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Regimes of language, whiteness and social class: the negotiation of sociolinguistic privileges by British migrants in rural France

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Abstract :
This ethnographic study of British migration in rural Brittany (France) reveals that the British benefit from positive attitudes towards their language, opening opportunities for them to access resources in English – a rare exception to the local monolingual ideology. The paper argues that the English language owes its specific place not only to its supranational status, but also to the consubstantial articulation of whiteness and class categorizations by migrants and the local population. Here, white privilege is built on the sharing of ideologies concerning language, 'integration' and otherness, enabling rearrangements of the language regime.

Keywords: privilege, whiteness, migration, materialism, language, ideologies.

1. Introduction

In this paper I will draw on the concept of regime of language (Kroskrity, 2000) and on materialist perspectives to present an analysis of the complex arrangement of linguistic ideologies I observed during my doctoral fieldwork. By materialism I refer to Marx's reflection on the constraints structuring and hierarchizing society. Marx developed his theories in reaction to the idealist philosophical tradition, which understood society to the result of collective thoughts and ideas (Marx and Engels, 1998 [1932]). Marx argued that this tradition failed to tackle the material conditions restraining the possibility of emancipation for some parts of society. A materialist perspective, however, sees society's structures as also resulting from material conditions that dominant groups impose upon others. These mainly regard workforce exploitation, mobility and access to resources. Social classes have long been considered to be the results of such hierarchization processes, but *materialist feminism* in France and *Black feminism* in North America later extended this analysis to the study of the production of gender and race.

Drawing on work with colleagues from the Université Européenne de Bretagne in Rennes,[1] I argue that a materialist insight into linguistic anthropological research is particularly useful in order to avoid an explanation of conflict as exclusively the result of ignorance of another's cultural and linguistic practices, or as the non-sharing of ideas. Indeed, and particularly in France, where I conducted my fieldwork, the constructionist tradition in the study of intercultural interactions has tended to focus on representations and the discursive production of identity. This focus can overlook the material social structures imposed upon individuals, the stakes of domination, assignation, and struggle for emancipation in discourse and interactions, and/or the material consequences of representation and identity-discursive production. In response, critical sociolinguistics developed in 2000s with the objective of better understanding how economic conditions in a neoliberal era interact with discursive and linguistic practices, yielding new forms of power relations.

Thus, by using the term *materialism*, I want to make explicit the Marxist heritage at the root of the critique of capitalism in linguistic anthropology, and to stretch critical sociolinguistics towards the analytical frameworks of Black and materialist Feminists.

To do so I present a case of what I choose to call *privileged migration*, drawing on Sheila Croucher's (2012) concept of privileged mobility. In developing this concept, I examine the migration of British people to the French countryside, and more specifically to rural Brittany, a western region of France. Although their number declined recently, the British account for the largest foreign population in Brittany, with an estimated 13,760 individuals according to the 2011 census (INSEE, 2015). These migrants are primarily retired couples, but also include quite a few younger working-age couples with children. They can loosely be defined as middle-class and lower-middle-class, and as white. Their settlement occurred in several increasing waves, mainly in the rural areas of the center of Brittany, from the end of the 1980s until the last boom in 2004. Migration to the region is the continuation of a larger movement of British migrats to France that begin in rural Provence and Périgord in the mid-1970s and then spread to many other French rural areas. In addition to this permanent migration, there are also numerous British secondary homeowners, who come to the region as seasonal tourists.

These migrations are part of a 'back to the land' movement, which is frequently seen as a reaction to hypermodernity and to the social and geographical changes that capitalist societies encourage. They leave densely populated areas and popular careers, instead valuing rural areas with low population density. Yet, my research has shown a paradoxical imbrication of the migrants' trajectories with the neoliberal context they say they want to

1 Here I would like to acknowledge that I owe my forays into materialist feminism to my colleague, sociologist Nadia Ouabdelmoumen, whose work on gender, class and race power relations in linguistic apparatuses directed at migrants in France has brought a fresh perspective to the instrumentation of linguistic policies in France (see Ouabdelmoumen, 2014).

escape. This is characterized by an endogenization of the critique of capitalism, where new commodities on the market are presented as solutions to the drawbacks of capitalist society. (Boltanski and Chiapello 2011). These new products can be presented as authentic, enabling consumers to step out of the 'rat race.' Yet they sustain rather than subvert the capitalist economy. The huge rural market that developed in the late 1980s of specialized estate agency, specialized press, literature or entertainment, specialized services is a perfect example (Etrillard 2014, 2015b).

This context of British migration to rural France implicates both the relationships between migrants, and between migrants and the local population. It also raises the question of the social and linguistic impact of British migration in rural Brittany. In this paper, I will study more specifically how these migrants negotiate privileges regarding the dominant linguistic regime of French monolingualism within this context: What happens when the migrants' language is considered to be an economic, professional, and social asset? And what happens when migrants arrive from northwestern European countries? Do these migrants have opportunities to negotiate the stigmas that most migrants face regarding their linguistic, social, and cultural practices?

