)

3.3.3 Recurring ideas

Language is a complex phenomenon (Milroy & Milroy, 1999: 1), and making judgements about language and its use is 'an integral part of using it' (Cameron, 1995: 3). Standard language ideology grants high prestige to one language variety (Lodge, 1993: 251-52), and can lead to 'over-simplified views of the nature of language' (Lodge, 1993: 22). Analysis of the recurring ideas in tweets engaging in metalinguistic discussion will illustrate these views which are often presented as truisms. Here I

examine the recurring ideas and motifs in tweets from the *orthographe* sample, the largest of the four samples.

A close analysis of *orthographe* tweets revealed a number of links made by users between a person's 'good' or 'bad' spelling and other personality traits, characteristics, or even position in society. Making such links was a frequent form of metalinguistic discussion in the sample, suggesting that Twitter users believe that spelling ability is not only indicative of a person's grasp of the standard language but rather that spelling can reliably reveal something more about someone's personality. One user even seemed to propose that non-standard spelling was linked to musical taste: 'C'est pas un fan de Justin Bieber qui va venir me faire des leçons d'orthographe' (OR-337). The use of the expression *vu ton*, or variations of this expression, used in 13 tweets (2.2%) is a clear example of this tendency: 'Vu ton orthographe , ton QI est négatif.' (OR-0352); 'vu l'orthographe l'enquête devrait s'orienter vers une cellule djihadiste d'élèves de CE1' (OR-0715); 'Faut aussi changer le ministre de l'éducation nationale !! vu l'orthographe ...' (OR-0933).

Age was linked to the use of non-standard features by 14 users (2.4%): 'ptn t'as 18 ans tu fais encore 40 fautes d'orthographe par phrase c choquant' (OR-0636); 'C'est l'écriture d'un enfant de 11 ans, l'orthographe d'un enfant de 8' (OR-0817); 'Quand ton copain a le même orthographe qu'un enfant immigrés roumain..vdm' (OR-0506). The tweets seem to suggest that non-standard spelling is something that one should grow out of; as you get older, you begin to use standard spelling. It is unclear whether users consider non-standard spelling a choice, functioning as an 'identity construction device' (Androutsopoulos, 2006: 528), or as linked to intelligence and level of education achieved. The overarching correlation of spelling and intelligence which is suggested by users is typical of standard language ideology (Lodge, 1993: 12).

A link between spelling and intelligence was suggested by 25 tweets (4.2%): ‘Fais une comparaison entre ton orthographe & la mienne, ensuite on discutera d'intelligence’ (OR-0618); ‘ce qui me dérange c'est ta flemme intellectuelle... Ton orthographe en est la preuve...’ (OR-0513); ‘orthographe et intelligence pas liés ? C'est marrant mais je suis sûr du contraire. Jamais vu un génie écrire en SMS’ (OR-0298). This link was also made, less explicitly, by tweets which mentioned education, either lack of or level achieved: ‘vous avez apparemment un problème 1.avec l'Histoire 2. L'orthographe Revenez après votre bac ??’ (OR-0799); ‘Je fais plein de faute d'orthographe, mais alors toi tu fais des fautes qu'on t'apprend à ne pas faire en CP ??’³⁷ (OR-0349); ‘bordel mais l'orthographe ptn y a des gens tu te demandes si ils ont été à l'école’ (OR-0600). The second most retweeted tweet (29 retweets) similarly touched on this idea: ‘Vu le nombre de fautes d'orthographe sur chaque tweet du hashtag #FermetureDesEcolesLundi je me dis qu'faut même les ouvrir le we³⁸ !’. These tweets present the use of standard orthography as an indicator of intelligence, with some using educational level as a measure of intelligence.

A number of threads discussed the perceived link between spelling and intelligence with users, often those being critiqued for their use of non-standard spelling, attempting to dispel the perceived correlation between the two. In Thread051 (Figure 3.4), User A begins the thread with a tweet discussing the prophet Muhammad and Islam. This prompts a response from User B targeting User A's intelligence and spelling. User A retorts ‘orthographe et intelligence ne sont pas lié’. This claim is disputed by User B who writes that he is sure that the opposite is true and that SMS language is an example of ‘bad’ language. User A then asserts that there is no link between spelling and intelligence as spelling is a set of rules that one learns and repeats. Written

³⁷ CP – *Cours préparatoire*.

³⁸ *Weekend*.

language skills are not innate but must be taught and learnt (Milroy & Milroy, 1999: 55). Despite this, many Twitter users seem to strongly believe in a correlation between spelling and intelligence, a belief that, for the most part, goes unquestioned.

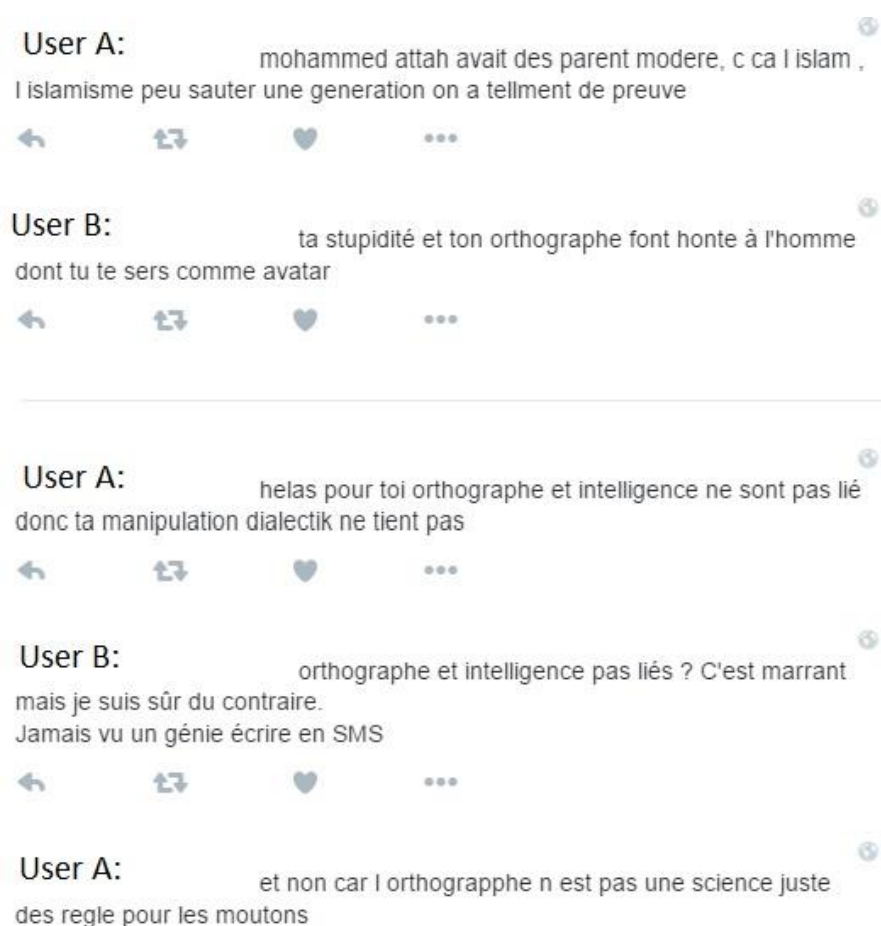


Figure 3.4 Thread discussing link between intelligence and standard orthography (Thread051)

'Bad' spelling was linked, in 12 tweets, to a lack of credibility: 'vu ton orthographe t'es pas plus crédible qu'eux ..' (OR-0013); 'T'as pas de photo de profil. Tu fais 141 fautes d'orthographe sur 140. Oui, je vais prendre en considération ce que tu penses' (OR-637); 'à la honte j'ai fait une faute d'orthographe adieu la crédibilité ??' (OR-579). The fifth most popular retweet (10 retweets) makes a similar inference: 'Les 2000 savent que suivre les mouvements mais sont dans l'incapacité de débattre de manière raisonnée, y a qu'à voir l'orthographe déjà'. These tweets imply that non-standard

spelling instantly renders whatever that person has said or written invalid. This seems to follow directly from the link users made between spelling and intelligence; one must be intelligent to make credible arguments, non-standard spellings are an indicator of a lack of intelligence and therefore anyone who uses non-standard spelling cannot make credible arguments.

Non-standard spelling as a motivation for exclusion from conversation or, in some cases, society was raised in 22 tweets (3.7%): 'Avant d'écrire, apprenez au moins l'orthographe' (OR-0014); 'On pourra aussi prier pour votre #orthographe catastrophique. Quand on veut s'exprimer, on le fait correctement.' (OR-0743); 'Ton orthographe n'est pas RP dis ! Attention tu vas être banni dis !' (OR-956). The context of these tweets, where available, showed that often such comments were made during an online argument. Figure 3.5 is one example of this. The thread, which contains tweets from five different users, is a political discussion. The first tweet states that France has bombed terrorist group *Daech* in Syria and that war has been declared. Users B, C and D continue this discussion, until User E tweets: 'Sécurise ton orthographe déjà, avant de donner des leçons de sécurité à la police et l'armée.'. User E suggests that other users cannot, or should not, discuss such matters until they use 'correct' spelling. Spelling, then, is being used not only as a tool for exclusion from conversation, but also, in the context of an argument, is being used to discredit the opinions of others.



Figure 3.5 Linguistic criticism during an online argument (Thread068)

Use of standard spelling was considered a prerequisite for claiming French nationhood by ten tweets in the *orthographe* sample (1.7%): 'si l'intégration passe par l'orthographe, vous risquez la déchéance de nationalité.' (OR-968); 'Les individus qui se pensent plus "français" que les autres et qui ont une orthographe catastrophique sont un grand mystère à mes yeux ...' (OR-487); 'il faut apprendre l'orthographe et la politesse si tu veux rester en France' (OR-0024). The link was not shown in either the *syntaxe* or *grammaire* samples but was put forward by two users in the *conjugaison* sample: 'quand on prône la France aux Français, on maîtrise au moins la conjugaison. #BescherelleVaincra' (CO-039); 'la nana qui clame "la France aux français " semble ignorer que la conjugaison va aussi de paire' (CO-070). These tweets give the impression that in order to be truly French, one must use the standard language; anything less than the standard is unacceptable for a French citizen.

Neography is often an intentional strategy in CMC as Herring summarises:

although computer-mediated language often contains non-standard features, only a relatively small percentage of such features appears to be errors caused by inattention or lack of knowledge of the standard language forms [...]. The majority are deliberate choices made by users to economize on typing effort, mimic spoken language features, or express themselves creatively.

(Herring, 2001: 617)

Access to threads allowed for analysis of users' retorts to attacks on their non-standard language and, as illustrated by Figures 3.6 and 3.7, the most common defence was to present non-standard spelling as a choice. In fact, in Figure 3.7, User B's freedom to use non-standard orthography was defended by another user, User E. In both these examples, orthography is presented not as a set of rigid rules, but rather an area of the written language which can be used as one wishes. This idea challenges the ideological link between standard spelling and intelligence, and suggests that use of non-standard orthography is a conscious decision. This also disputes common media representations, at least in the Anglophone world, of online language use as eroding the standard language and of a youth unable to grasp anything but non-standard orthography (Thurlow, 2006: 668-71). If use of non-standard language is a choice, one presumes that users could also 'choose' to use the standard should they so desire. It seems that rather than being examples of a lack of knowledge of standard French orthography, a lot of the non-standard content found on Twitter is actually the product of a conscious decision.



Figure 3.6 Example of non-standard language as a choice 1 (Thread032)



Figure 3.7 Example of non-standard language as a choice 2 (Thread058)

3.4 Conclusion

The analysis of tweets on the topics of spelling, grammar, conjugation and syntax has found that spelling was the most frequently criticised term of the four by a large margin. I have suggested two reasons for this. First, spelling is the most standardised and closely codified element of language, and deviations are considered a cultural faux pas (Paveau & Rosier, 2008: 141). Second, it is often difficult to determine the source of a non-standard feature, but all non-standard written features are noticeable via their graphic form, so users may more frequently label any non-standard feature as orthographic.

