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To Pierre Léger

**LANGUAGE OR DIALECT SHIFT ?**  
**SHIFTING, FADING AND REVIVAL OF BURGUNDIAN GALLO-ROMANCE VARIETIES**

**1. Introduction : goals and insights**

As *dialects* are indeed *languages*, from a structural, yet not from a communicative point of view, there is not much difference between *dialect shift* and *language shift*, notwithstanding an overtly low sociolinguistic status. In this respect, the shifting, the fading away and revival of such languages as Burgundian Gallo-Romance dialects turns out to be an outstanding field of observation on language shift or sociolinguistic attrition. The main curse on endangered languages lays in low status, resulting in unfair position while competing with neighbouring or national languages. Diglossia – either of the Fishmanian or of the Fergusonian type – is the plight and the plague, and this plague hits bitterly language varieties considered as dialects. In French sociolinguistic history, these dialects have even been given a more scornful denomination: “patois”. The “patois” ideology, which is part of what Arjun Appadurai (1996) calls an *ideoscape*, states that the varieties at stake are not only dialects, but an awkward misuse, a “deformation”, an illegitimate anamorphosis of the national language – or referential and legitimate koinè. To be considered as a “patois” is one of the worse curse that may happen to a language. Nevertheless, to any native speaker of a Mayan or an Otomanguean language, hearing his mother tongue called “dialecto” sounds contemptuous and as much humiliating, whereas “patois” speakers (*patoisants*, according to the French denomination) do not feel the low status of their language humiliating. They accept low status as an intrinsic property of their “patois”. They are no more ashamed of speaking it, though they would never indulge to do so out of their familiar neighbourhood, i.e. with outsiders. They would never complain or ask for any linguistic or cultural right. They assume low status acceptance, as predicted by Erving Goffman in his theory of stigma (1963).

**2. Model & Grids. Do languages « disappear »?**

Diglossia entails the construction of a stigmatized identity, with all properties assumed by the individual or groups involved in stigmatization, as shown in table 1 below. In the following pages, I shall consider diglossia as a *Frame of Experience* (Goffman, 1974) among other existential frames.

<i>Negative : Stigma</i>		
1 -	5 -	9 -

<b>OBEDIENCE</b>	<b>GHETTOISATION</b>	<b>CONFORMISM</b>
2 -	6 -	10 -
<b>VICTIMISATION</b>	<b>INCORPORATION</b>	<b>PROVOCATION</b>
3 -	7 -	11 -
<b>COMPENSATION</b>	<b>EUPHEMISATION</b>	<b>NORMIFICATION</b>
4 -	8 -	12 -
<b>RESILIENCE</b>	<b>IDEALISATION</b>	<b>ACCULTURATION</b>

Table 1. Properties involved in the construction of a stigmatized identity (Goffman, 1963)

Erving Goffman's seminal essay on stigma did not call sufficiently the attention of sociolinguists. This powerful essay on the mechanism and behavioural properties of *stigma*, as a plight monitoring the balance of power between social groups and determining contradictions and inhibitions in the members of the stigmatized groups, deserves more attention among sociolinguists. Goffman's model is all the more subversive, if we reverse the properties displayed in table 1 into antithetic properties, such as in table 2.

<i>Positive: Reversing the Stigma</i>		
1 +	5 +	9 +
CONSCIENTISATION	DÉSENCLAVEMENT (Opening Up)	INNOVATION
2 +	6 +	10 +
PROTAGONISM	RETICULARITY	TRANSGRESSION
3 +	7 +	11 +
INDIVIDUATION	DENOMINATION	NORMALISATION
4 +	8 +	12 +
POLYVALENCY	PRAGMATISM	MEDIATION

Table 2. Reversing the stigma: properties unravelling and subverting stigmatization (Léonard & al. 2011)

Table 2 shows the properties unravelling and subverting stigmatization: reversing the stigma means counter-attacking the twelve plights of table 1 – the negative attitudes, from 1- to 12- – with the twelve positive properties, enumerated from 1+ to 12+ in the chart. Notional and pragmatic pairs such as OBEDIENCE vs. CONSCIENTISATION, VICTIMISATION vs. PROTAGONISM, and COMPENSATION vs. INDIVIDUATION clash one against the other, subverting the legitimate order of interaction of Ego with society, or of the stigmatized group with stigmatizing groups.