The following section will present a definition of the concept of language regime and how it relates to materialism. I will then describe my fieldwork and the context of British migration to rural Brittany. Finally, I will examine discourses where migrants position themselves in relation to the dominant idea that migrants ought to learn and speak French. Their positionings question the definition of a *migrant*, which is entangled in social categorizations of race and class. Through my analysis, I will show how racialization processes and white privilege rearrange the local regime of language.

2. The concept of *regime* in a materialist perspective

The use of the word 'regime' in the social sciences and humanities refers to the political structuration and setting of social practices and beliefs. For example, Michel Foucault's concept of 'regimes of truth' (2012, 2001; Foucault and Rabinow, 1984) makes an explicit link between knowledge and power. In his work, regimes are the processes by which governing instances assert their power through discourses and apparatuses. According to Foucault, power is acquired through the discursive production of 'truth.' The regimentation process relies on the deployment and reproduction of these discourses and apparatuses by individuals, in their own conducts and as they regulate others' conducts. Within this perspective, language practices are regimented conducts: as they speak, speakers ponder the 'proper' and legitimate uses of language in contexts, and they (re)produce statements on language that are assessed as 'true' or not. Those statements

and practices have been studied for decades by linguistic anthropologists as linguistic ideologies (see Bauman and Briggs, 2003; Kroskrity, 2000; Schieffelin et al., 1998; Silverstein, 1979). In that sense, the regimentation process could be shortly defined as the structuration of ideologies by practice. Drawing on this understanding of regimentation, Kroskrity (2000, p. 3) used the phrase 'regimes of language' as the title of a volume gathering contributions questioning the political enactment of linguistic ideologies. The regimentation of language refers to the mechanisms of restriction, authorization, or valorization of linguistic practices in a given political economical context. And as Paul Kroskrity (2000) reminds us with Gramsci's (1985) distinction between institutional direct actions and their hegemonic influence on societies, these regulation mechanisms can be studied in their institutional forms, as well as in the practice and discourses of speakers.

Therefore, if there is a regimentation force that organizes language practices and beliefs, it is worth questioning what its nature might be. As Legrand (2004) argues it in a Marxist reading of Foucault (2003), the transmission, overthrow, or acquisition of power does not necessarily rely on conscious and active strategies. In addition, empowerment and resistance capacities are not homogeneously diffused in the 'social body.' These remarks make materialist perspective particularly relevant to the study the regimentation of conducts in their political-economic context, because they enable us to analyze how the social body is structured by capitalism, gender and racial differentiations.

Since the 1980s, *Black feminists* in the US (Crenshaw, 1991; Davis, 2011; Lorde, 2007) and *materialist feminists* in France (e.g. Delphy, 2008; Guillaumin, 1986; Kergoat, 2009; Pfefferkorn, 2007) have developed the tools to study what Patricia Hill Collins has called the *matrix of domination (2000)*,[2] and what Danièle Kergoat has defined as the complex and dynamic interlacing of race, class and gender in the production of social hierarchy (2010). Although Kergoat recognizes that there are other forms of power relations (age, sexual practices, religion…), she isolates race, gender, and class as operating together and similarly through processes of *separation* and *hierarchization*. Kergoat's work focuses on the relational quality of social structure, which is encapsulated in the concept of power relations.[3] Hill Collins and Kergoat's work converge on the insistence that forms of

2 'The term *matrix of domination* describes this overall social organization within which intersecting oppressions originate, develop, and are contained. (…) Just as intersecting oppressions take on historically specific forms that change in response to human actions—racial segregation persists, but not in the forms that it took in prior historical eras—so the shape of domination itself changes.'(Hill Collins, 2000, pp. 227–228)

3 In this paper I have chosen to translate the French concept of *'rapport social'* and the German one, used by Marx in his *Grundrisse* (Marx, 1993), of '*Verhältnisse*,' by 'power relations' rather then 'social relation' or 'interrelation' that the English translation of the *Grundisse* have retained. Indeed, the notion of 'social relation' might lead to a smoothing of the term '*rapport*' that seem to tackle particularly the tension in the relation. As the sociologist Roland Pfefferkorn summarizes it: 'Every power relation ≍*rapport social*≡ is, by nature, the source of cohesion as well as conflict. It unites (or links) the social subjects that it mediatizes, it constitutes one of the elements from which is built the architecture of global society. But reversely, depending on its forms and contents, always changing and specific to contexts, each power relation is, at least potentially, a source of tensions and conflicts between its agents, individuals or collectives. The power relation is in short a tension that crosses society and that establishes some social phenomena into stakes around which social groups with antagonistic interests are built.' (my translation, Pfefferkorn, 2007). It is on this important nuance between *relation* and

domination are not fixed but always renewed according to sociohistorical and spatial contexts. This is why, considering that thinking in terms of intersection requires the delimitation and stabilization of categories, or sections, of oppression and can lead to an arithmetical and additive analyses of domination, Kergoat sees power relations more as *knots* and as dynamic processes produced in social practices. Thus, power relations, or the separation and hierarchization processes relying on race, gender and class, are inseparable from each other (they are 'consubstantial'), and they flexibly coproduce each other (they are 'coextensive') (2010, p. 112). In other words, studying such a matrix is studying how race needs class and gender categories to be operational, how class requires gender and race differentiation, and how gender relies on race and class categories.[4] As Pfefferkorn (2007) and Kergoat (2009) underline, moving away from the temptation of determinism, such interlocking processes can be sources of ambivalences, ambiguities, contradictions and paradoxes in the individuals' social practices, as I hope, this case study presented in this paper will demonstrate.