A tendency to correct other users was apparent in all samples of tweets; some users commented upon this fact in their tweets. Even in the days following a terrorist attack in France's capital, Twitter users engaged in linguistic criticism, even correcting the language of tweets reflecting on the attacks. It is felt by some users to be so important that it overrides sensitivity to the shock of the events themselves. As in Chapman's (2012) study, there is evidence that political arguments can descend into criticism of non-standard language, even if our data do not allow us to draw any conclusions about how often an argument becomes a battle of language on Twitter.

The analysis of the non-standard features targeted has suggested a hierarchy of non-standard features. The high frequency of abbreviations in the samples, even in the tweets of language critics, and the lack of criticism of them suggests that they are considered acceptable in a CMC context. Other deviations from the norm, such as non-standard adjectival agreements, were not present in the tweets of any critics, suggesting that they are 'unacceptable' non-standard features on Twitter. The high frequency of non-standard features, in the tweets of critics and the criticised, is further evidence of incomplete mastery amongst native speakers of the standard language.

This is striking given the strong links suggested by some between standard spelling use and intelligence, level of education, and credibility.

Chapter 4 Attitudes towards non-standard verb forms

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 analysed general attitudes towards non-standard language use on Twitter. Following the same broad structure, this chapter narrows its focus to consider discussions surrounding the use of *croivent* and *voyent*. Both are non-standard forms of the third person plural present tense of verbs *croire* and *voir*, but only the first, *croivent*, is audibly distinct in spoken French. As such, it might be criticised more often than *voyent*. This chapter first outlines the compositions of each sample before considering the content of the tweets, focusing on reactions towards non-standard verb forms, the object of criticism, and the recurring themes.

4.2 *Croivent* and *voyent*

Tweets were collected over a one week period in April 2016 using three search terms: *croivent*, *croive*, and *voyent* (the first two samples are amalgamated and referred to as *croivent*). Both *croive* and *croivent* were used as pilot searches showed that users often jocularly refer to *le verbe croive* or extend the non-standard verb form to other persons, e.g. *je croive*. Using the additional term *croive* ensured these tweets were also collected. The *croivent* search returned 1,147 tweets, compared to 200 for the term *voyent*, already indicating a disparity in both usage and discussion of the verb forms on Twitter. This may be a result of the phonological distinctness of *croivent* to standard *croient* compared to the non-audibly distinct *voyent*. Usernames were replaced with unique identifiers in the following format: CR-0001 (*croivent*) and VO-0001 (*voyent*). All tweets are reproduced in the original French, including all non-standard features and punctuation.

Each tweet was classified into one of three categories: use, comment, or unclear. Use tweets are tweets which use the non-standard verb forms as if they were standard, without passing any judgement: ‘Ils croivent te punir en t'excluant de l'établissement mdr ça fais 1semaine de vacances surtout’ (CR-0470); ‘juste que les vegan voyent pas ca de la meme facon que les omnis..’ (VO-0018). Comment tweets include tweets which pass judgement, whether positive or negative, on use of the non-standard forms: ‘ils croivent* ptn trop marre de corriger les gens sur Twitter’ (CR-0715); ‘Les gens qui "voyent", expliquez moi !’ (VO-0077). Making this distinction relies on a subjective judgement which is not always easy. When necessary and where available, the threads of tweets were consulted for further context. It was not always possible, even with context, to confidently classify a tweet as either use or comment, e.g. ‘Il y a des gens dans ma classe ils croivent (mdr) trop que je suis leur pote c'est trop gênant !’ (CR-0728). These form the small unclear category — 16 tweets for *croivent* and one for *voyent*. Table 4.1 displays the *croivent* and *voyent* samples by these types.

	Comment	Use	Unclear
<i>croivent</i>	751 (65.5%)	380 (33.1%)	16 (1.4%)
<i>voyent</i>	79 (39.5%)	120 (60%)	1 (0.5%)

Table 4.1 Composition of *croivent* and *voyent* samples by type

The distribution of comment and use tweets varies greatly between the two terms. Commenting on the use of *croivent* is much more prevalent than on *voyent* (66% to 39% respectively). *Voyent*, being a graphic rather than phonetic non-standard feature, is perhaps less noticeable and therefore less commented upon. A brief look at the number of memes³⁹ dealing with metalinguistic data suggests that this is true in a

³⁹ Shifman defines memes as ‘the propagation of items such as jokes, rumors, videos, and websites from person to person via the Internet’ (2013: 2).

wider CMC context: the non-standard *croivent* is the subject of a large number of viral memes (e.g. Figure 4.1), whereas a similar search for content citing *voyent* brings back no results⁴⁰.



Figure 4.1 *Croivent* meme

In the *croivent* sample, almost twice as many tweets pass comment on the use of *croivent* as use the term (751 and 380 tweets respectively); for every person using *croivent*, two people criticise this usage. This strongly suggests that there is a critical awareness of this non-standard verb form. Tweets classified as use or unclear will not be further analysed in this study, which considers only the metalinguistic discussion surrounding the verb forms. Removing these tweets leaves 751 comment tweets for *croivent* and 79 for *voyent*.

Original tweets and retweets are separated out to avoid unintended double counting of tweets. Table 4.2 shows both samples by retweets and original material. Retweets account for the majority of both samples, 68% (*croivent*) and 87% (*voyent*). This suggests that rather than many individual users critiquing the use of others, tweets judging the use of the non-standard verb forms are mainly confined to the sharing of popular retweets. This differs from the pattern found in Chapter 3 which displayed

⁴⁰ Searches conducted on 25/08/2016.

higher frequencies of original material for three out of four search terms.⁴¹ Commenting upon specific non-standard verb forms, this suggests, is more ‘shareable’ than general comments on the quality of a user’s level of spelling or grammar. For the non-standard verb form *croivent* in particular, with 551 retweets in one week, one could claim that it has become a viral non-standard feature, common both in use and as a popular symbol of non-standard language, as we shall see below.

Search term	No. of original	% of sample	No. of Retweets	% of sample
<i>croivent</i>	240	32%	511	68%
<i>voyent</i>	13	13%	69	87%

Table 4.2 Composition of tweets by original material and retweets

Where relevant, retweets are discussed but, unless otherwise stated, analysis is based on original tweets which pass comment on *croivent/voyent*, forming samples of 240 and just 13 tweets respectively. The *voyent* sample is undeniably very small, but, even within this small sample, we shall see that the same themes and images arise as in the larger *croivent* sample. Table 4.3 displays the most retweeted tweets during the collection period for both searches. The ten most retweeted tweets are shown for *croivent*, and all retweets for *voyent*.

⁴¹ *Orthographe, conjugaison and syntaxe.*

<i>croivent</i>		
Number	Tweet	No. of Retweets
1	Tout à l'heure, j'ai dit : "ils croient" Ma fille m'a repris : «on dit" ils croivent", non ?» C'est dommage, je l'aimais bien	262
2	5) les gens qui croivent	34
3	"si j'aurai..." "ceux qui croivent..." "au jour d'aujourd'hui...." https://t.co/qoX7sSGdmM	22
4	C'est dur de comprendre ceux qui en viennent à commettre des génocides Puis d'un coup, tu vois des gens qui écrivent "croivent" et "sa va"	17
5	les gens ils croivent trop jsuis bcp trop con pour savoir conjuguer le verbe croire allez vous faire enculer	17
6	● Alerte #LGLf5 : - "Ils croivent" Loulou Robert. - "les hôpitals" Claire Berest. TOUT VA BIEN.	10
7	kan j'entend qlqun dire ils croivent https://t.co/RL5RCiPDBI	10
8	Ils croivent ☹️ https://t.co/OcophJSlmh	9
9	"Y'en a ils croivent trop..." "Je sais pas c'est qui..." "Si j'aurais su..." - moi : https://t.co/C7iKlgTwwY	6
10	Je viens d'entendre "ils croivent" sur La Grande Librairie de France 5. Je vais me coucher. #LGL	5
<i>voyent</i>		
1	Avoir écrit: "comme même", sa va", "endrait", " ils voyent" et "ils croivent"#InventeUneRaisonPourTuer	31
2	En 2016 c'est inacceptable de voir des: - Ils croivent - Ils voyent - Comme même - Sa - En dirait	20
3	Les gens qui croivent et qui voyent vous méritez la peine de mort	8
4	Les gens qui dises qu'ils voyent des fautes de conjugaison dans mes tweets ils croivent trop que je suis un boloss. J'ai était à l'école moi	5
5	En 2016 c'est plus possible les personnes qui disent : - Croivent - Voyent - En dirait - Comme même - Bonne anniversaire ! Cordialement.	3

Table 4.3 Most retweeted tweets for samples

Tweets which group together non-standard features seem to be frequently shared (tweets 3, 4, 6 and 9 for *croivent* and all five *voyent* tweets), suggesting that this is a popular form of metalinguistic discourse. The five most retweeted *voyent* tweets all mention *croivent*, providing further evidence for the claim that *croivent* is more

frequently recognised and commented upon on Twitter than *voyent*. As six out of ten *croivent* retweets mention only *croivent*, it appears that the verb form is sufficiently infamous to be used alone and still gain large numbers of retweets.

When considering the retweets as a whole, the reactions to the two non-standard verb forms are overwhelmingly negative. The one exception presents a more defiant than negative reaction: 'Les gens qui dises qu'ils voyent des fautes de conjugaison dans mes tweets ils croivent trop que je suis un boloss. J'ai était à l'école moi' (VO-136). This strongly suggests that negative attitudes to the non-standard verb forms are popular and widely shared on Twitter. With no explicitly positive reactions shared, it seems that either these are rare, or not considered worthy of retweeting.

The most retweeted tweet, from either sample, is the following: 'Tout à l'heure, j'ai dit : "ils croient" Ma fille m'a repris : «on dit" ils croivent", non ?» C'est dommage, je l'aimais bien' (CR-0251). Retweeted 262 times in the one week period, and representing 23% of the entire *croivent* sample, this tweet shows a negative response towards the use of *croivent*, with ironic insinuations of exclusion. The tone appears more light-hearted and humorous than those which used extreme imagery, which may account for its popularity. Mills (2012: 166-67) suggests that the popularity of online content is based on two points: 1. likeability, how stimulating or engaging the content is, and 2. shareability, how much users think other people in their social networks will enjoy the content. It seems that, metalinguistic discourse is more widely shared when the content is considered humorous, rather than simply correcting the use of others.

4.3 Content of the samples

4.3.1 Reactions

We now examine the displayed reactions towards use of the two non-standard verb forms in original, comment tweets (240 *croivent*; 13 *voyent*). Analysis of *croivent*

tweets showed five types of reactions: 1. Positive; 2. Negative; 3. Neutral; 4. Correcting the use of *croivent*; and 5. *Croivent* as a stand-alone concept. A large proportion of tweets which correct usage also display a negative attitude towards the use of *croivent* but, in order to distinguish further between reaction types, the correction was considered the classifying feature over the negative attitude. Table 4.4 shows the *croivent* sample by reaction type.

No.	Reaction type	No. of instances	%
1	Negative	152	63.3%
2	Correcting use of <i>croivent</i>	66	27.5%
3	<i>Croivent</i> as a stand-alone concept	9	3.8%
4	Positive	9	3.8%
5	Neutral	4	1.7%

Table 4.4 Types of reactions to the use of *croivent*

The majority of tweets, 152 tweets (63.3%), present an explicitly negative reaction to the use or users of *croivent*: “‘Ils CROIVENT” putain mais merde ARRÊTEZ! ILS CROIENT, ILS CROIENT, ILS CROIENT bordel!’ (CR-0205); ‘Les gens qui disent les “ils croivent” ou bien “tu l’as euse” là vous êtes problématiques’ (CR-0009); ‘j’aV écrit “croivent” mdr g honte’ (CR-0837). This is in comparison to just 9 tweets (3.8%) expressing positive reactions. The majority of these tweets do not even express explicitly positive views, but rather defiance in their use of the non-standard verb form: ‘Ils disent Savent, Doivent, Boivent, mais Je dis Croivent et sa mcritique ? Bande d’hypocrite jaloux’ (CR-1071); ‘JE M’EN FOUS DE CE QUE LES GENS CROIVENT’ (CR-0129); ‘théoriquement dire “ils croivent” c’est juste et c’est une évolution et une contraction pour marqué la diff du singulier’ (CR-0327). The final tweet (CR-0327) argues that *croivent* is a useful distinction, which should perhaps be accepted or encouraged. Despite this, supporters of *croivent* are infrequent in the sample, and a prevalence of negative discourse surrounding the non-standard verb form on Twitter seems likely.