The very notion of *Language Revitalization* is questionable, as part of an ideoscape inherited by the evangelist approach to social life, out of its vitalist, biological connotations. As all the items induced by an *ideoscape*, the notion of *Revitalization* tells more about power enforcement than empowerment of the civil society. It entails no subversion or unravelling of the language shift in progress. It reminds the ingenuous and cynical notion of “born again”, which was one of the arguments of the *mediascape* when defending the figure of George Bush

Junior in the momentous years 2001-2007. A period in which democracy and reason, the main assets of Enlightenment, were blatantly dismissed for the sake of military, industrial and financial oligarchies, under the shadow of fear, xenophobia and demagoguery.

### 3. The thread of Sociolinguistic Networks

What does revitalization change to language shift? Very little, indeed, if nothing at all: the result is still obsolescence and eradication of the language at stake from the social space where it was spoken before. Revitalization actually amounts most of the time to what Guy Debord in 1967 called “La société du spectacle”: the *mediascape* provides only but a fragmented world of fake sceneries and scenarios. Storytelling (Salmon, 2007) and fairytales through “soap operas” become substitutes to social criticism and political awareness. Civil societies, instead of behaving as protagonists of their own story, are satisfied with ersatz of information and action. Democracy becomes a circus, with spectacular and virtual fight between professional politicians converted into pseudo-gladiators. Jean-François Lyotard’s predictions, issued in a government report at the end of the seventies (Lyotard, 1979), about the s.c. “postmodern condition” of mankind have sadly become reality: the primacy of storytelling over reason and facts, narrativity over argumentation, fragmentation and depoliticisation of knowledge, and an ever wider agonistic field of argumentation and individualistic experimentation, instead of a clear-cut debate or an overt struggle between antagonistic interests.

When many NGO (Non Governmental Organizations) defending the cause of minority languages set up in the years 1970 and 1980 in France, especially in Southern France (e.g. the Occitanist movement) their claim was to foster critical debate on ecological, political and social issues. They were struggling against obliteration or « Obliviation » of crucial social and environmental issues. In the same way, the *Rahvarinne* in Estonia and other similar political fronts in the Baltic Region and elsewhere in the USSR were striving at the end of the eighties, pointing at historical facts, such as the illegitimacy of Soviet rule over the Baltic countries. One of the tactics of Soviet power at this time was to downsize historical memory as much as possible, in spite of the *glasnost* process, which was contrived as a mere asset of the Soviet ideoscape. One of the major concerns of minorities is to preserve *memory* against *oblivion*, to make their cause visible, readable, fathomable and understandable, in order to legitimate their right to existence and to decent life, not only survival or revitalization in the margin. Revitalization turns into a kind of paradoxical remembrance: when it should be a bottom up elaboration of meaning and forms, instead of an enumeration or a top down taxonomy, it ends up in mere products of the *Society of spectacle* (Debord, 1967). We observed this trend through the LES LANGUES & VOUS survey in 2010, reporting on the recollection of over thirty years of activity on behalf of Langues d’Oïl: though language revitalization was the main concern during the years of foundation of NGOs, most of the resources actually were absorbed by the *Société du spectacle*, akin to Appadurai’s notion of *mediascape*, especially on behalf of traditional music and dance in Morvan. Though a genuine effort has been endeavoured in order to avoid overt folklorization, the whole project of language engineering and reversing of diglossia became a by-product, whose *raison d’être* becomes more and more criticized by the younger generation of activists. The promotion of local “patois” does not provide earnings, whereas the performing of traditional music and dance does, because it is easier to trade or to get subsidized by regional agencies. Our main positive conclusion, as far as “language revitalization” is concerned – though we do not like this term and would rather simply use such a pragmatic phrase as “language support” – has to do with the most intricate realm of social networks and communities of practice (Eckert, 2005). These networks make up a pool of active cells working for the elaboration of *paradoxical koinès* (i.e. *ad hoc koinès*). For instance, the Burgundian region displays a wide range of microscopic NGO,

gathering a handful of free will improvised scholars and occasional writers, meeting in homely circles or very small clubs, actively working on local dialects.