The systematic analysis of power relations as defined by Kergoat offers a particularly interesting and compatible framework for the study of regimes of language. Kergoat states that 'the notion of power relation refers simultaneously to a production principle (the power relations, in the form of stakes, produce and reproduce social practices, which in return act on the tensions that are the power relations); and to a heuristic principle (the power relations enable understanding observed practices)' (Kergoat, 2010, pp. 62–63). Linguistic and discursive practices, as social practices, are power relations (see also Irvine, this issue). Studying them is studying the unequal capacity of individuals to transmit, overthrow or acquire power. Speaking, being given the floor, in a given language, or fitting into or challenging a regime of language, is a major social stake on which depends the access to resources and the authority to produce 'truth.'

Neither only determined nor all potentially empowered individuals make their trajectories in a complex, dynamic, flexible matrix that constrains and/or empowers them, reproducing the matrix as they live their social life, and notably as they talk, and as they talk about the way they talk. This paper will thus analyze how this domination matrix can regiment language use and language ideologies and map relations of power. More precisely in this case, British migrants' privileged trajectories in the French language regime rely not exclusively on English language hegemony, but also on class and race privileges.

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rapport that the French sociologists working on the interlacing of race, gender and class (Kergoat, 2009; Pfefferkorn, 2007) have built their thought.

4 My turn towards materialist feminism in my research work occurred after I had completed most of the fieldwork. I started using the theoretical framework as I was trying to understand the linguistic privileges I had observed. This is why, paradoxically, the analysis of topics regarding family, morality, women's emancipation, or the gendered distribution of tasks remains mostly absent from the study, and this paper.

3. The British migration and the fieldwork

My doctoral fieldwork consisted of semi-structured interviews with British migrants and autochthones in rural Brittany, observations of associative activities, informal non-recorded discussions, the collection of various institutional and associative documentations, and the compilation of discussions taking place on an online forum dedicated to British migrants in Brittany. With a critical sociolinguistic perspective (Heller, 2011, 2002) the ambition of the study was to understand the sociological and ideological conditions of this migration and its sociolinguistic impact on the local areas. This included analyzing the local 'welcoming' policies and the views of autochthones and migrants about their relationships.

Between the late 1980s and 2004, thousands of British people settled in rural Brittany, an area that until that time had experienced a large wave of emigration throughout the 20th century. The British are now the largest foreign population in a region that attracts few migrants in comparison to the rest of France. These middle-class and lower-middle class retirees and workers have been attracted by very low-priced rural housing, which is unaffordable in the UK for most of them.

Many market-related and ideological factors led to this trend of British migration to France, which began in the south in the late 1970s (see Benson, 2011; Etrillard, 2015a). The industrial revolution in Great Britain, early outsourcing of agricultural goods in the 19th century, and the constant urbanization of the country ever since led to the disappearance of a peasantry. While the countryside has remained the property of aristocratic families, a fantasy of the rural idyll has crystallized: the countryside in Great Britain is seen as a place preserved from modernity, which allows for a better lifestyle. Many books, TV shows and movies testify to the strong presence of this rural myth in Great Britain. In recent decades, housing market speculation around the country, and particularly in rural areas, led to increased prices, and a house in the British countryside has become a rare and prized commodity. Meanwhile, rural areas elsewhere in Europe have lost much of their population.

Looking for a better lifestyle and warmer climes, a first wave of British people settled in France in the 1990s, buying old barns in small villages in the south. The market was open, and specialized magazines, books and television shows started to advertize the move to France as a thrilling and fulfilling adventure, where people were urged to 'live the dream' (Etrillard 2014b). As property prices increased in the south, some entrepreneurs opened new markets in the northern regions, such as Brittany, Limousin and Normandy, which became attractive areas for lower budget buyers. The 2007 financial crisis slowed

this trend, perhaps along with stories from some adventurers who have found the dream to be not quite so fulfilling as advertized.

After a century marked by a constant rural exodus, Brittany indeed matches the rural fantasy of these lifestyle migrants, with its low density and landscape of woods, fields, farms, small hills, and hamlets of sometimes deserted stone houses. These are assets that local organizations have tried to promote to develop tourism over the past 10 years, as agricultural and food industry crises have harshly hit the area. The average wage is 9% lower in the rural areas of Brittany than in the region as a whole, and the percentage of retirees is higher. In this fragile context, the marketing strategy of rural Brittany to attract new residents and tourists relies on the narration of a local identity that is at the same time authentic and open to the world and to modernity.