The authors of 66 tweets (27.5%) correct someone else's use of *croivent*: 'ils croivent *' (CR-1145); 'on dit croient pas croivent' (CR-1053); 'non non, croient c'est très bien.' (CR-0618). This included two tweets which explained that *croire* does not follow the conjugational pattern of *boire*: 'bah ouais boivent 😊 c'est pas croivent' (CR-1130); 'Boire c'est pas comme Croire... On ne dit pas "ils croivent" mais on dit "ils boivent"' (CR-1111). Such explanations may be genuine attempts to teach others about standard conjugations or smug assertions of superiority.

A further 3.8% of the sample were classified as using *croivent* as a stand-alone concept. These tweets contained either just the word *croivent* or *croiver*, or a list of possible conjugations for the verb *croiver*: 'CROIVENT' (CR-0360); 'je croive tu croives il croive nous croivons vous croivez ils croivent' (CR-0219). It is possible that the non-standard verb form *croivent* has gained an infamous status online so that one need only write the word to invoke other connotations. Three other tweets in the sample support this suggestion by making the use of *croivent* into a noun: 'Je viens d'entendre un "ils croivent"' (CR-0856); 'Je viens d'entendre un " ils croivent "' (CR-0739). *Croivent*, it seems, has an online notoriety which may explain the disparity in the frequency of tweets mentioning *croivent* and *voyent*.

Turning to the *voyent* sample, 12 tweets (92.3%) reacted negatively towards the verb form, no tweets react positively and one tweet remains ambiguous. The *voyent* sample, despite its size, shares a similar composition to the *croivent* sample, with a large negative presence in both. The same recurring themes (Section 4.4.3) are also reflected in both samples, suggesting that, although small, the *voyent* sample is indicative of the metalinguistic discourse surrounding the verb form.

4.3.2 The Object of Criticism in *croivent* tweets

Tweets in Chapter 3 demonstrated four different targets of linguistic criticism: the writers themselves, the public in general, direct criticism of another Twitter user, and indirect criticism of someone else, not necessarily a Twitter user. The same four categories were shown in the *croivent* sample of original tweets classified as negative (152) and correcting (66) (218 tweets in total).

The general public was alluded to in 71 tweets (32.6%): ‘Ce qui m'énervé le plus ? Les gens qui disent "au jour d'aujourd'hui" ou qu'ils "croivent" je suis pas une grammar nazi mais y a des limites’ (CR-0955); ‘à tout ceux qui croivent qu'on dit croivent’ (CR-0688); ‘c bad les gens qui écrient "croivent" vous perdez un max de charme’ (CR-0789). 32 of these tweets referred to *les gens*. The use of a general address may indicate that this is a high frequency non-standard feature and supports previous suggestions of online notoriety.

Only seven tweets (3.2%) commented on the author's own non-standard usage: ‘à croire j'ai dit ils croivent’ (CR-1070); ‘trappel qd on m'a insulté PSK G dit "les gens qui croivent que C bonne anniversaire 🙄"' (CR-1062); ‘Au téléphone je lâche des "croivent" faut me balayer.’ (CR-0848). Self-deprecating tweets such as these were much more frequent in the *orthographe* sample in Chapter 3 (10.5%). Direct or indirect criticism of someone else, on the other hand, is present in 140 tweets (64.2%). It appears that Twitter users are more likely to highlight and comment upon the specific mistakes of others than of themselves. This differs from general linguistic criticism of spelling quality in which self-deprecation had a greater presence. This may suggest that it is more acceptable to be poor at spelling than it is to use a non-standard verb form.

4.3.3 Recurring Themes

Tweets in both the *croivent* and *voyent* samples of original tweets (240 and 13 respectively) were analysed for recurring themes as in Chapter 3. Unlike in Chapter 3, where themes focused exclusively on the negative traits of non-standard language users, the themes in this chapter centre more on the critic themselves and how seeing/hearing non-standard language affects them; shame, frustration and disbelief were the most frequently occurring themes.

Shame is mentioned in 27 *croivent* tweets (11.3%): “3mn de tps additionnel, pr que Lorient y croive encore’ ehhehh t journaliste fr t’as pas honte?” (CR-0196); ‘Ouais normal qu’on te croivent pas vue comment tu l’écris... Choquée et déçue’ (CR-0969); ‘#JeudiConfession hier j’ai dit “croive” dans une conversation. J’ai honte. Très honte !’ (CR-0664). The use of the hashtag ‘#JeudiConfession’ in the final tweet conjures even stronger feelings of guilt and sin. These tweets are always addressed to someone specific, be that another Twitter user, or the writer themselves, making explicit personal targets for the strong emotions of shame. Language professionals are often targeted, mainly journalists and authors, with the implication being that someone who works with language should use it ‘correctly’ and feel shame at non-standard usages. Similar rhetoric was also seen in a study of Czech Facebook groups (Sherman & Švelch, 2015: 327). Eight tweets which explicitly reference *honte* are written using abbreviations (theorized in Chapter 3): ‘j’aV écrit “croivent” mdr g honte’ (CR-0837); ‘pouahhahah mais kel mito en + la honte el a dit croivent’ (CR-0973). This seems illustrative of an online hierarchy of ‘acceptable’ and ‘unacceptable’ language. The use of *croivent* is deemed unacceptable and shameful, yet other non-standard features, such as abbreviations, are appropriate even in the context of linguistic criticism. The tendency to concentrate criticism on the user of the non-standard verb form, rather than properties of the non-standard verb form, is also apparent.

Frustration is shown in 23 *croivent* tweets (9.6%) and one *voyent* tweet (7.7%): “Pour pas que les gens ils croivent que [...]” Je suis désespérée, achevez les sérieux...’ (CR-0397); ‘Flemme des gens qui disent "ils croivent"' (CR-1042); ‘Le "ils voyent" m'horripile tellement.. (et se répand beaucoup trop malheureusement...)' (VO-041). This even extends to a frustration at ‘having to’ correct other people: ‘ils croivent* ptn trop marre de corriger les gens sur Twitter uu’ (CR-0715). This mirrors somewhat the prevalence of language correction to which users alluded in Chapter 3. These tweets not only demonstrate a recurring negativity towards the use and users of *croivent* but the idea of frustration again suggests high frequency and superiority.

Disbelief at the use of *croivent* is expressed in 19 tweets (7.9%), with particular reference to ‘continued’ use of *croivent*: ‘#MiroirDisMoiSi Il y a encore des gens qui croivent’ (CR-0436); ‘Nous sommes en 2016 mais il y a des gens qui disent " ils croivent " toujours’ (CR-0058); ‘En 2016 il y a encore des gens qui croivent’ (CR-0801). Four tweets in the *voyent* sample (30.8%) shared this disbelief: ‘Les gens qui "voyent", expliquez moi !’ (VO-077); ‘En 2016 c'est inacceptable de voir des: - Ils croivent - Ils voyent - Comme même - Sa - En dirait’ (VO-58). This once again suggests that the non-standard verb forms are heard/seen frequently and the incredulity evokes a sense of superiority. The references to ‘continued’ use support this by suggesting that these features have received so much airtime that it is impossible to still be unaware of the standard forms.

On 13 occasions (5.4%) Twitter users make negative judgements about someone’s character based on their use of the non-standard *croivent*: “Croivent" tes bo cochons’ (CR-1014); ‘on croive surtout que t'es con 😏😏’ (CR-0965); ‘Pour permettre l'intégration de nombreux chômeurs sur le marché du travail, je propose d'autoriser le verbe "croiver"' (CR-0843). The tweets are written purely to insult the person using

the verb form, with a primary focus on intelligence. Prescription instils the belief that 'correct' language use is indicative of high status and intelligence, and inversely low social status and lack of intelligence is shown through 'incorrect' language use (Milroy & Milroy, 1999: 2). Chapter 3 tweets also channelled this logic, suggesting that standard language ideology is still pervasive in France and attacks on intelligence are frequent in online prescriptivism.

Finally, 32 tweets from the *croivent* sample (13.3%) and five tweets from the *voyent* sample (38.5%) mention other non-standard features in their metalinguistic discourse. These can be split into two categories: 1. Reactions to multiple mistakes made by the same person (8 *croivent* tweets): '● Alerte #LGLf5 : - "Ils croivent" Loulou Robert. - "les hôpitals" Claire Berest. TOUT VA BIEN.' (CR-0773); and 2. Commentary on ubiquitous non-standard features (24 *croivent* tweets): 'En 2016 c'est inacceptable de voir des: - Ils croivent - Ils voyent - Comme même - Sa - En dirait' (VO-058). The grouping together of non-standard features is clearly a common way of critiquing deviations from the norm, as was shown in the analysis of retweets. The recurrence of numerous non-standard features also highlights which non-standard features are either most frequently used or most 'unforgiveable' for online prescriptivists.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has narrowed the focus of metalinguistic discourse to consider the use of and comment on two non-standard verb forms: *croivent* and *voyent*. *Croivent* was both used and commented upon more frequently than *voyent*. As both are commonly used verbs, one could hypothesise that either phonology plays a role, as *voyent* is not

audibly distinct from its standard form, or that *croivent* is deemed less 'acceptable' than *voyent*. A hierarchy of non-standard usages was already noted in Chapter 3, and in this chapter abbreviations were again rarely highlighted as non-standard, even in tweets proclaiming that a user should feel ashamed of their use of a non-standard verb form.

A link between intelligence and standard language use was again evident in some tweets; however, more frequent themes included shame, disbelief and frustration. These tweets focused on how other people's non-standard language use affects the critic and in doing so places the critic in a position of superiority, carrying the burden of other people's non-standard language. It was also less common for writers to self-critique, a tendency which arose more frequently in Chapter 3. This may suggest that it is more 'acceptable' to struggle with spelling than it is to use a non-standard verb form.

Chapter 5 *#JeSuisCirconflexe* – The Spelling Reform of 1990 and 2016 reactions

5.1 Introduction

In February 2016, a spelling reform dating from 1990 hit the headlines in France causing the topic to trend on Twitter. The official documentation outlining this spelling reform, including its context, what it entails and the rhetoric surrounding it, is discussed in this chapter. Samples of tweets from February 2016, using the search terms *#JeSuisCirconflexe*, *reform orthographe* and *ognon*, are then analysed to examine the reactions to the reappearance of the reform, providing an insight into how governmental intervention in French orthography is viewed on Twitter.

5.2 Context

France has a long history of governmental language intervention and the reform of 1990 represents just one initiative in a long line of previous changes (Dupriez, 2009: 19). French orthography is well known to be complex (Paveau & Rosier, 2008: 60) and the question of its reform is periodically discussed within France (Arrivé, 1994: 3). In the years leading up to the *Rectifications de l'orthographe* in 1990, there was a general feeling of acceptance for a moderate reform 'to modernise the spelling of French, without threatening the foundation upon which it is built' (Catach, 1993: 141-42). Both linguists and laypeople were discussing the possibility of a potential reform (Arrivé, 1994: 3), as demonstrated by a study published in *L'école libératrice*, which claimed that 90% of French teachers backed a simplification of French spelling (Goosse, 1991: 120).

In reaction to the apparent desire for reform, Prime Minister Michel Rocard founded the *Conseil supérieur de la langue française* (CSLF) in 1989, an institution headed by

Rocard himself, which united journalists, linguists and writers, amongst others, to work together on a number of *rectifications* to the spelling system (Arrivé, 1994: 5-7). During their first meeting, on 24th October 1989, Rocard presented five areas to be targeted: the use of hyphens, the pluralisation of compound words, the circumflex accent, the past participles of reflexive verbs and a number of ‘anomalies’ (Arrivé, 1994: 5-7). Once achieved, Rocard and Maurice Druon, as *Secrétaire perpétuel* of the *Académie française* from 1985-1999, approved the corrections (Catach, 1993: 143). The official report was published in December 1990 (*Académie française*, 1990).

The aims of the *rectifications*, according to the official documentation, were to remove anomalies from French orthography, e.g. changing *combatif* to *combattif* (1990: 15), and to create a simpler spelling system, benefitting children learning to write French for the first time and adults who struggle (1990: 3). These changes were meant not only to change the spellings of existing words but to serve as recommendations for future term creation, particularly in science and technology. Both new and old spellings of affected words, around 2,000, were to be considered correct for an indeterminate time period in order to aid the transition.