The product of their scholarship deserves being called *paradoxical koinès*, as the forms of codification of the local dialects they produce are not really intended to become widely functional. They rather amount at what could be called an attempt to elucidate the patterns of the language and to preserve memory of semiotic forms linked to existential experience. We shall deal with to this point later on in this presentation. On the whole, we could say that the *modus operandi* of these very small private units of LS (*Language Support*) amount to a kind of “microreformism” of diglossia, without inducing any change on the overall patterns of sociolinguistic subordination. Therefore, we do not intend to suggest that their action may actually lead to reversing language shift (see Fishman, 1991, 2001). Nevertheless, we do argue that they potentially could take part in more critical and creative projects for the last margin of action on behalf of these languages at the verge of extinction, among which a systematic endeavour for linguistic documentation. Strong support from intellectuals and from the university would be needed, but unfortunately, it seems this support is still missing, or will not be made available in the years to come.

The project LES LANGUES & VOUS (LLV) was made possible by a CNRS grant in 2010, as an experimental and exploratory project (a P.E.P.S.). During this project, systematic interviews were carried out with intellectuals involved in the elaboration and the promotion of Langues d’Oil, formerly classified as “patois” by public opinion – and by most speakers themselves –, on the basis of a semi-directive questionnaire (see table 3, for a list of people interviewed<sup>1</sup>).

1 Language 2 Language used during the interview	Informant		audio & video recording			Transcription
			Date	Place	Fieldwork	Date
1 Poitevin-saintongeais 2 Poitevin-saintongeais  (except interview # 4: Poitevin-saintongeais and français)	1	Eric Nowak	Février-mars 2010	Gironde	Jean-Léo Léonard	mars-avril 2010
	2	Annie Jollet				septembre 2010
	3	Jean-Pierre Coutanceau		Charente		août 2010
	4	Thierry Gilabert				mai 2010
1 Gallo 2 Gallo (answers) and poitevin-saintongeais (questions)	5	Bertrand Obree	avril	Rennes		juillet 2010
	6	Christophe Simon				juin 2010
	7	Jean-Luc Ramel				octobre 2010
	8	Anne-Marie Pelhate				novembre 2010
1 Poitevin-saintongeais 2 Poitevin-saintongeais  (except	9	Philippe Dufour	Avril-août 2010	Deux-Sèvres	mai 2010	
	10	Ulysse Dubois			juin 2010	

<sup>1</sup> Dates and details in table 3 are in French, as a *facsimile* of the final report of the LLV project, sent to CNRS on July 2011.

- interviews 9 & 13 : French ; - interview 14 : Poitevin- saintongeais & français)	11	Maryvonne Barillot			Prestataires de service	mai 2010
	12	Michel Gautier		Vendée		juillet 2010
	13	Jacqueline Fortin		Charente -		juin 2010
	14	Lucie Mémin		Maritime		mai 2010
	15	Geneviève Charlot		Vienne		juin 2010
	16	Jean-Jacques Chevrier	août 2010			octobre 2010
1 Morvandiau-Bourguignon 2 Morvandiau (answers) & poitevin-saintongeais (questions)	17	René Fortin	Novembr e-2010	Saône- et-Loire	Jean-Léo Léonard	décembre 2010
	18	Pierre Léger				
	19	Mickaël O Sullivan				
	20	Christian Lagrange				
	21	Jean-Luc Debard				
	22	Jeanne Démolis				
	23	Jean-Claude Rouard				