British migration to Brittany shares some commonalities with a general trend identified by sociologists, anthropologists and geographers, called amenity migration (Moss, 2006), lifestyle migration (Benson and O'Reilly, 2009) or privileged mobility (Amit, 2007; Croucher, 2012). With a preference for the word *migration* over *mobility (Faist, 2013)*, I use the term *privileged migration* to refer to the migration, often short-term, of citizens from northern countries to other northern countries[5] or to southern countries.[6] Indeed, despite the fact that, as I have demonstrated in my dissertation (Etrillard, 2015b), the position of the entrepreneur, the rhetoric of the individual responsibility, and the flexibility of life-courses can lead to socioeconomic insecurity and social isolation for some migrants, it is important to underline that these people have the legal and economic capacity to migrate. They are not fleeing politically instable or economically exploited regions, but migrate in order to live the 'thrill of adventures' in new lands or/and in the hope of improving their standard of living, blurring the line between migration and tourism. The study of the language regimentation and discourses reveals additional privileges.

4. Migrants, expats, and the relation to language duty: looking beyond class

As I have shown elsewhere (Etrillard, 2014a), most British migrants to Brittany benefit from a variety of English-language resources that explain local administrative procedures, informal and formal rules and traditions, customer services, etc. For instance, some booklets and information sheets are created exclusively in English to address major questions that the newly arrived population might have. While most employees of public or private services seem to speak only in French, some, like Fabrice and Grégoire, two or

5 British, German or Dutch people settling in France (Benson, 2011; Etrillard, 2015a), Portugal (Torkington, 2015) or Spain (O'Reilly, 2000), Dutch moving to Sweden (Eimermann, 2014), etc.
6 British moving to India (Korpela, 2010), North Americans to Ecuador (Hayes, 2015), etc.

my interlocutors, are happy to use their English skills when interacting with British migrants.

Autochthones do not all welcome English. While some express satisfaction about new opportunities to speak English in the area, there are also complaints about many British migrants' the lack of French language skills. The call to 'make the effort to learn French' is still very firm among the French-Breton. Yet local institutions in Brittany often provide help in English for the British. This is particularly uncommon in France, where the national 'regime of language' is renowned for not being tolerant of linguistic diversity, especially in state institutions. Local activists of regional languages (Breton and Gallo) have pled for years for bilingual institutions. Most foreign migrants face pressure to learn French, as knowledge of French is seen as a criterion for newcomers to show the 'loyalty' to the nation. Since 2006, the issuing or the renewal of a residence permit for non-EU migrants is subordinate to the completion of language tests and/or trainings (about these tests and training, see Ouabdelmoumen, 2014). In this context, plurilingualism in institutions remains very rare,[7] and that this practice exists with English in Brittany might hint at a change in the local regime.

Page 2 of Newcomer's guide to Côte d'Armor

What could account for the allowance of English in this context? In this section I will explore several possible explanations: the global hegemony of English, the perceived economic assets of British migrants, and processes of racialization. In previous work (Etrillard, 2014a), I have reviewed the role of the supranational status of the English language in the French-Breton perspective, where, contrary to other migrants' languages, English is not associated to an ethnoracial minority, but instead considered to be a valuable skill to acquire and practice. But if we take the example of the booklet issued to newcomers by the Département des Côtes-d'Armor, it is not only the use of English that is

7 There may be ongoing changes as some public institutions seem to take a turn in adapting their service to users.

surprising, but the fact that it is precisely targeted towards the British population, as the iconography shows us:
The use of the flags indexes identities (European, Breton, Côtes-d'Armor, and British) of the people pictured. Aside from the British flag being the only foreign one shown, the ferry connecting Great Britain to Brittany in the background refers specifically to the situation of the British. While the British are the largest foreign population in the area, they are not the only one. Yet this iconography makes them, not just any speaker of global English, the implicit audience.

Therefore we have to look beyond the linguistic hegemony argument. The second possible explanation for the number of English resources is the fact that British migrants are generally considered to be economic assets to the area, so the circulation of their capital must be facilitated. As the rural region of Brittany is depopulated and lacks of economic dynamism, some local politicians see it as important to try to increase and facilitate the settlement of British migrants. One such politician is Yvon, a mayor who developed several initiatives (booklet, translated welcoming reception) to welcome British migrants to his town in their language. Shopkeepers and service providers have also started providing anglophone services to attract British customers and to remain competitive, especially as British migrant have started businesses themselves.[8] So, an important reason for the status the local language regime gives to English is indeed the status of British migrants as consumers, which is a powerful status in a fragile economic context.