Despite the pro-reform sentiment demonstrated from the late 1980s (Dupriez, 2009: 20), the *rectifications* were not positively received by the media (Goosse, 1991: 118) or the speech community (Reyes, 2013: 337) and were quickly relabelled as a *réforme de l’orthographe* (Arrivé, 1994: 7). Such resistance is not uncommon (Reyes, 2013: 337) or surprising given the strong cultural tie that the layperson creates between spelling and culture (Goosse, 1991: 119). The response was, however, more favourable in Québec and Belgium (Paveau & Rosier, 2008: 139). Rocard continued to defend the proposed changes, despite the negative reaction, while the *Académie* distanced itself and did not recommend the usage of the new spellings (Arrivé, 1994: 7). Dictionaries

began to include the reformed spellings alongside the old spellings and, in April 2007, the Ministry of National Education announced the official recognition of the new spellings in the school system from 2008 (Dupriez, 2009: 23).

In February 2016, discussion of the reform resurfaced when a number of newspapers announced that from September 2016 the corrected spellings would be used in educational textbooks (Le Hanaff, 2016), leading to widespread discussion on social media. This prompted the *Académie* to publish an online statement which, despite acknowledging Druon's official approval of the report, declared: 'L'Académie française tient tout d'abord à rappeler qu'elle n'est pas à l'origine de ce qui est désigné sous le nom de « réforme de l'orthographe », dont la presse se fait l'écho depuis quelques jours' (*Académie française*, 2016). On 4th February 2016, the Education Minister, Najat Vallaud-Belkacem (2016) also reacted to the media backlash via her official website, stating that the proposal of changes was outside her remit, but rather that 'ce travail revient à l'Académie française'. This was followed by an interview, published on *Le Figaro's* website, with the current *Secrétaire perpétuel*, Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, who claimed that the *Académie* had in fact not approved the reform itself, but rather a limited number of changes to anomalies (*Le Figaro*, 2016). In the face of social media backlash, neither the *Académie* nor the French government were willing to take responsibility for the *Rectifications de l'orthographe*.⁴²

5.3 *Les rectifications de l'orthographe* – Official Report

The official report, published in December 1990, outlined the proposed changes to the French spelling system. The report contains two open letters between Druon and Rocard; the rhetoric and content of which are discussed in this section. The document

⁴² The CSLF was decommissioned in 2006; no statement was made on their behalf.

is entitled *Les Rectifications de l'orthographe* and the report explicitly states that 'il exclut toute idée de réforme' (1990: 6). The media in 2016 and, more specifically, the tweets discussed in Section 5.4, did not adopt this carefully considered term and instead used the less moderate *réforme*.⁴³

The proposed changes, Druon states, were constructed following four principles: 1. The suggestions must be 'fermes et souples'; 2. The changes will affect the spellings of words which both adults and children find difficult; 3. The amendments will reflect changes already visible in contemporary language; 4. The changes are moderate and will cause little upheaval (1990: 3). Again, the desire to present the reform as minor is clear, yet the suggestion that the changes will be both firm and flexible is somewhat contradictory. Druon acknowledges that the changes will not be accepted by all; some will feel they go too far, while others will argue that they don't go far enough. This is later reiterated in the Prime Minister's letter which describes the changes as 'simples, modérées et acceptables pour tous' (1990: 6). Both Rocard and Druon assert that the proposed changes are reasonable and that the French-speaking population should readily accept them.

Druon's letter presents the Prime Minister as a modern-day Cardinal Richelieu, founder of the *Académie française*, who gave 'des règles certaines à notre langue, de la rendre éloquente et pure, capable de traiter des arts et des sciences' (1990: 3). Including this reference gives legitimacy and historical power to the report, whilst also implicitly highlighting that governmental linguistic intervention is positive and productive, i.e. the French language benefitted from previous intervention and it will again. Rocard also discusses the importance of linguistic intervention, stating the

⁴³ To reflect this, reform is used in this chapter rather than *rectifications*.

future vitality of the language and the innumerable spelling mistakes made by most French people as justifications for the proposed changes (1990: 6).

Druon draws on a number of language tropes in his letter to defend the reform and praise the language: 'clarté, précision, pureté, toutes qualités qui font notre langue suprême' (1990: 3).⁴⁴ Linguistic intervention, Druon suggests, allows the French language to continually boast these positive attributes. French as a language of clarity is a popular trope, widely held since the 18th century (Lodge, 1998: 25), which Druon exploits. The idea of a supreme language is generally viewed as unfounded as no language has '*inherent* aesthetic or linguistic advantage' over another (Bourhis, 1982: 34). Druon also reflects on the richness of French and states that 'une langue simple ou simplifiée à l'extrême est une langue pauvre' (1990: 5); French is a rich language because of its complexities, of which some are found in the spelling system. The reform must remove enough of these complexities to facilitate use but not so many as to impoverish the language. It is generally considered a non-academic stance to attribute value judgements to a language (Langer & Davies, 2011: 7), suggesting a lay rather than linguistic approach to the reform, and drawing on emotional rather than pragmatic reasoning.

Both Druon and Rocard emphasise the need for governmental linguistic intervention, suggesting that whilst they acknowledge that a living language evolves, their vision for the French language is a government-controlled evolution. While Rocard focuses primarily on the importance and necessity of corrections to the spelling system, Druon uses emotive language and notions such as clarity and purity throughout his letter, mirroring the discourse surrounding language standardisation (Lodge, 1993: 4). The inclusion of these letters within the report suggests that those in charge felt a need to

⁴⁴ These tropes are often referred to as 'language myths' (see, for instance Lodge, 1998).

justify the changes. Change to actual language use can only be brought about by users choosing to adopt the proposed spellings; ‘language planning is rarely effective without support at the grassroots levels’ (Kircher, 2016: 241). Without the support of French-speakers, the proposed changes would fail to effect change in usage - indeed, it has taken over 25 years for the changes to be fully adopted in the education system, let alone in daily language use.

5.4 #JeSuisCirconflexe

After a quarter of a century of near silence, the spelling reform of 1990 was widely discussed online in February 2016. My analysis of this online activity is based on tweets collected from the 4th February 2016 for 48 hours using the hashtag #JeSuisCirconflexe as the principal search term and two hours of tweets using the search terms *ognon* and *reform orthographe*. The #JeSuisCirconflexe hashtag is a calque on a previously trending hashtag from January 2015, #JeSuisCharlie, used by Twitter users in reaction to the Charlie Hebdo attacks of 7th January 2015 in Paris. The use of the hashtag shows solidarity, with Twitter users grouping together for the same cause. This particular construction, *Je suis*, implies that ‘this could have been me’, making a highly emotive statement. The connotations of the hashtag #JeSuisCirconflexe may make the collection of negative opinions of the reform more likely. It is also possible that tweets using this hashtag are more extreme in their imagery and language as the use of the hashtag itself is, arguably, extreme – equating the reform to a terrorist attack. In light of this, the neutral search term *reform orthographe* was also used to capture data that might be less partisan. *Ognon* was another trending topic in February, as the reform proposes the change of the spelling of *oignon* to *ognon*. This search term was included to compare reactions to the proposed removal of the circumflex, with reactions to removing a letter.

Over the 48-hour collection period, 4,481 tweets were collected using the search term *#JeSuisCirconflexe*. Names of users were removed and tweets given unique identifiers in the following format: JE-0001 (search term – number). 64 spam tweets were collected and removed from the sample. 623 non-French language tweets were also removed; although 248 written in English are briefly analysed. This left the number of relevant, French-language tweets at 3,794. Original tweets (1,193) were then separated from retweeted material (2,601). Table 5.1 shows the top ten most retweeted tweets during the collection period. Unless otherwise stated, the below analysis refers to the 1,193 original, French-language tweets. This sample was compared to tweets using the search terms *reform orthographe* (300 tweets) and *ognon* (204 tweets), collected during a two hour period, which coincided with the first two hours of the *#JeSuisCirconflexe* collection (during which time 214 tweets were collected). These searches are referred to as RO-0001 and OG-0001. The spelling and punctuation of all tweets is reproduced as collected.

Number	Tweet	Number of Retweets
1	#JeSuisCirconflexe Apparemment en France on aime accompagner les gens dans la médiocrité https://t.co/eX71v4saZl	199
2	Non mais imaginons: "Je suis sûre ta soeur elle va bien" et "je suis sur ta soeur elle va bien" C'est pas pareil. #JeSuisCirconflexe	162
3	Ne pas confondre un homme mûr, et un homme mur. #JeSuisCirconflexe https://t.co/dR1oMBepFj	132
4	A lire #JeSuisCirconflexe Face with tears of joy Face with tears of joy https://t.co/lnj7FfGpGB	128
5	#JeSuisCirconflexe	99
6	#ReformeOrthographe : simplification, glorification de la médiocrité, nivellement par le bas... #JeSuisCirconflexe http://bit.ly/2c1xHQ4	90
7	Le seul fait de lire le mot "ognon" suffira à nous faire pleurer maintenant. #JeSuisCirconflexe	88
8	#JeSuisCirconflexe #ReformeOrthographe https://t.co/26UXpmue9Y	82
9	Dsl les Jérôme, Benoît, Pacôme, etc.. C'est dur de perdre une partie de soi si vous avez besoin de soutien n'hésitez pas #JeSuisCirconflexe	67
10	#JeSuisCirconflexe https://t.co/P2ZN702lB4	53

Table 5.1 Top ten retweets (#JeSuisCirconflexe)

5.5 Content of the samples

5.5.1 Reactions

#JeSuisCirconflexe tweets fell into four categories of reactions towards the spelling reform: informational, hashtag seen as an overreaction, negative, and positive (some also unclear). Tweets which shared a link or information about the reform with no judgements made were classified as informational: ‘La réforme de l' #orthographe, résumée en deux points’ (JE-0027). The hashtag seen as an overreaction category includes tweets which criticise other Twitter users for their use of the hashtag *#JeSuisCirconflexe*: ‘#JeSuisCirconflexe #JeSuisCharlie vous associez de l'orthographe au drame de Charlie hebdo c'est du grand n'importe quoi..’ (JE-0159). The sample by reaction types is shown in Table 5.2.

The majority of tweets in the sample, 998 (83.7%), reacted negatively to the reform: ‘C'est vraiment trop trop nul cette réforme de l'orthographe #JeSuisCirconflexe’ (JE-0282). The recurring themes found in the negative tweets are discussed in detail in Section 5.5.3. Within the negative reactions, an additional emotional response was displayed in 104 tweets (10.4%). Shock, anger and sadness were the most prevalent: ‘M...mais je pensais que c'était un hoax!’ (JE-0193); ‘Je suis véritablement INDIGNÉ’ (JE-4476); ‘Ils ont brisé mon coeur’ (JE-1500). The emotional nature of these tweets suggests a non-rational response to the reform.

Reaction type	No. of instances	% of sample
Negative	998	83.7%
Informational	79	6.6%
Unclear	72	6.0%
Hashtag seen as an overreaction	41	3.4%
Positive	3	0.3%

Table 5.2 Composition of reactions by type (#JeSuisCirconflexe)

Of the three tweets which reacted positively towards the spelling reform, two mention language evolution: ‘Une langue qui n’évolue pas est une langue morte...’ (JE-3510); ‘notre langue évolue !’ (JE-4313). Both users acknowledge that languages change over time, and by using the hashtag *#JeSuisCirconflexe*, link such natural evolution to the reform. The third, and final, positive tweet states ‘Je comprends parfaitement l’utilité de cette réforme de l’orthographe. Il suffit de lire les tweets de votre TL⁴⁵ pour comprendre pourquoi’ (JE-1991). This tweet suggests that non-standard language is not acceptable, even online, and that a reform of this nature is both needed and likely to improve the situation. All three positive tweets acknowledge a need for a language to change over time but do not provide explicit support for the changes proposed by the reform.