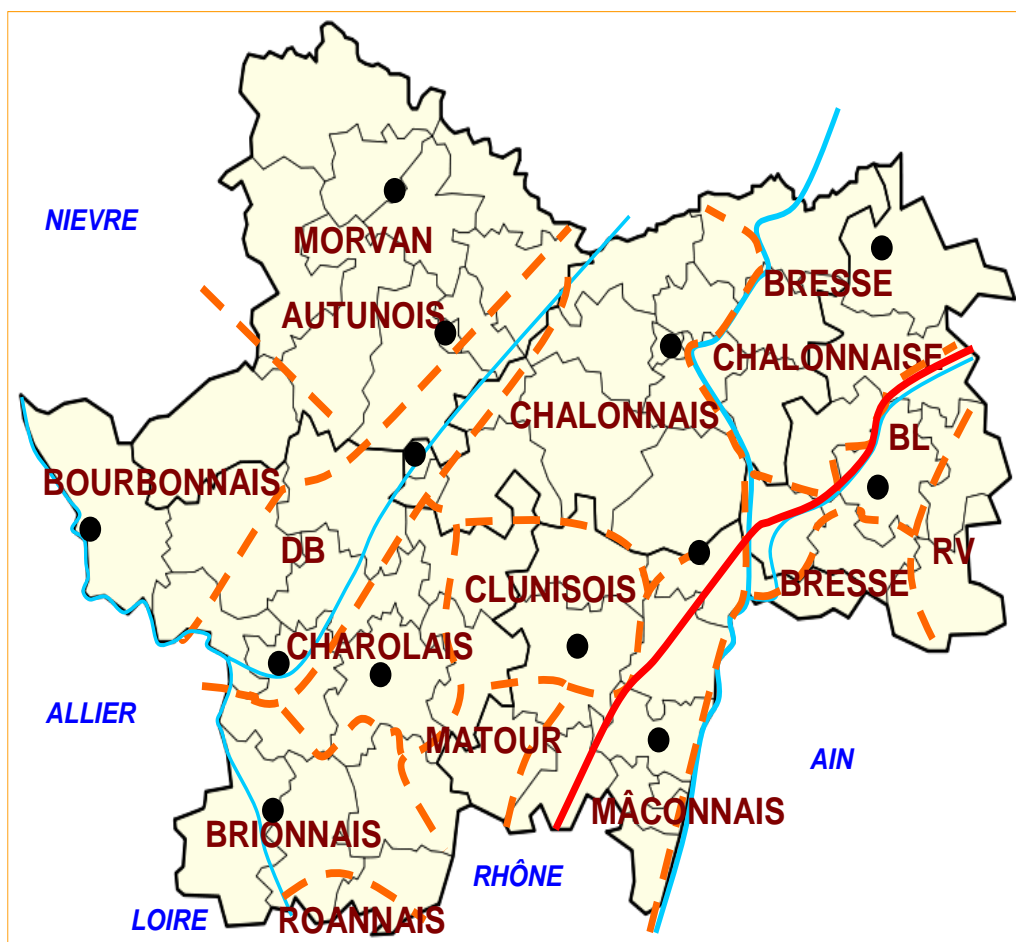
Table 3. Empirical evidence from the LES LANGUES & VOUS project (PEPS CNRS, 2010, Poitiers/Paris 3)

Before entering in the heart of the topic, one should have a careful and critical look at the various representations of what we could call, according to Appadurai's witty *-scape* terminology, the French « historical ethnoscape » and, more specifically, of what we shall coin as the *glottoscape*. Maps of languages spoken on the French territory tend to give a far too categorical image of linguistic diversity. As shows any geolinguistic survey of dialectal data, and as the Fergusonian model predicts, languages variate within dialect *continua*. This is particularly the case for the Burgundian Oïl and Francoprovençal varieties: the whole area can be boldly considered as a transition zone between central and eastern Oïl dialect networks (see Taverdet's data, in Taverdet, 1975-1980). The Southern part of the Burgundian dialect zone connects to the Francoprovençal dialect network, especially at the south of the Bresse region, where one could even speak of a “croissant” stripe in the continuation of the extremely diverse block of Francoprovençal dialects (Taverdet, 1994).

Few sub-regions really qualify as emblematic, except the Morvan Plateau, endowed with a strong identity and a vivid tradition of social and political criticism. It may be that the plight of this small rural region, whose resources have been ruthlessly absorbed by “The Belly of Paris” for centuries (wood, nurses and labour flowing from Morvan villages and small towns to the capital). “The land of thatch roofs”, as it was dubbed locally: families in the Morvan Plateau have long been dependent on the migration of women to bourgeois homes in Paris to serve as nurses for the babies of well off families, while their own babies would die of hunger at home – Morvan nurses were forbidden to take along their own children, in order to save milk for the infants of their employers... The meagre compensation at home for motherless families and for high infant mortality due to under-feeding, summed up to remove

old fashioned thatch roofs to replace them by brand new slate roofs, in the *bourgeois* style. When the first NGOs on behalf of local cultural heritage emerged in the mid-seventies, among which *Lai Poélée*, the trigger came from ecological threat on the environment, out of the schemes of the Fluorine industry, linked to nuclear power plants – a situation which will probably remind our Estonian audience of the plans for the intensification of Phosphate mining in former Soviet Estonia, which triggered the “Singing Revolution”.