This perceived economic status indeed seems to distinguish the British from other migrants, both in how they talk about themselves and how locals talk about them. Locally, they are commonly called expats, newcomers, British/English residents, and most commonly by the locals '*les Anglais*.' The word 'migrant,' and its negative connotations, is avoided. In the threads from the forum for British migrants living in Brittany that I discuss below, some forum users discuss this differentiation between 'immigrants' on the one side and 'expats,' 'newcomers,' or 'residents' on the other. For these forum users, British residents are not *immigrants* precisely because they contribute to the circulation of capital. Extract 1 is one example among many where a forum user, who claims to be a British person moving to Brittany, insists on the distinction between the British and economic migrants. To do so, he puts forward his legal and economic status and uses the reported speech of an autochthone to strengthen his argument.

Extract 1: Joe Posted on: 08/02/2004 at 01:42[9]

8 An important network of British independent service providers have developed locally, to the extent that these businesses tend to suffer from oversaturation of the market.
9 The original spelling used by the forum users is reproduced.

> I just like Steve **I will be entering Brittany by the front door. I will not be hidding in the back of some poor truckers lorry**.
>
> **I will be also be doing my very best to contribute to both the Breton economy and way of life.** What has happened in the U.K. and to many other European counties can not be compared to the plight of MOST economical 'Migranants'
>
> (…)
>
> I can understant your interest with concerns of the Breton's about the 'invasion' **but my experiance (and that of many others) is that the Breton's view the current europe wide problem of immigration as somthing quite seperate from the 'Brit invasion'**
>
> It would indeed as you have said Helena be great to see more offerings from Breton's in the debate - but I fear - it is not likely for the following reason
>
> This summer I had a long chat with a Frenchman - oppppssssss Breton. **(…)**
>
> **What John Pierre was angry about turned out to be the French (not Breton lol) problem of economic migrants. He then explained that he viewed the 'Brit' invasion as the reverse of economic migration. Money to the area - old run down properties being renovated and improving other property prices in the area.** He also added that he and other locals have a view that the people that were moving from the U.K. to his area were doing so because they wanted what the Breton's had and were prepared top spend money to get it. **'Brits were not comming to Bretagne to suck on the stone of the fruit - but - to nerture the tree' he informed us.**
>
> (…)
> Helena please don't be offended but **talking the way you do about being prepared to undermine the Breton economy will only class 'Brits' as economical migrants...**

According to 'Joe' and his reported speech of Jean Pierre, British people moving to Brittany are not migrants precisely because of their legal and economic status. Instead, they are the 'reverse,' bringing much-needed capital to the Breton countryside.

This distinction between British migrants and 'immigrants' extends to ideas about language competency. In Extract 2, forum user 'Bubblehead,' replies to an

ironic suggestion that British migrants should pass the French linguistic tests that non-EU migrants have to take. Bubblehead writes:

> **Extract 2: Bubblehead 12/07/2008 at 16:48**
>
> It is just not fair to compare the two situations. **The difference with the immigrants in the UK is that they are seeking official citizenship and that is what the proposed language skill test is directed at. I would imagine that no British ex-pats seek French citizenship, but are self-financing/paying into the system and as such do not really have to prove that they are able to speak French.**
>
> **Having said that**, we've been here over five years now and **our French is very good** - helped no doubt by the fact that we no longer watch UK tv. (...)

In this extract there is an association of preconceptions about migrants: here again we find the myth of the parasitic migrant versus the productive expat. This stereotype of the immigrant as dependent on the welcoming state allows the valorization of British mobility as the opposite. Bubblehead sees this distinction to exempt the British expat from the need to 'prove' their loyalty to France by speaking French. We can see as well, that 'British' is not seen as a stigmatizing category: the two nationalities are considered to be on the same level by this forum-user, making it 'unimaginable' that a British citizen would ask for French citizenship.

This idea of never becoming French was quite common among my interlocutors. At the time of my fieldwork, British citizens who asked for French citizenship were quite rare.[10] The procedure was either dismissed as 'useless' or 'ridiculous.' Many British migrants mocked the symbolic act that it represented. I regularly read or heard 's/he tries to be more French than the French,' when a British person talked about a compatriot considered to be copying what is considered as a 'French lifestyle,' or as doing 'everything French.' These discourses were based on a fixed idea of identity, and therefore a migrant seen to be changing his or her lifestyle *too much* was seen as dishonest to the locals and disloyal to their identity. All of my British interlocutors discursively positioned themselves in a carefully balanced in-between. 'We will always be *les Anglais*,' Jack said about him and his wife, after she listed the French habits that they consider important to 'fit in.' His code-switch here is interesting, as it seems to index the reported speech of the locals. For the vast majority of the respondents I met, it is not up to them as foreigners to label themselves French. Like Joe's voicing of the Breton Jean Pierre, Jack is suggesting that

10 The referendum leading to the UK's leave of the European Union might change this situation, depending on the bilateral agreements that will be created. The ongoing research program Brexit Brits Abroad aims at measuring the consequences of Brexit for British people living overseas.

legitimacy must be given by the host and not asked for by the foreigner. Many would consider doing so 'pretentious.'