One negative French-language tweet and 23 negative English tweets also mentioned evolution: ‘Une langue n'est vivante que parce qu'elle évolue sans cesse. Mais ne faites pas n'importe quoi avec l'orthographe !’ (JE-2708); ‘It evolves - it cannot be one way one day and suddenly change. It is a steady process of growth and evolution’ (JE-1747); ‘The vote to remove the "accent circonflexe" from over 2,400 French words is a horrific

⁴⁵ Timeline.

erasure of linguistic history' (JE-0719). Users again acknowledge that a living language must evolve but do not consider linguistic intervention as necessary or natural. Two English-language tweets reflect on the spelling reform proposed in 1996 in Germany to conclude that top down language changes cannot be successful: 'I never wrote Schiffahrt anyway, I won't write disparaitre!' (JE-3248); 'This happened with German and it was broadly a failure; it still retains features like three identical letters in a row' (JE-1783). With a focus on etymology and language evolution, these tweets oppose government-controlled language intervention, advocating instead an organic process of change.

Five of the 175 English-language tweets (2.9%) also reacted positively towards the reform: 'Finally. French is getting a much-needed clean-up.' (JE-1608); 'French spelling never made sense (neither does English) stop complaining and be happy your language finally makes sense' (JE-3265); '"because it has always been this way" is not a GOOD reason to keep it tough' (JE-3276). Although five tweets form only 2.9% of the English-language sample, this is almost ten times more, proportionally, than the 0.3% of French-language tweets using the same hashtag.

During the 48-hour collection period, 22 tweets (1.9%) critiqued the use of the hashtag *#JeSuisCirconflexe*: 'LE HASHTAG LE PLUS DEBILE DE L'HISTOIRE DE TWITTER !' (JE-0738); 'Tous les fdp⁴⁶ qui tweet #JeSuisCirconflexe et qui ont tweeter #JeSuisCharlie l'année dernière nvm⁴⁷, j'vous jure vous respecte pas.' (JE-1080); 'Y a qd même des gens qui osent utiliser #JeSuisCirconflexe en référence à#JeSuisCharlie' (JE-4261). The language used in these examples – *debile*, *fdp*, and *osent* – is more aggressive than in other categories of the sample, and this is typical of

⁴⁶ *Fils de putes.*

⁴⁷ *Niquez vos mères.*

the tweets in this section. The choice of vocabulary emphasises the anger felt towards the appropriation of the *#JeSuisCharlie* hashtag for a very different kind of event.

Table 5.3 displays the frequency of each reaction type for the two hour samples of tweets from search terms *ognon*, *#JeSuisCirconflexe* and *reform orthographe*. 33 tweets (19.5%) using the neutral term *reform orthographe* were informational, in comparison to seven *ognon* tweets (8.6%) and five *#JeSuisCirconflexe* tweets (5.6%). This is unsurprising given the neutrality of the search term, *reform orthographe*, and the neutrality strived for in official information-sharing. No tweets in the two hour *#JeSuisCirconflexe* sample reacted positively to the reform, compared to two *ognon* tweets (2.5%) and seven *reform orthographe* tweets (4.1%). Whether the search term was negatively marked or neutral, the vast majority of tweets in all three samples reacted negatively to the reform.

	#JeSuisCirconflexe		Ognon		Reforme orthographe	
Reaction type	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Informational	5	5.6%	7	8.6%	33	19.5%
Positive	0	0%	2	2.5%	7	4.1%
Negative	78	87.6%	68	84.0%	124	73.4%
Hashtag seen as an overreaction	4	4.5%	0	0%	3	1.8%

Table 5.3 Types of reaction towards the reform (all samples, 2 hours)

5.5.2 The Object of Criticism

In February 2016, following a social media backlash, the *Académie française* and current Minister of Education, Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, officially denied responsibility for the spelling reform of 1990. Tweets using the hashtag *#JeSuisCirconflexe* present differing opinions about where responsibility lies for the re-emergence of the reform.

The current French President, François Hollande, and current Minister of Education, Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, were the two most targeted in the sample. Neither of these politicians was directly involved in the creation of the spelling reform, first published in 1990, but, arguably, their current positions of power mean they are to some extent responsible for its revival and introduction into textbooks from September 2016. The *Académie française* appears in nine tweets. This is far fewer mentions than political figures received, despite the significant role of the *Académie* in the spelling reform (Catach, 1993: 143).

Chômage was mentioned by 27 of the tweets which referenced Hollande (64.3%): ‘Hollande a voulu alléger les chômage, il l'a fais! Sans accent circonflexe...’ (JE-1573); ‘Fin du chômage et des chômeurs Bravo #Hollande’ (JE-1985); ‘#Hollande a enfin vaincu le #chômage’ (JE-0204). Hervé Baudry’s cartoon, Figure 5.1, is shared in 18 tweets. The cartoon, published on the artist’s Facebook page on 4th February 2016⁴⁸, shows Hollande standing on top of the word *chômage* with its circumflex in his hands saying: ‘Je vous avais promis, d’alléger le chômage: c’est fait !’. There is a subtext in many of these tweets that Hollande has much bigger issues to worry about than the reform of the spelling system, such as unemployment rates: ‘Dites Me @fhollande si au lieu de supprimer accents circonflexes vous pouviez carrément supprimer "chômage" et "impôts"' (JE-4000). Users, therefore, when mentioning the President tended to suggest that orthography is a triviality in comparison to other societal problems.

48

<https://www.facebook.com/324409304346512/photos/a.324412124346230.76717.324409304346512/893734424080661/?type=3&theater> [Accessed 23/09/2016].



Figure 5.1 Cartoon by Hervé Baudry

Of the tweets which mention Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, seven directly address her Twitter account, showing a desire to engage the minister in online discussion. One of these tweets, JE-0008, shares a link to an article on *Le Monde*'s website entitled 'Non, l'accent circonflexe ne va pas disparaître'⁴⁹. The sharing of this article does not necessarily indicate support of the reform but does represent a wish to share reliable information. Shortly before the collection period, a tweet was sent from Vallaud-Belkacem's account which labelled the general reaction to the reform as a 'polémique absurde'. Vallaud-Belkacem included a link with the tweet to an article in magazine *L'Express*⁵⁰, which labels the backlash against the reform a 'manipulation politique'. Vallaud-Belkacem did, then, address general criticism of the reform, but did not, it seems, personally reply to the users addressing her directly.

Like the tweets mentioning Hollande, two tweets directed at Vallaud-Belkacem question governmental priorities: 'Que le gouvernement s'occupe des chômeurs avec accent même sans accent ils seront toujours dans le même cas' (JE-0722); 'Simplifier l'orthographe tire la langue vers le bas. Vous n'avez rien d'autre à faire ?' (JE-4212). Unlike in Hollande references, five tweets directly insult Vallaud-Belkacem: 'NUL

⁴⁹ http://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2016/02/04/non-l-accent-circonflexe-ne-va-pas-disparaître_4859439_4355770.html [Accessed 23/09/2016].

⁵⁰ http://www.lexpress.fr/education/revision-de-l-orthographe-une-manipulation-grossiere_1760437.html [Accessed 23/09/2016].

NAJAT' (JE-0722); 'débarrassons-nous de Najat VB' (JE-1214); 'elle est bête la ministre' (JE-2590). Research commissioned by British newspaper The Guardian found that articles written by female contributors receive 'more abuse and dismissive trolling' via online comments than articles written by men (Gardiner *et al.*, 2016). The difference in reactions to Hollande and Vallaud-Belkacem may suggest that this phenomenon is present in a wider CMC context. Three tweets reference former Prime Minister, Nicolas Sarkozy. None of these references link Sarkozy to the reform but, rather, compare the shape of his eyebrows to that of the circumflex accent.

Tweets which reference the *Académie* do not contain other recurring themes, with some citing emotional responses to the reform such as sadness and shock, while others are informative, sharing links to news articles on the subject. Tweet JE-0014, 'Triste que les immortels empêchent les mots de l'être', suggests that the *Académie* has the authority to remove words from the language, not acknowledging that, in reality, actual change in usage can only be propagated by users of the language. No tweets referencing the *Académie* are insulting or aggressive, as displayed in tweets about Vallaud-Belkacem – although the use of *immortels* may be slightly pejorative. It seems that the institution managed to escape the wrath of the Twitter backlash, despite having, arguably, the greatest involvement. This may be because the *Académie* denounced their involvement in February 2016 or because French-speakers are used to the prescriptive nature of the *Académie*, whereas linguistic intervention by the government is less usual.

5.5.3 Recurring themes

This section will analyse the recurring themes in the 998 #JeSuisCirconflexe tweets classified as reacting negatively towards the spelling reform of 1990. Where relevant

retweets, samples for other search terms, and English-language tweets are also discussed.

The importance of the circumflex accent is highlighted in 128 tweets (12.8%). 104 of these did so by providing example sentences where the meaning would be changed by the inclusion/exclusion of the accent: ‘« Être un homme mûr » et « être un homme mur », pas si sûr que ce soit la même chose...!’ (JE-0947); ‘Avant la réforme : "je suis sûr ta mère elle va crier" après "je suis sur ta mère elle va crier"' (JE-0668). The second, third and fourth most retweeted tweets use examples in the same way: *sur/sûr* (JE-1018 – 162 retweets and JE-0451 – 128 retweets); *mur/mûr* (JE-0042 – 132 retweets). The ninth tweet, JE-0020 (67 retweets), mentions first names which are spelt with circumflex accents and states: ‘C'est dur de perdre une partie de soi’. Highfield (2015: 2715) states that humour is a key factor for the ‘retweetability’ of a tweet; the popularity of these tweets seems to uphold this claim. Table 5.4 displays all examples cited more than once (excluding retweets).

	Example Used	Number of mentions
Spelling due to change	coût	7
	maître/maîtriser	6
	île	4
	paraître/disparaître	3
No change proposed	sûr	72
	chômage	36
	jeûne	22
	proper nouns	18
	mûr	15
	être/peut-être	9
	tâche	6
	impôt	3
	même	3
	bête	2
	côte	2
	croître	2
	fête	2
	gâteau	2
	hôtel	2
	pâques	2

Table 5.4 Circumflex examples cited in #JeSuisCirconflexe tweets

Of the 20 examples, only four are proposed to change, while 16 are unaffected. In fact, *jeûne*, *mûr* and *sûr* are explicitly mentioned in the official documentation as words which will not change (1990: 5). Despite this, these three words are among the most commented upon, potentially because of the comedic value of confusing the homophones: ‘Je suis sûr ta soeur elle va bien. Je suis sur ta soeur elle va bien’ (JE-1452); ‘Je vais me faire un petit jeune Je vais me faire un petit jeûne’ (JE-0377); ‘Ne jamais confondre un homme mûr avec un homme mur’ (JE-2725). It is unclear whether Twitter users chose these examples for their humour or because they believed that the circumflex was being removed from these words. Langer, in analysing reactions to the German spelling reform, found that the facts were unimportant. What was

important was that language was in danger (2001: 34). This seems to be reflected in the sample.

Four tweets share images which negate the *sur* and *sûr* example. For instance, JE-1890, tweeted ‘#PasQueLorthographeQuiCompte’ alongside the image shown in Figure 5.2⁵¹. The image shows that, with the addition of the relative pronoun *que* in the first sentence, and a comma in the second, there is no longer confusion surrounding the meaning of the sentence. This was refuted once more when users tweeted the image in Figure 5.3 which states ‘l’importance de savoir écrire avant de vouloir corriger’. There are then different levels of metalinguistic discussion happening, with many users becoming frustrated at the apparent lack of knowledge of others, while many more are either unaware of these nuances or are using the examples for comedy rather than metalinguistic commentary. Furthermore, the tweets focus on singular examples, rather than on the principles behind the changes, a tendency also shown in reactions to a German spelling reform (Hohenhaus, 2005: 206).

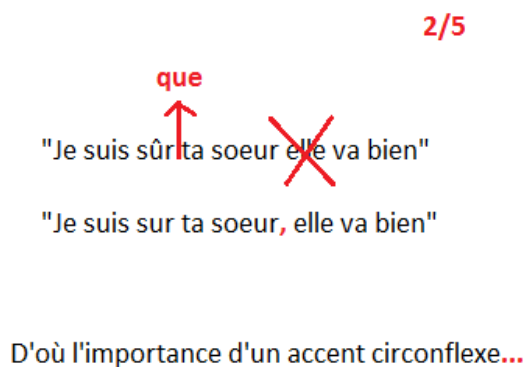
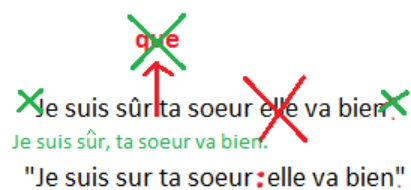


Figure 5.2 Sur correction (1)

⁵¹ Figures 5.2 and 5.3 are recreations of the original images which were too large for the document.