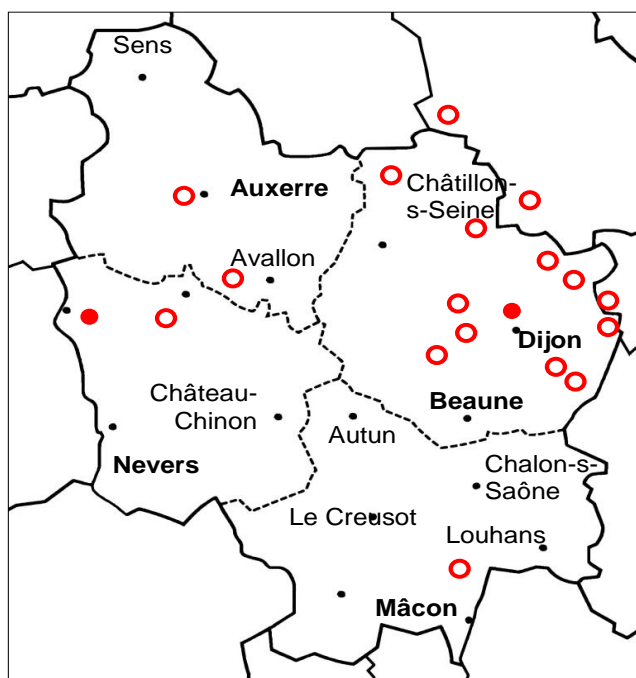
Nevertheless, unlike Picard in Northern France, Normand in the North-West, or Wallon in Belgium, there is hardly anything like a definite Burgundian dialect by itself. Denominations such as “Morvandiau-Bourguignon”, or “Gallo” in the West (High Brittany), or “Poitevin-Saintongeais in the West-Central plains, are all constructs whose legitimation remains far more structural, according to bundles of isoglosses, than actual ethnolinguistic or historical entities. Borderlines and boundedness amount at the best to stripes and tousled blocks of isoglosses, rather than to clear-cut delimitations (see map 1).



Map 1. Geolinguistic areas in the Saône-et-Loire department (G. Taverdet, 1980)

This situation is by no means peculiar within the Eastern Oil region: the Franc-Comtois dialects, in the close vicinity of Burgundian dialects, have also been mingled and scrambled throughout history. It should also be pointed out that Eastern France in early medieval times was an important area of irradiation of the “highest” or more “elaborate” forms of cultures: a dense network of monastery was covering the region, among which the famous cloister of Cluny. Mid-sized urban centres such as Dijon, Auxerre, Mâcon, Chalon, Beaune, densely clustering all along the zone, may also have had a more decisive influence in assimilating local dialects to French (see map 2), as the degree of integration of these urban

kernels was probably higher than around major urban and bourgeois centres elsewhere in France, such as Nantes or Rouen in the West, which had less incidence on the surrounding rural, more corporative Oïl dialects.