We also have an example of this search for equilibrium between 'fitting in' and affirming a British identity, with Extract 2 above: after stating that s/he does not imagine asking for citizenship and therefore does not have to prove s/he speaks French, Bubblehead still adds that *they*[11] do speak French, and that they were proactive in the learning process. I will return to this ambivalence later in the paper, but for now it is just important to note how Bubblehead's positioning as speaking just enough, but not too much, French fits with this more general differentiation between the British population in Brittany and 'immigrants.'

Other British migrants, albeit not as many, do use the term *immigrant* to categorize themselves. When they do, it is interesting to note that they index an anti-racist stand, as illustrated by Extracts 3 and 4 from the online forums:

> **Extract 3: driver replied on 09/07/2007 at 10:11**
>
> the most racist people i have met over here are.....the english,especialy northerners who moan about immegrants in england,what do thay think thay are here?
>
> **Extract 4: Mickrest posted on: 18/02/2010 at 15:11**
>
> (…) Nor would I subscribe in any way to your implication that british immigrants are in any way different to any other type of immigrant, either in the UK or France. **Can you perhaps explain what you assume to be superior about British immigrants?**

A hierarchization of mobilities relying on class is apparent, but it seems to be entangled here with the sensitive issue of racialization. Indeed as I continued my exploration of the forum corpus, the explanation of the negotiation of the language regime as only relying on class was insufficient. First, because it appears the British migrants in Brittany do not actually seem to always be much more affluent than the autochthones: economic situations are heterogeneous. They do have different economic practices that include spending, selling and developing entrepreneurial and money placements strategies more than what locals are used to. There are hints that the contrast with the culture of sparse consumption and saving of the locals led some to think that British migrants have considerable capital. For the most part the local population seems to still see these migrants as the image of the affluent British retiree differentiate them from

11An important feature of this migration is that it is mostly couple (mainly heterosexual) or family migration. Respondents and forum-users often produced discourse presenting the family or the couple as a unit that acts and thinks unanimously, particularly when the thematic is the presentation of self and socialization strategies.

other migrant populations. Yet, many British migrants find it hard to make ends meet, especially since the devaluation of the pound against the Euro in 2007, which cut by a third the budget of the migrants receiving their pension or other revenues in sterling, or when unexpected health or family difficulties occur. Many migrants I encountered, including as Kate and Jack mentioned above, live off of savings and investments, and on low paid, temporary jobs. Some of the British migrants of working age, like Kate whose knowledge of French is too weak to enable her to continue her career as a sales assistant in France, may eventually find themselves in the same situation as other declassed migrants, following the same professional programs. Some (mostly women) are thus oriented towards home-helper careers, others (mostly men) towards chain work in the local food processing factories.

Therefore I argue that not their economic status, but their nationality and their whiteness contribute to the stabilization of the perception of British migrants as members of an affluent class and a group sufficiently culturally close to open negotiation of sociolinguistic privileges. I define whiteness as the dynamic sociocultural construction, contingent of sociohistorical contexts, of a 'socially gratifying identity' (Cervulle, 2013, p. 49; Garner, 2007), relying on the estrangement and racialization of others.

Racialization processes can form outside explicitly and intentionally racializing discourses. In fact, one fundamental aspect of the concept of whiteness, is that 'white is not a color' (Cervulle 2013), in the sense that whiteness rarely emerges from the explicit differentiation of white people, but from the differentiation of non-white. As the linguistic anthropologist Jane Hill underlines, it is sometimes in what is not said that one can find marks of differentiation (Hill 2008). We can see this in the use of the term 'newcomers' by the local institutions to designate the British migrants, for example by the mayors of some villages or by the Côtes-d'Armor departmental council. Talking about 'newcomers' enables them to bypass not only the economic preconceptions of the word 'immigrant' but also its racializing implications. During my research, I chose early to keep using the word 'migrant' to designate the British when describing my research to interlocutors. Interviewing Alice, a local French woman, who speaks English and created an administrative help business, I tried to explain this:

Extract 5

Aude (…) Et y a personne qui utilise 'fin je suis un peu la seule / moi j'utilise le terme migrant parce que c'est juste pour esp- expliciter le fait qu'ils bougent d'un endroit pour arriver dans un autre/et s'installer définitivement/ .. Eumh est-ce que vous entendez ce mot-là?/ prononcé/ émigrés /migrants etc/

[(…) And no one uses – well I'm about the only one/ me, I use the term migrant because it's just to esp- explain the fact that they move from one place to another/ and settle definitely/

.. Eumh do you hear that word ?/ pronounced emigrants migrants etc/]

Alice immigrés jamais pour un Britannique/

[immigrants never for a British person]

Aude non/

Alice c'est (en riant) très intéressant ça/ en effet un immigré est forcément marron quoi/

[It's (laughs) very interesting/ indeed an immigrant has to be brown then/]

Aude ouais/

Alice non mais c'est fou ça/ quand on y pense/..