~~Je suis sûr ta soeur elle va bien~~

 Je suis sûr, ta soeur va bien.

 "Je suis sur ta soeur: elle va bien."

D'où l'importance ~~d'un accent circonflexe~~

~~de savoir écrire...~~

 avant de vouloir corriger.

Figure 5.3 Sur correction (2)

The idea of a future decline of the French language is mentioned in 80 tweets in the sample (8.0%): 'Ça commence par supprimer les accents et ça finira par inscrire "sa va" dans le dico...' (JE-0142); 'C'est choquant, on finira à utiliser les émoticônes à la place des lettres' (JE-1226); '2015: Oignon. 2016: Ognon. 2023: Truc qui fait pleurer' (JE-0578). This theme was also shown in the tweets using the search terms *reform orthographe* and *ognon* (6 and 12 tweets respectively). Langer and Davies (2011: 1) suggest that this slippery slope metaphor, of progressive changes leading to eventual decline, is a 'recurrent phenomenon' amongst non-linguists, with 'modernising and foreign influences' often cited as the threat. Milroy and Milroy's concept of a complaint tradition also requires that 'someone or something has to be blamed for this alleged decline' (1999: 40). The mention of emoticons (JE-1226), a feature of 'textspeak', is a clear example of such modernising influences. The tweets present hypothetical future changes that are often hyperbolic such as *un wazo* for *un oiseau*, *Ojd* for *aujourd'hui* and an extension of the change proposed to *nenuphar* (ph to an f) to the words *pharmacie* (*farmacie*) and *orthographe* (*orthografe*). Reyes similarly found that Spanish speakers were likely to associate spelling reform with language decline (2013: 354). It is unclear whether this negative attitude, although seemingly

cross-cultural, is specific to this instance of government intervention or to language change more broadly.

In 76 tweets (7.6%), users suggest that the reform represents an undesirable simplification of the language or its decline into mediocrity: 'Plutôt que de prôner l'excellence, ce gouvernement préfère le nivellement par le bas' (JE-0030); 'Simplification - Glorification de la médiocrité - Nivellement par le bas...' (JE-3455); '"Simplification" de orthographe: RAS LE BOL du culte de la médiocrité et du nivellement par le bas' (JE-1640). This is further shown in the retweets: 'Apparemment en France on aime accompagner les gens dans la médiocrité' (JE-0003 – 199 retweets); '#ReformeOrthographe : simplification, glorification de la médiocrité, nivellement par le bas...' (JE-0006 – 90 retweets). In just two hours of collection, simplification is also mentioned 14 times in the *reform orthographe* sample (11.3% of negative tweets) and twice in the *ognon* sample (2.9%). The use of *simplification* mirrors the official report which uses the verb *simplifier* twice (1990: 11, 13). Druon's opening letter explicitly states: 'une langue simple ou simplifiée à l'extrême est une langue pauvre' (1990: 5). The Perpetual Secretary insists that while some spellings are being simplified, this does not equate to a simplification of the orthographic system. These tweets, on the other hand, imply that the reform is not only a simplification of orthography, but rather of the language as a whole. The reluctance to accept a simplification of the spelling system can be explained, somewhat, by standard language ideology. For those who have mastered the complicated French spelling system, the social status associated with 'correct' usage of the standard language (Lodge, 1993: 12) and 'correct' spelling (Paveau & Rosier, 2008: 143) is at stake.

Seven tweets include variations of the verb *appauvrir*, echoing Druon's use of *pauvre* in the official documentation (1990: 5): 'un appauvrissement de notre langue' (JE-

3668); 'Appauvrir la langue pour que les mauvais ne fassent pas l'effort de s'améliorer, à l'image du pays : médiocre' (JE-1013); 'Comment justifier cette volonté de tout appauvrir ?' (JE-3417). Both Druon and the Twitter users use the same rhetoric but from opposing angles. It seems unlikely that this is a deliberate mirroring of official rhetoric as tweets which gave examples of words which will not be changing suggested that Twitter users are not informed on the intricacies of the reform and its official documentation. Rather, concepts such as *simplification* and *appauvrissement* have become classic arguments within metalinguistic discussion; the metaphor of an impoverished language has been used in German purism since at least the 17th century (Jones, 1999: 59-60).

The reform is not the only target of criticism. Other French speakers with 'poor' language skills are blamed in 33 tweets (3.3%) for the introduction of the reform: 'Quitte à aider les nuls' (JE-2335); 'Bientôt (ou bientôt ?) le mot "TORT" s'écrira "TORD" pour donner raison aux cancre qui ne savent pas l'écrire' (JE-0397); 'Encore une langue sacrifié aux idiots' (JE-4447). Thirteen of these tweets mention illiteracy: 'La réforme de l'illettré' (JE-0147); 'Bienvenue dans l'ère de l'illettrisme !' (JE-1038); 'On sacrifie la langue française pour une bande d'illettrés' (JE-1119). These tweets belittle those who struggle with the language, and in turn position the writers as superior. Once again, maintenance of the status quo is desired; the prestige of the French language, and of those who have mastered it, is presented as more important than an accessible spelling system.

The perceived inherent qualities of the French language are praised in 45 tweets (4.5%): 'En gommant l'accent circonflexe, on gomme aussi l'histoire et l'étymologie. La logique de la langue!' (JE-1096); 'défendons la richesse de notre langue' (JE-2930); 'La langue française, chef d'oeuvre de l'humanité, élégante et subtile, fille héritière du

latin... Ne la bradons pas !' (JE-0227). A number of recurring purist images are displayed; a link to Latin, for instance, has been salient since the Middle Ages (Catach, 1993: 139) and qualities of logic and richness resemble Paveau and Rosier's pseudo-linguistic arguments (2008: 57). In linguistic terms, no language is inherently more logical or richer than any other language; all such judgements are arbitrary (Joseph, 1987: 4), yet metalinguistic commentary has long included such judgements (Jones, 1999: 121). Beauty is mentioned in nine French-language tweets and five English-language tweets: 'Ô beauté de la langue française' (JE-2400); 'il faut préserver notre si belle langue française' (JE-0403); 'French language is beautiful. Making it simpler is just making it less beautiful' (JE-3256). Comments on the beauty of French resemble Thomas' aesthetic purism, a non-rational argument for the purity of a language (1991: 39) and the aesthetic arguments that Paveau and Rosier suggest are characteristic of a purist discourse (2008: 57). Beauty is presented as reason enough to protect a language, regardless of whether this makes an efficient or usable language. It seems that the rhetoric of beauty, logic and clarity has a presence in online discussions of language.

Nostalgia is shown in 21 tweets (2.1%) which refer to the circumflex accent as *le petit chapeau* or *le chapeau chinois*, echoing presumably how they referred to the accent as children. Four tweets looked a little further back in time and mentioned 17th century French playwright Molière: 'laissez nous la belle langue de Molière..!' (JE-0390); 'Une réforme inutile qui fait de cette belle langue française une langue qui perd son symbole : la langue de Molière' (JE-4284); 'Molière doit se retourner dans sa tombe' (JE-4379). Twitter users hark back to a 'golden age' of French language, as is common in prescriptivism (Watts, 2000: 35) and purism (Thomas, 1991: 76). The golden age construct implies that change following a golden age can only be negative (Watts, 2000: 35) and that 'something needs to be done to restore it [the language] to its

former glory' (Langer & Davies, 2011: 1). Furthermore, references to Molière and *le petit chapeau* inextricably link the French language to culture and, in turn, the spelling reform becomes an attack on this culture.

5.6 Conclusion

The official report, published in 1990, showed clear attempts to present the *Rectifications de l'orthographe* as moderate and able to be accepted by all. However, Twitter reactions in 2016 dubbed the *rectifications* a reform, immediately radicalising the proposal. Across all three samples of tweets, whether using an explicitly negative hashtag (*#JeSuisCirconflexe*) or a neutral referent (*reform orthographe*), the majority of tweets reacted negatively to the reform. Clarity, logic, and beauty were just some of the characteristics attributed to French in both tweets and the official rhetoric of the report. These attributes have long been associated with French and it is interesting to see them carried over to the new context.

Measured against Thomas' categories of rational and non-rational purist arguments (1991: 37), French-language tweets generally made non-rational assertions against the reform, with aesthetic arguments amongst the most used. One could argue that in the context of a spelling reform, a desire to maintain the status quo, that is to say the current orthography, is not irrational. French-speakers adopting the reformed spelling system will have to learn the new orthography, which takes time and effort; time and effort which could be saved by keeping the existing system. The reform will benefit children learning the French orthography for the first time, but for the Twitter users passing comment in this sample, it represents an overhaul of existing knowledge.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate attitudes towards non-standard language use on Twitter. By considering reactions towards deviations from the linguistic norm and the speakers behind the deviations, I showed that Twitter users have clear ideas about what constitutes ‘good’ and ‘bad’ language and are not afraid to share these ideas with other users –prescriptivism is still clearly present in France today.

Chapter 3 explored general attitudes to ‘bad’ language on Twitter by using the broad search terms *orthographe*, *grammaire*, *conjugaison* and *syntaxe*. Spelling is considered ‘absolute law’ in France (Anis, 2007: 89) and, in a written medium, all non-standard features are identifiable via their non-standard graphic presentation. Given this, it was expected that spelling would be the most frequently criticised area of the four and this was confirmed. In light of research suggesting that online interaction can be hostile (Joinson, 1999: 433) and Paveau and Rosier’s (2008: 97) affirmation that the internet has provided a space for language correction, it seemed likely that Twitter users would critique the non-standard language use of others. In all four samples, linguistic criticism was indeed included in the majority of tweets. It appears that many Twitter users feel the need to enforce standard language use amongst others. Despite this strong prescriptive presence, the data hint at a hierarchy of non-standard usages; for example, many language critics themselves used abbreviated forms, non-standard spellings and *ne* deletion, amongst other non-standard features. Non-standard adjectival agreements, on the other hand, were frequent in the language of criticised users, but not observed in the language of critics. Given the small sample size, it is not possible to theorize fully the ranking of non-standard usages that seems to be taking shape, but the findings should encourage future research to consider the presence of such a hierarchy in Twitter communication. If generalizable, it can be posited that

Twitter interaction does not just follow the prescriptive practices of offline written communication but has evolved to create its own language norms, some of which are non-standard offline.

Chapter 4 narrowed the study's focus to consider the non-standard verb forms *croivent* and *voyent*. *Croivent*, audibly distinct from the standard *croient*, was both used and commented upon more frequently than *voyent*, which is phonologically identical to standard *voient*. It may be that even in online linguistic commentary, users are more attuned to comment upon non-standard features also heard offline. As *croivent* is more noticeable in spoken language, it may have become more of a shibboleth for critics and is therefore more widely recognisable as non-standard. The recurring themes displayed in this sample focused not on what the use of a non-standard feature is felt to imply about the user, but rather the effects that seeing/hearing a non-standard feature has on the critic, e.g. shame, disbelief and frustration. In focusing on themselves, rather than on the non-standard user, critics present themselves as burdened by the non-standard usages of others and, in turn, as superior.

Recent reactions to the re-emergence of the spelling reform of 1990 were studied in Chapter 5. A corpus of tweets compiled using the search terms *#JeSuisCirconflexe*, *reform orthographe* and *ognon* allowed for the analysis of direct reactions to governmental linguistic intervention. Negative reactions formed the majority of all three samples, although users were not always fully informed about the intricacies of the reform, often expressing outrage at words losing their circumflex accents when no change was planned, for example. This seems to support Langer's (2001: 34) finding that laypeople object to spelling reform outright as they believe change is bad, but rarely reflect on the principles of the reform. Tweets displayed a number of language

tropes, with many users praising the beauty, clarity and logic of French. These tropes, some of which were observed since at least the sixteenth century (Jones, 1999: 121), still appear pervasive in Francophone society, particularly when the language is felt to be under threat.