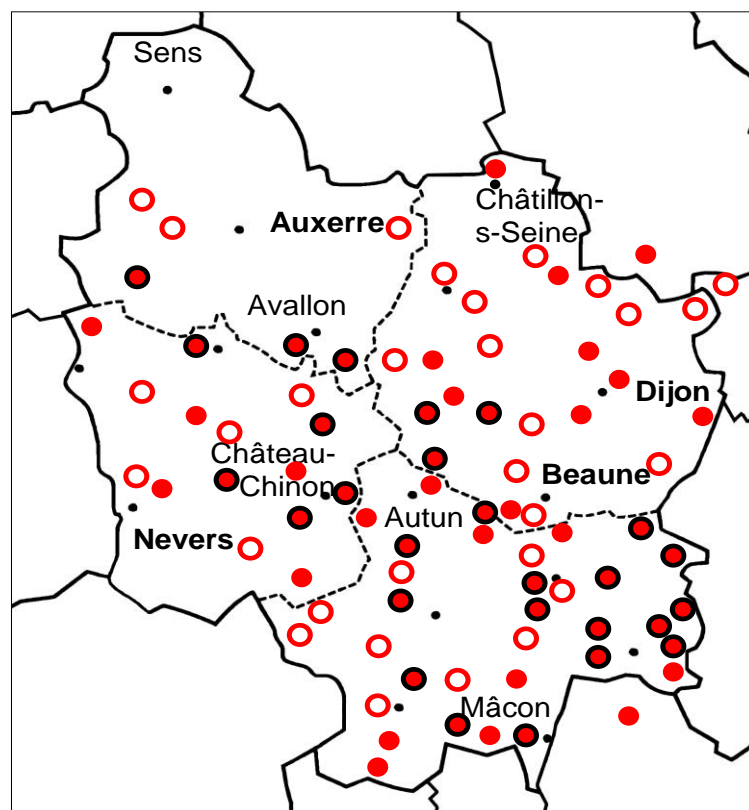


Map 2. Long term assimilation of Burgundian dialects around urban centres, according to Taverdet, 2000: 179

In map 2, full spots stand for « places where no dialect was ever spoken », while the empty spots point at « places where no one remembers any dialect being ever spoken ». In map 3, full spots with a circle stand for « dialect still spoken at home », while full spots hint at « spoken only by elders »; the empty spots point at « regional French ». This picture partly confirms the impact of mid-sized urban centres on assimilation, out of what Anneli Sarhima calls “integrated networks”, i.e. situations of densely connecting social links between the minority and the majority or outsiders to both groups (Sarhima, 2009).

The Sarhima’s model suggests that networks can be divided in seven main categories, as follows: *egocentric network* (EgoNw), *total network* (Tot. Nw), *joint network* (Jt. Nw), *referential network* (Ref. Nw), *potential network* (Pot.Nw), *experiential network* (Exp. Nw), *integrated network* (Int.Nw).

In short, the properties of these sociolinguistic networks may be defined as the *Ego/Tot.Nw polarity*, ranging from Ego connected to others (EgoNw), to the society as a whole around Ego or his/her group (Tot. Nw). *Joint networks* (i.e. “congregative Nw.”) define as neighbourhood, friends or any congregation one is involved in, either by family link or by personal choices (through hobby, politics, religion, labour, etc.). By *referential network*, we intend identity and any ethnocultural or professional self-esteem or commitment. *Potential networks* are nowadays soaring with the Internet, as we know, but here this category will simply refer to identity properties potentially connecting to others. *Experiential networks* connecting people around « the good old time » or any crucial experience. *Integrated networks* make the minority mingle and interact with the majority and with outsiders.



Map 3. The thread of sociolinguistic attrition and assimilation in the M-B (BOURG-MORVAN) area

Map 3 provides a valuable, though very impressionistic view at the geographical thread of dialect networks emerging from long term sociolinguistic assimilation in Burgundia. Let's scrutinize this map in order to speculate on the nature of *communities of practice* promoting the local dialects, on the basis of our own observations, during the LLV survey. Clinging to Sarhima network typology, we assume that most of the work depends on *egocentric networks* (EgoNw), which do not necessarily correlate with the spots on the map: many freelance scholars involved in gathering a thesaurus and promoting the languages of Burgundia live in Dijon or other urban centres, or even in hamlets where local varieties may have long been extinct. Two famous freelance scholars live in Paris, and prove to be very active and authoritative, in their own way. The extremely individualistic context of this activity of *corpus elaboration* (codification, standardization) from the standpoint of Ego Nw makes it paradoxically very much linked with the total network, with low integration in joint networks, and a high intensity conferred to referential networks – this may result in highly speculative behaviour, at symbolic level, with idiosyncratic “graphies” (i.e. *spellings*).

#### 4. Beyond « Revitalization »

The joint network (Jt. Nw) *modus operandi* is nowadays far less determining than it may have been within the framework of the former society, where “patois” prevailed, i.e., within the framework of Braudelian peasant civilization (Braudel, 1986). Instead, *referential networks* and *potential networks* through the use of Internet and new media of communication



and social linking, rank second in the list of *modus operandi*. The experiential networks, from the Braudelian peasant civilization, does probably not appeal much as an incentive to freelance scholars, especially to the younger generation of activists, as it may appeal to more traditional speakers or elders cooperating with them, answering their questions, working out booklets and lectures on the local varieties, much more with the commitment to remember “good old times” than to enhance *referential properties* of the local or regional dialects or languages, i.e. ethnolinguistic identity. As a whole, the commitment to any ethnolinguistic identity, for “traditional speakers”, has an extremely narrow field of reference, contrary to the referential sphere available to freelance scholars or to linguists, who have access to a much wider view on the thread of the dialect continuum. Integrated networks may also provide freelance scholars, and we would even say that the next generations of university scholars, unlike the previous ones, who were “gens du pays” (i.e. *native*), will be more and more *outsiders*.