[no but that's crazy/ when you come to think of it]

Aude mm/ et même EUX euh se considèrent pas: forcément dans une situation euh:

[mm/ and even THEM euh don't consider themselves in a situation euh:/]

Alice pas du tout non non non/

[not at all no no no]

Aude d'immigration/

[of immigration]

Alice non/ .. ..

Aude mmm/

Alice non/ c'est vrai que le mot n'est pas tellement utilisé dans leur bouche non/ .. .. (souffle)/ non et puis d'ailleurs UN mot est utilisé souvent à tort c'est les Anglais/

[no/ it's true that this word is not used so much by them no/ … (exhales)/ no and in fact ONE word that is often wrongly used is the English/]

After outlining the fact that not all British migrants are English, Alice goes back to the topic of immigration, telling me for the first time that her partner is English. She explains that as a result she meets a lot of British migrants at parties and that she has been shocked by the 'racist,' and she adds 'homophobic,' discourses she has heard during those events.

Extract 6

Alice (…) alors Y A une truc FOU/ et MEME chez les gens là/ là là là ouais alors moi je suis contente que je me: souvienne/ de me souvenir de ça/ .. Parce que CA je l'ai entendu à ma grande surprise chez beaucoup/ chez TOUS quasiment/ unanimement/ même des gens voyez/ fin je veux dire unanimement euh de gauche euh jusqu'à droite/ 'fin voilà quoi/euh: Leurs pays a - un - problème/ c'est l'immigration/

[(…) so THERE IS something CRAZY/ and EVEN with people that/ yes well I am really happy to remember/ to remember that/ .. because THAT I've heard it to my great surprise from a lot of people/almost ALL of them/ unanimously/ even people you see/ well I mean unanimously euh from the left to the right/ well that's it/ euh their country has – one – problem/ it's immigration/]

Aude Mmmm/

Alice alors c'est quand même fort de café pour des gens qui- viennent ici/ ils le disent ICI en plus/.. mais alors après (rires)/ quand vous grattez un peu vous dites « attends mais tu fais quoi là toi? »/et ils vous disent « oui mais moi j'demande rien/ (rire) à l'Etat »/ enfin voilà/ je ne sais pas en quelle mesure ils exagèrent ou pas/ je veux bien croire euh:/ mais alors ça affecte TOUS les gens de tout bord/

[So it's a bit strong from people who come here/ they even say it HERE/ .. but then after (laughs)/ when you scratch a bit and you say ' wait but what are you doing here then ?'/ and they tell you 'yes but I I am not asking anything/ (laughs) from the state'/ well that's it / I don't know to what degree they're exaggerating or not/ I can believe that euh:/ but it affects them ALL from any background/]

What I want to underline here with these two extracts is how racialization and class differentiation are tied together in these discourses. Economic criteria, even inexact, gives the illusion of an objective and fair way to separate and hierarchize populations, and it is the very consubstantiality of race and class differentiation that enables British migrants to naturalize this differentiation discourse. Although if it had not been one of the purposes of my research, after this interview with Alice I started to look more systematically for traces of racialization and white privilege in the corpus.

5. White privileges and the rearrangement of the regime of language

Racialization is also a way for British migrants to implicitly claim similarities to the local population that legitimize their presence in Brittany without their needing to speak French. I have argued elsewhere that the migrants have identified rural Brittany as an authentic space, preserved from the negative changes brought to Britain by modernity (Etrillard, 2017). As such, some migrants seem to have associated it with a *white* space, preserved from the diversity brought by urbanization and migration, which is perceived as bringing insecurity. This is apparent in Extract 7 from the online forum.

Extract 7: TRB replied on 15/04/2009 at 09:13

I have been a French resident since 1991. Why ? It wasn't economics but the culture.
France is still as French as it has been for centuries. They appreciate their culture and dont let it be eroded by people from other countries trying to hoist their ways on the cummunity. If you want to live a good life in France you must live it as the French do (Parisians excepted). The French attitude to political correctness is as it should be.Call a spade a spade, not a shovel just in case you may offend someone. Apart from the city of Marsailles the lunitics haven't been allowed to take over the asylem unlike Leeds or Wolverhampton.

Here it is worth underlining that the forums offer an interactional space at the same time virtual and territorialized as almost all of the contributors live in Brittany. It's a place where

anonymity enables non-consensual discussion. Many representations and ideologies are discussed, disputed and challenged. Therefore it differs vastly from the interview context. It enabled me, as a French-Breton myself, to access directly to types of discourses that had been reported to me, for example by Alice, but that I hadn't witnessed personally.

In this extract there are hints that 'TRB' produces a racialization of some foreign population and a hierachization of 'cultures-nations,' referring to the 'lunatics' that are supposed to have taken over Marseille, a city in southern France known for its large population of people of North African origin. Rurality, as the British sociologists Niel Chakraborti and Jon Garland have shown in their work on rural racism in UK (Chakraborti and Garland, 2004), is represented in the UK as the 'quintessence of Britishness' and is the place of morality. In Extract 7, the perception of the disappearance of this Britishness gives the opportunity to TRB, but also to other forum users, to produce a 'white victimhood' discourse that accuses 'multicultural policies (…) to have tilted the balance of power away from the indigenous white population' (Garner, 2007, p. 8). These forum users see France as an escape this perceived foreign takeover.