A brief analysis of imagery and the use of shared cultural references was conducted on all samples of tweets which, although not in-depth enough to form part of the analysis proper, did raise some interesting themes which may be useful in a future study. For instance, images of war and battle were present in all samples of tweets; imagery common in purist discourse (Walsh, 2016: 144). Tweets also showed that nation and culture are still heavily linked to language, to the extent that one can be considered 'not French' if one uses non-standard features. Three shared cultural references appeared in all tweet samples: the *Bescherelle*; the *Académie française*; and the French footballer Franck Ribéry. The repeated mentions of the *Bescherelle* and the *Académie* demonstrate that these are still viewed as gatekeepers of 'correct' language use and references to them give legitimacy to criticism made. Ribéry, on the other hand, appears to be Twitter's 'go-to' example of 'poor' language; held up by users as a figure of ridicule and an example of what not to do. The brief, and by no means extensive, analysis of imagery and cultural references in metalinguistic tweets suggested that this is a potentially fruitful area of research. Future research could investigate this in more detail, perhaps using Thomas' (1991) and Paveau and Rosier' (2008) analyses of typical purist metaphors as guidelines.

The samples used in this study are proportionally small in comparison to the amount of Twitter data sent daily, and were limited by the fact that irrelevant data were removed after the collection period, reducing the corpus size. Examining a larger data set would enable further exploration of attitudes to non-standard features on Twitter

and of the claims made in this study. A larger study could also incorporate geographic and demographic variables.

This study fills a lacuna in research at the intersection between two areas – shared language ideologies and CMC – and the results have suggested that prescriptivism, and to a lesser extent purism, have a presence on Twitter. In addition to more traditional forms of purist commentary, new language tropes and cultural references are also evident in the purist commentary examined. Most interestingly, even those Twitter users who engage in prescriptive commentary and criticize the language usages of others deviate from certain standard usages themselves. This suggests that certain deviations are viewed more negatively than others. Such a hierarchy may of course not be limited to the online sphere, it may simply be that the nature of online discourse has made it more evident. Further research is now necessary to fully evaluate the complexities of this hierarchy of linguistic norms, to determine whether it is a purely online phenomenon, and to re-examine the notion of standard language and what this means to French speakers.

References

- Agarwal, Apoorv, Boyi Xie, Ilia Vovsha, Owen Rambow and Rebecca Passonneau. 2011. 'Sentiment Analysis of Twitter Data', *Proceedings of the Workshop on Languages in Social Media*, pp.30-38.
- Ager, Dennis. 1999. *Identity, Insecurity and Image: France and Language* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters).
- Aïssaoui, Mohammed, and Bruno Corty. 2016. 'Hélène Carrère d'Encausse : « L'Académie s'oppose à toute réforme de l'orthographe »'. *Le Figaro*. [online] Available at: <http://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2016/02/12/01016-20160212ARTFIG00297-helene-carrere-d-encausse-l-academie-s-oppose-a-toute-reforme-de-l-orthographe.php> [Accessed 23/09/2016].
- Androutsopoulos, Jannis K. 2000. 'Non-Standard Spellings in Media Texts: The Case of German Fanzines', *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 4.4: 514-533.
- 2006. 'Introduction: Sociolinguistics and Computer-Mediated Communication', *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 10: 419-438.
- 2013. 'Participatory Culture and Metalinguistic Discourse: Performing and Negotiating German Dialects on YouTube', in Deborah Tannen and Anna Marie Trester (eds.), *Discourse 2.0. Language and New Media* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press), pp.47-71.
- Anis, Jacques. 1999. 'Chats et usages graphiques du français', in Jacques Anis (ed.), *Internet communication et Langue Française* (Paris: Hermès Sciences), pp.71-90).
- 2003. 'Communication électronique scripturale et formes langagières : chats et SMS', *Actes des Quatrièmes Rencontres Technologiques*, 31 mai-1 juin 2002, Université de Poitiers.
- 2007. 'Neography: Unconventional Spelling in French SMS Text Messages', in Brenda Danet and Susan C. Herring (eds.), *The Multilingual Internet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp.87-115.
- Armstrong, Nigel and Zoë Boughton. 2009. 'Perception and Production in French Dialect Levelling', in Kate Beeching, Nigel Armstrong and Françoise Gadet (eds.), *Sociolinguistic Variation in Contemporary French*, (Amsterdam: John Benjamins), pp.9-24.
- Arrivé, Michel. 1994. 'Les problèmes de l'orthographe française aujourd'hui'. *Tréma* 6: 3-21.
- Ayres-Bennett, Wendy. 1994. 'Negative Evidence: Or Another Look at the Non-Use of Negative Ne in Seventeenth-Century French', *French Studies* XLVIII (1): 63-85.

- Ayres-Bennett, Wendy and Magali Seijido. 2011. *Remarques et observations sur la langue française: histoire et évolution d'un genre* (Paris: Classiques Garnier).
- Bazo, Alexander, Manuel Burghardt and Christian Wolff. 2013. 'TOWRPUS- An Easy-to-Use Tool for the Creation of Tailored Twitter Corpora', in Iryna Gurevych, Chris Biemann and Torsten Zesch (eds), *Language Processing and Knowledge in the Web* (Berlin: Springer), pp. 23-34.
- Blommaert, Jan (ed.). 2010a. *Language, Power and Social Process: Language Ideological Debates* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter).
- 2010b. *The Sociolinguistics of Globalization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Blommaert, Jan, Sipra Leppänen, Päivi Pahta, Tina Virkkula and Tiina Räisänen (eds.). 2012. *Dangerous Multilingualism: Northern Perspectives on Order, Purity and Normality* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan).
- Boeder, Winifried, Joseph Brincat and Thomas Stolz. 2003. 'Preface', in Joseph Brincat, Winifried Boeder and Thomas Stolz (eds.), *Minor, Regional and Endangered Languages* (Bochum: Brockmeyer), pp.viii-xiv.
- Bourhis, Richard Y. 1982. 'Language Policies and Language Attitudes: le monde de la Francophonie', in Ellen B. Ryan and Howard Giles (eds.), *Attitudes Towards Language Variation: Social and Applied Contexts*, (London: Arnold), pp.34-62.
- Bowman, John. 2016. *Hats off: Many French Words Losing Circumflex Accent* (Canada: CBC News) <<http://www.cbc.ca/news/trending/french-spelling-reforme-orthographe-jesu-s-circonflexe-1.3433227>> [Accessed 23/09/2016].
- Cameron, Deborah. 1995. *Verbal Hygiene* (New York: Routledge).
- Catach, Nina. 1993. 'The Reform of the Writing System', in Carol Sanders, *French Today: Language in its Social Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp.139-154.
- Chapman, Don. 2012. 'You Say Nuclear; I Say Yourstupid: Popular Prescriptivism in the Politics of the United States', in Carol Percy and Mary Catherine Davidson (eds.) *The Languages of Nation* (Bristol: Multilingual Matters), pp.192-207.
- Chesnel, Sandrine. 2016. 'Révision de l'orthographe: "Une manipulation grossière"'. *L'express*. [online] < http://www.lexpress.fr/education/revision-de-l-orthographe-une-manipulation-grossiere_1760437.html> [Accessed 23/09/2016].
- Crystal, David. 2001. *Language and the Internet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- 2011. *Internet Linguistics: A Student Guide* (New York: Routledge).
- Dargent, Françoise. 2015. 'Orthographe : les cinq bêtes noires des Français'. *Le Figaro*. [online] <<http://www.lefigaro.fr/livres/2015/03/12/03005-20150312ARTFIG00383-orthographe-les-cinq-betes-noires-des-francais.php>> [Accessed 23/09/2016].

- Davidson, Jacob. 2015. 'Here's How Many Internet Users There Are'. *Time*. [online] <<http://time.com/money/3896219/internet-users-worldwide>> [Accessed 23/09/2016].
- Douglas, Mary. 2002. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concept of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Routledge).
- Dupriez, Dominique. 2009. *La nouvelle orthographe en pratique* (Brussels: De Boeck Supérieur).
- Dürscheid, Christa. 2004. 'Netzsprache – ein neuer Mythos', *Osnabrücker Beiträge zur Sprachtheorie* 68: 141-157.
- Gal, Susan. 2009. 'Migration, Minorities and Multilingualism: Language Ideologies in Europe', in Clare Mar-Molinero and Patrick Stevenson (eds.) *Language Ideologies, Policies and Practices. Language and the Future of Europe*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan).
- Gardiner, Becky, Mahana Mansfield, Ian Anderson, Josh Holder, Daan Louter and Monica Ulmanu. 'The Dark Side of Guardian Comments'. *The Guardian*. [online] <<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/apr/12/the-dark-side-of-guardian-comments>> [Accessed 23/09/2016].
- Goosse, André. 1991. *Mélanges de grammaire et de lexicologie françaises* (Leuven: Peeters Publishers).
- Graedler, Anne-Line and Guðrún Kvaran. 2010. 'Foreign Influence on the Written Language in the Nordic Language Communities', *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 204: 31-42.
- Haugen, Einar. 'Dialect, Language, Nation', *American Anthropologist* 68.4: 922-35.
- Herring, Susan C. 2001. 'Computer-Mediated Discourse', in Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen and Heidi E. Hamilton (eds.), *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers), pp.612-634.
- 2010. 'Computer-Mediated Conversation: Introduction and Overview', *Language@Internet* 7: 1-12.
- Herring, Susan C, and Jannis Androutsopoulos. 2015. 'Computer-Mediated Discourse 2.0', in Deborah Tannen, Heidi E. Hamilton and Deborah Schiffrin (eds.), *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis, 2* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell), pp.127-151.
- Highfield, Tim. 2015. 'Tweeted Joke Life Spans and Appropriated Punch Lines: Practices Around Topical Humor on Social Media', *International Journal of Communication* 9: 2713-2734.
- Himmelboim, Itai, Stephen McCreery and Marc Smith. 2013. 'Birds of a Feather Tweet Together: Integrating Network and Content Analyses to Examine Cross-Ideology Exposure on Twitter', *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 18.2: 40-60.

- Hodson, Jane. 2006. 'The Problem of Joseph Priestly's (1733-1804) Descriptivism', *Historiographia Linguistica* 33(1-2): 57-84.
- Hohenhaus, Peter. 2005. 'Elements of Traditional and "Reverse" Purism in Relation to Computer-Mediated Communication', in Nils Langer and Winifred Davies, *Linguistic Purism in the Germanic Language* (Berlin: De Gruyter), pp.204-220.
- Hong, Lichan, Gregorio Convertino and Ed H Chi. 2011. 'Language Matters In Twitter: A Large Scale Study', *ICWSM* 518-521.
- Hornsby, David. 2007. 'Regional Dialect Levelling in Urban France and Britain', *Nottingham French Studies* 46.2: 64-81.
- Hu, Yuheng, Kartik Talamadupula and Subbarao Kambhampati. 2013. 'Dude, srsly?: The Surprisingly Formal Nature of Twitter's Language', *ICWSM*, pp.1-10.
- Irvine, Judith T. 1989. 'When Talk Isn't Cheap: Language and Political Economy', *American Ethnologist* 16.2: 248-267.
- Jane, Emma A. 2014. 'Your a Ugly, Whorish, Slut' Understanding E-bile', *Feminist Media Studies* 14.4: 531-546.
- Johnson, Sally. 2000. 'The Cultural Politics of the 1998 Reform of German Orthography', *German Life and Letters* 53.1: 106-125.
- 2005. "'Sonst Kann Jeder Schreiben, wie er will...'? Orthography, Legitimation and the Construction of Publics', *German Life and Letters* 58.4: 453-470.
- Joinson, Adam. 1999. 'Social Desirability, Anonymity, and Internet-Based Questionnaires', *Behavior Research Methods, Instruments, & Computers* 31.3: 433-438.
- Jones, William Jervis. 1999. *Images of Language: Six Essays on German Attitudes to European Languages from 1500 to 1800* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins).
- Joseph, John E. 1987. *Eloquence and Power: The Rise of Language Standards and Standard Languages* (New York: B. Blackwell).
- Kircher, Ruth. 2016. 'Language Attitudes Among Adolescents in Montreal: Potential Lessons for Language Planning in Québec', *Nottingham French Studies*, 55.2: 239-259.
- Koch, Peter, and Wulf Oesterreicher. 1990. *Gesprochene Sprache in der Romania: Französisch, Italienisch, Spanisch* (Berlin: De Gruyter).
- Kroskrity, Paul. 2004. 'Language Ideologies', in Alessandro Duranti, *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology*, (Oxford: Blackwell), pp.496-517.
- Langer, Nils. 2001. 'The Rechtschreibreform: A Lesson in Linguistic Purism', *German as a Foreign Language* 3: 15-35.