The chairman of the NGO *Langues de Bourgogne*, Pierre Léger, told us how much he valued the relevance of migrant communities in Burgundia, such as Sardinian or Polish workers, and that any project on the vernaculars of Burgundia and the linguistic diversity of the region should take languages of immigration into account. We heard the same statements in Poitou-Saintonge, especially from Eric Nowak, an extremely well informed and active freelance scholar, who works as an editorial advisor for several publishing houses in the Poitou-Charentes and the Aquitaine regions. These positive and integrative attitudes of freelance scholars towards migrants enhance integrative networks, and are an asset for realistic and democratic language management – as opposed to the stereotype of local chauvinism associated to regionalist movements<sup>2</sup>. Freelance scholars and traditional speakers follow parallel and asymmetric patterns in their commitment to the vernaculars: the former move within referential and potential networks, whereas the later are more bound to experiential and joint networks.

<b>Relations &amp; Processes</b>			
	<b>Privative</b>	<b>Additive</b>	<b>Reactive</b>
<b>To Norm(s)</b>	Attrition (AT)	Individuation (ID)	Superposition (SP)
<b>To Communities of Practice</b>	Language Switch(LSw)	Coming Out (CO)	Reappearance (RP)
<b>To Attrition</b>	Language Shift (LSh)	Implantation, importation (IM)	Revitalization (RV)

Table 4. A grid for language attrition, fading and shift: relations and processes

Language shift is a much more complex process than mere substitution. Modal and aspectual processes are implied, on the long term, including a whole range of relations to norms, communities of practice and to trends leading to obsolescence. We should never forget that language is by no means a living being, but an intricate and highly coordinated semiotic system. Even the metaphor of “rise and decay” is ambiguous, and most probably irrelevant, as far as language is concerned. Could we say, for instance, that Occitan entered a period of decay after the climax of its prestige in medieval times? First, this prestige was a reality only for the courts and chancelleries, but probably not for the majority of speakers, whereas Latin

<sup>2</sup> Such chauvinism does actually exist in Poitou-Saintonge or in the Occitan-Provençal areas, among some groups of activists, but we shall not deal with this topic here.

was still on the foreground of linguistic prestige. Second, the Felibrige first (e.g. Frédéric Mistral, Joseph d'Arbaud, etc.), and later on, Modern Occitan literature in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, with such writers as Bernard Manciet, Jean Boudou, Max Rouquette, Robert Lafont, etc. punctuate several periods of “rising again”, while the language was fading away from society. Third, as traditional forms of Occitan dialects disappeared, new koinès appeared within Occitan, more or less induced by the standard script – or in reaction against it. We could carry on with this enumeration of nuances about “decay”.

The grid in table 4 attempts to fathom this diversity of situations, and the multiplex dynamics of language shift. It articulates relations and processes according to a polarity from privative to reactive phenomena, through an additive stage, according to three axis: 1) norms (oral and written, i.e. from local speech to local or regional koinès), 2) communities of practice and 3) attrition proper. For instance, matching the first columns of the chart, from norms to attrition proper: the Burgundian Oïl and Francoprovençal norms (or transitional norms in Southern Bresse) of the past may have undergone a process of attrition, as many communities of practice using the language may have switched to forms of regional French (e.g. many peasant who use “patois” only occasionally in their work, but do not ignore the former technolects formally used in agriculture), or undergone thorough language shift, ending up in plain attrition of the dialect. All these processes mainly qualify as *privative*. In the column in the middle of the chart, *additive* relations and processes instead rank, from individuation of new local koinès (ID) to the coming out (CO) of “patois” speakers as the s.c. freelance scholars I mentioned earlier. Additive processes crushing attrition may occur, such as implantation of retired people, who therefore import (IM) their local speech and their *habitus* of “patois” speaking where the local dialect was in an advanced stage of attrition. This may actually often be the case, and a great bulk of speakers nowadays happen to be “enfants du pays” who lately returned to settle in their native village after 30 or 40 years of hard work in Dijon, Paris or even abroad – especially retired civil servants or industry workers. The relation to attrition is therefore, unexpectedly, additive. The last column of the chart predicts a *reactive* relation to norms, communities of practice and to attrition. For instance, freelance scholars may superpose (SP) a kind of standardized koinè in booklets and publications on various supports (written, but also oral, on CDs and DVDs). The freelance scholars induce trends to take over the formerly forgotten local speech, which bursts up again, reappearing (RP). Activism in the sociocultural sphere (through the mediascape, within the framework of ethnoscape, such as in feasts and cultural events dedicated to the local heritage) may foster forms of revitalization (RV), beating attrition for a while, encouraging local people to have a more a critical view on assimilation – though I think we should not expect too much from the “Society of Spectacle”.

### Prospects?

The prospects for dialect varieties such as the Morvandiau-Bourguignon dialects are unfortunately very depressing. Language vitality is nowadays extremely low, there is no feeling of a « common interest » or of a « linguistic community ». Though, many groups and associations are doing their best to recollect data from elders – they are full of good will, but lack any training in the « art of linguistic documentation »

University is missing: since most dialectologists retired at the University of Dijon, no one is willing to take over their task. Though, the University has a crucial role to play in training, advising, supporting both financially and technically freelance scholars and the wide array of circles and organizations dedicated to traditional music and local dialects. The B-M (BOURG-MORVAN) dialects/languages are still the focus of a rather wide range of communities of practice scrutinizing the « glossoscape » (i.e. the careful scrutiny of lexicon, from the same fragmented and “storytelling” standpoint as any other *-scape* compound).

These networks (communities of *glossoscapes*) qualify as *joint networks* or as *experiential networks*, rather than *referential networks*: people are not working out of local or regional chauvinism. Instead, they are before all motivated by friendship, family links and a strong commitment to previous experience of the Braudelian « Civilisation paysanne ». The Academic world has a strong responsibility in responding the demand of the civil society for applied – and critical – knowledge. The epoch is challenging: as pressures from the *finanscape* and *ideoscape* on academic freedom make the task even more difficult. Once more, we shall ask: *for whom does the Piper play?*<sup>3</sup>

One of the results of the LLV project is indeed that not only do the NGO committed to Oïl dialect language management in a bottom up *modus operandi*, such as Langues de Bourgogne, Bretagne Galèse, Chubri, UPCP-Métive, and a few more, are sociopolitically benign: they can even be considered as one of the most promising asset for sociocultural development in their regions. Most of them emerged as what the urbanist Yona Friedman called “Utopies Réalisables” (Friedman, 1975) after may 1968, and they are part of this socio-political heritage, though it would be misleading to describe them only in such terms. They thrived on social criticism and democracy, in a much more open society than our postmodern world of the early 2010, which unfortunately resembles more and more to totalitarian societies, as Hartmut Rosa and William Scheuerman convincingly argue (Rosa & Scheuerman, 2009). Unfortunately, acceleration and alienation of modern civil societies weaken forms of social criticism and protest, in such a way that the “espace des possibles”, or the range of utopian improvement and creativity is constantly shrinking. Even the university will be more and more oblivious of such “marginal” networks as the Burgundian freelance scholars and their cooperative informants and dialect speakers. A strong trend nowadays even leads many academic scholars to overtly despise and disqualify such networks and their activities. As Paul Valéry put it as soon as 1931: “le temps du monde fini commence”. Language endangerment belongs to this finiteness of our postmodern world, which erroneously claims that it opens infinite prospects. Instead, social criticism and rational political dissent, heterogeneity and diversity will always support what dialect networks have always been producing too, as a product of history: *engineering infinity*<sup>4</sup>. From this non finiteness and from the constant transformation and reengineering of the raw material which make up the thread of our civil societies out of good will and benign activism, we can expect much for the sake of democracy and pluralism. We should bear in mind the case for Bourguignon-Morvandiau “revival” as one of those positive and encouraging trends in our (post)modern societies.

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<sup>3</sup> Let me make it more explicit: for a piper to play bagpipe, or « cornemuse », during a village feast, participants - or the mayor – are supposed to give him a tip. Bag pipe musicians may indeed play for free, but most of the time, they don't.

<sup>4</sup> Handwaving to Jonathan Strahan.

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