- Langer, Nils and Winifred Davies. 2005. *Linguistic Purism in the Germanic Languages* (Berlin: De Gruyter).
- 2006. *The Making of Bad Language: Lay linguistic stigmatisations in German, Past and Present* (Berlin: Peter Lang).
- 2011. *Linguistic Purism in the Germanic Languages* (Berlin: de Gruyter).
- Laurent, Samuel. 2016. 'Non, l'accent circonflexe ne va pas disparaître'. *Le Monde*. [online] <http://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2016/02/04/non-l-accent-circonflexe-ne-va-pas-disparaitre_4859439_4355770.html> [Accessed 23/09/2016].
- Lee, Carmen. 2013. "'My English Is So Poor... So I Take Photos" Metalinguistic Discourses about English on Flickr', in Deborah Tannen and Anna Marie Trester (eds.), *Discourse 2.0: Language and New Media* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press), pp.73-83.
- Le Hanaff, Ludivine. 2016. 'Réforme de l'orthographe : 10 mots qui vont changer à la rentrée'. *TF1*. [online]< <http://lci.tf1.fr/france/societe/reforme-orthographique-10-mots-qui-vont-changer-a-la-rentree-8712574.html>> [Accessed 23/09/2016].
- Lippi-Green, Rosina. 1997. *English with an Accent: Language, Ideology, and Discrimination in the United States* (London: Routledge).
- Lodge, Raymond A. 1993. *French, from Dialect to Standard* (London: Routledge).
- 1998. 'Myth 4: French is a Logical Language', in Laurie Bauer and Peter Trudgill (eds.), *Language Myths* (London: Penguin books), pp.23-36.
- Marcoccia, Michel. 2003. 'Parler politique dans un forum de discussion', *Langage et Société*, 104: 9-55.
- McLelland, Nicola. 2009. 'Linguistic Purism, Protectionism and Nationalism in the Germanic Languages', *Journal of Germanic Linguistics* 21.2: 93-112.
- McMinn, Andrew J., Yashar Moshfeghi and Joemon M. Jose. 2013. 'Building a Large-Scale Corpus for Evaluating Event Detection on Twitter', *Proceedings of the 22nd ACM international conference on Information 7 Knowledge Management*, pp.409-418.
- Meyer, John C. 2000. 'Humor as a Double-Edged Sword: Four Functions of Humor in Communication', *Communication Theory* 10.3: 310-331.
- Milani, Tommaso. 2007. 'Voices of Endangerment: A Language Ideological Debate on the Swedish Language', in Alexandre Duchêne and Monica Heller (eds.), *Discourses of endangerment. Ideology and Interest in the Defence of Languages* (London: Continuum), pp.169-196.
- Miller, Carl, Josh Smith and Jack Dale. 2016. 'Islamophobia on Twitter: March to July 2016'. *Demos*. [online] <<http://www.demos.co.uk/wp->

content/uploads/2016/08/Islamophobia-on-Twitter_-March-to-July-2016-.pdf>
[Accessed 23/09/2016].

- Mills, Adam J. 2012. 'Virality in Social Media: The SPIN Framework', *Journal of Public Affairs* 12.2: 162-169.
- Milroy, James and Lesley Milroy. 1999. *Authority in Language. Investigating Language Prescription and Standardization* (London: Routledge).
- Milroy, James. 2001. 'Language Ideologies and the Consequences of Standardization', *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 5.4: 530-555.
- Misoch, Sabina. 2015. 'Stranger on the Internet: Online Self-Disclosure and the Role of Visual Anonymity', *Computers in Human Behavior* 48: 535-541.
- Molyneux, Logan. 2015. 'What Journalists Retweet: Opinion, Humor, and Brand Development on Twitter', *Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism* 16.7: 920-935.
- Moschonas, Spiros and Jürgen Spitzmüller. 2010. 'Prescriptivism in and about the Media: A Comparative Analysis of Corrective Practices in Greece and Germany', in Sally Johnson and Tommaso M. Milano (eds.), *Language Ideologies and Media Discourse: Texts, Practices, Politics* (New York: Continuum), pp.17-40.
- Osthus, Dietmar 2002. 'Le bon usage d'Internet : le discours normatif sur la toile' <
<http://www.cawa.fr/le-bon-usage-d-internet---le-discours-normatif-sur-la-toile-article00842.html>> [Accessed 23/09/2016].
- Paffey, Darren. 2012. *Language Ideologies and the Globalization of 'Standard' Spanish* (London: Bloomsbury).
- Paveau, Marie-Anne, and Laurence Rosier. 2008. *La langue française: passions et polémiques* (Paris: Vuibert).
- Reyes, Antonio. 2013. 'Don't Touch My Language: Attitudes Toward Institutional Language Reforms', *Current Issues in Language Planning* 14.2: 337-357.
- Ricento, Thomas. 2009. *An Introduction to Language Policy: Theory and Method* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell).
- Ritter, Alan, Colin Cherry, and Bill Dolan. 2010. 'Unsupervised Modeling of Twitter Conversations', *Human Language Technologies: The 2010 Annual Conference of the North American Chapter of the ACL*, pp.172-180.
- Russell, Matthew A. 2013. *Mining the Social Web* (California: O'Reilly).
- Schiffman, Harold. 2009. 'Language Policy and Linguistic Culture', in Thomas Ricento, *An Introduction to Language Policy: Theory and Method* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell), pp.111-125.
- Shifman, Limor. 2013. *Memes in Digital Culture* (Massachusetts: MIT Press).

- Sherman, Tamah and Jaroslac Švelch. 2015. "'Grammar Nazis never sleep': Facebook Humor and the Management of Standard Written Language', *Language Policy* 14: 315-334.
- Silverstein, Michael. 1979. 'Language Structure and Linguistic Ideology', in Paul R. Clyne, William F. Hanks and Carol L. Hofbauer (eds.), *The Elements: A Parasession on Linguistic Units and Levels* (Chicago: Chicago Linguist), pp.193-247.
- Spitzmüller, Jürgen. 2007. 'Staking the Claims of Identity: Purism, Linguistics and the Media in Post-1990 Germany', *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 11.2: 261-285.
- Strauss, Claudia and Naomi Quinn. 1997. *A Cognitive Theory of Cultural Meaning*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Tannen, Deborah. 2013. 'The Medium Is the Metamessage: Conversational Style in New Media Interaction', in Deborah Tannen and Anna Marie Trester, *Discourse 2.0: Language and New Media* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press), pp.99-117.
- Thomas, George. 1991. *Linguistic Purism* (London: Longman).
- Thomas, Michael. 2009. 'Preface', in Michael Thomas (ed.), *Handbook of Research on Web 2.0 and Second Language Learning* (London: Information Science Reference), pp.xxi-xxvi.
- Thurlow, Crispin. 2006. 'From Statistical Panic to Moral Panic: The Metadiscursive Construction and Popular Exaggeration of New Media Language in the Print Media', *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 11: 667-701.
- Trask, Robert. 1999. *Key Concepts in Language and Linguistics* (London: Routledge).
- Vachek, Josef. 1982. 'English Orthography: A functionalist Approach', in William Haas (ed.), *Standard language: Spoken and written* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), pp.37-56.
- van Compernelle, Rémi. 2010. 'The (Slightly More) Productive Use of *ne* in Montreal French Chat', *Language Sciences* 32.4: 447-463.
- Vikør, Lars S. 2010. 'Language Purism in the Nordic countries', *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 204: 9-30.
- Vogl, Ulrike. 2012. 'Multilingualism in a Standard Language Culture', in Matthias Hüning, Ulrike Vogl and Olivier Moliner (eds.), *Standard Languages and Multilingualism in European History* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins).
- Walsh, Olivia. 2016. *Linguistic Purism: Language Attitudes in France and Quebec* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins).
- Wang, Yulu and Jimmy Lin. 2014. 'The Impact of Future Term Statistics in Real-Time Tweet Search', in Maarten de Rijke, Tom Kenter, Arjen De Vries, ChengXiang Zhai, Franciska de Jong, Kira Radinsky and Katja Hofmann (eds.), *ECIR 2014 Proceedings of the 36th*

European Conference on IR Research on Advances in Information Retrieval - Volume 8416 (New York: Springer-Verlag), pp.567-572.

Watts, Richard J. 2000. 'Mythical Strands in the Ideology of Prescriptivism', in Laura Wright (ed.) *The Development of Standard English 1300-1800: Theories, Descriptions, Conflicts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp.29-48.

Woolard, Kathryn A. 1998. 'Language Ideology as a Field of Inquiry', in Bambi B. Schieffelin, Kathryn A. Woolard and Paul V. Kroskrity (eds.), *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory* (USA: Oxford University Press), pp.3-50.

Woolard, Kathryn and Bambi B. Schieffelin. 1994. 'Language Ideology', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 23: 55-82.

Zappavigna, Michele. 2012. *Discourse of Twitter and Social Media: How We Use Language to Create Affiliation on the Web* (New York: Continuum).

Internet Resources

Académie française

<<http://academie-francaise.fr/>> [Accessed 23/09/2016]

Les rectifications de l'orthographe

< http://www.academie-francaise.fr/sites/academie-francaise.fr/files/rectifications_1990.pdf> (Accessed 23/09/2016)

Dire, ne pas dire

<<http://www.academie-francaise.fr/dire-ne-pas-dire>> (Accessed 23/09/2016)

Dire, ne pas dire: Croient pour croient

<<http://www.academie-francaise.fr/croient-pour-croient>> (Accessed 23/09/2016)

L'Académie française et la « réforme de l'orthographe »

< <http://www.academie-francaise.fr/actualites/lacademie-francaise-et-la-reforme-de-lorthographe>> (Accessed 23/09/2016)

Bescherelle ta mère

<<http://bescherelletamere.fr/>> [Accessed 23/09/2016]

Facebook

<<https://www.facebook.com/>> [Accessed 23/09/2016]

Golden Blog Awards

< <https://www.golden-blog-awards.fr/laureats-2014.html>> [Accessed 23/09/2016]

Langue sauce piquante

< <http://correcteurs.blog.lemonde.fr/>> [Accessed 23/09/2016]

Larousse

<<http://www.larousse.fr/>> [Accessed 23/09/2016]

Erreur

< <http://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/erreur/30846?q=erreur#30759>> (Accessed 23/09/2016)

Non standard

< http://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/non_standard/54937?q=non-standard#54558> (Accessed 23/09/2016)

Légifrance

<<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/>> [Accessed 23/09/2016]

Loi no 75-1349 du 31 décembre 1975 relatif à l'emploi de la langue française

<<https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do;?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000521788>> (Accessed 23/09/2016)

Circulaire du 19 mars 1996 concernant l'application de la loi n° 94-665 du 4 août 1994 relative à l'emploi de la langue française
<<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000376966>>
(accessed 23/09/2016)

Najat Vallaud-Belkacem

< <http://www.najat-vallaud-belkacem.com/> > [Accessed 23/09/2016]

Quelques éléments importants sur l'orthographe et le décret du 6 décembre 1990
< <http://www.najat-vallaud-belkacem.com/2016/02/04/quelques-elements-importants-sur-lorthographe-et-le-decret-du-6-decembre-1990/> > (Accessed 23/09/2016)

Twilert

<<https://www.twilert.com/>> [Accessed 23/09/2016]

Twilert press kit

< https://docs.google.com/document/d/1vrNR2CiVBHSe9DrUzh-9WSu3RBoMO_GhKGcciuGNglE/pub > (Accessed 23/09/2016)

Twitter

< <https://twitter.com/> > [Accessed 23/09/2016]

Company

<<https://about.twitter.com/company>> (Accessed 23/09/2016)

The Twitter glossary

<<https://support.twitter.com/articles/166337>> (Accessed 23/09/2016)

FAQs about following

<<https://support.twitter.com/articles/14019>> (Accessed 23/09/2016)