In the following extract of a group interview I conducted with two autochthones, Yvonne and Robert, and British migrants, one of the migrants, Gillian, describes the mental representation of some British parents towards Brittany's countryside as opposed to the urban United Kingdom. It is unclear here whether Gillian reproduces a reported discourse. The original interview was in French, and, as Gillian is a learner, her word choices are restricted.

Extract 8

Gillian: et je pense ici pour-pour les parents anglais/ c'est une vie differente/ il n'y a pas les étrangers/
[and I think that here for-for the English parents/ it's a different life/ there are no foreigners/]

Robert: oui mais là en Bretagne/
[*yes but here in Brittany/]*

Gillian: oui/ mais/
[yes/ but/]

Yvonne: dans la campagne/
[in the countryside /]

Gillian: il n'y a pas les noirs/ les étrangers et: il n'y a pas BEAUCOUP des gens/ il y a les/ des petits euh villages très: bien connu à tous/
*[there are no black people/ foreigners and**:** there are not A LOT of people/ there are the/ the small euh villages very: well known to all]*

Aude: donc les gens ont pas peur parce qu'y a pas d'autres euh:/

[so people aren't afraid because there are no others eh:/]

Gillian: (soupir) what's perception?/

Aude: perception?/ ouais/

Gillian: que c'est c'est gentil c'est simple/

[that it's it's nice it's simple/]

Robert: ouais/

Gillian: tranquille/

[quiet/]

The relationality of racialization here is apparent: by defining otherness (black, foreigners), an implicit sameness is constructed. While Gillian's discourse explicitly marks black people and the foreigners as the 'racialized other,' it also implicitly produces whiteness as shared by the British migrants and Breton autochthones.

Some autochthones share this position toward whiteness, explicitly resorting to racist ideologies. In Extract 9, an anglophile autochthone reproduces a discourse that other migrants have reported hearing from the mouths of locals (see Extract 1): the British, having supposedly a sufficiently related culture are not concerned by the injunction to integrate, and are favored to migrants of other origins:

Extract 9: petitbois posted on: 15/02/2010 at 18:54

Hello, I am sorry but I won't find the time to read all the replies to this post, just wanted to say what **I understand in 'integration': it is aimed at people coming from a very different culture than the western culture, we have been talking of integration when people arrived from 'north africa' or other part of the african continent.** this is not in any way meaning that brits should become french. **it is more a 'western' attitude, like conforming to the 'republican' ideal that for example we don't put religion first in our life and behaviour**, which explains that we do not tolerate the burka in public places. (…)

Here, we can see how culture and religion, just like economy and nationality, can serve as a separation and criteria for hierarchization. After this post, a British forum user, Mickrest, who regularly intervenes to deconstruct racist discourses expressed his disagreement, and another forum user, Erdeven007, repeats Petitbois's comment:

Extract 10: Erdeven007 posted on: 17/02/2010 at 20:26

Ref: Mr or Mrs or Miss Mickrest **Depends on who and the type of foreigner who is invading your country**, hence the rise in the number of right wing extremist parties in the UK now and the amount of UK peoples leaving the UK.

> **I remember reading an article in the Times before I left for France in 2007 entitled ' We shove off whilst they push in' talking about people coming to the UK looking for work and a better standard of living and why not, when the Brits are leaving the UK looking for a better life abroad. We all know why** we have come to Brittany and yes we do integrate with the culture.**My French neighbour once said to me, that he would rather see British people coming to France to live here rather than the others! I' ll leave that one to you guys to work out as to who he meant by the others.** (...) So, back to integration, life is what you make of it, if you choose to stay in a small Brit world then hey, why not, but don't judge just on what you assume, you know what they say about assumption!

Here it is interesting to note how Erdeven uses indirect speech to infer his positions (the *Times* article, his neighbor's words), avoiding explicitly formulating his own thoughts and maintaining a slightly blurry positioning, reinforced by the relativizing question ('and why not?'). Besides, as in Extract 1, reported speech from a local serves to assert the truth of the discourse. Later in the discussion Mickrest indeed asks Erdeven007 to clarify his position, but Erdeven does not. Many other interventions on the forum use these ambivalent constructions of discourse when producing racializing discourses. They enable the reproduction of such discourses without fearing sanctions from the moderator or leaning towards explicit racial discrimination that could be socially and legally condemned. Ruth Wodak and Martin Reisgle have described these kinds of strategies as 'calculated ambivalences' in their study of populist political discourses (Wodak et Reisigl 2015).

Yet, Erdeven007 and Petitbois underline how the injunction to integrate depends on the culture and religion of migrants. Here it is not a question of the economic contribution, but of a cultural proximity, of a 'western attitude.' It is thus a western — implicitly *white*— solidarity that Petitbois and Erdeven seem to offer, and which Mickrest criticizes. This solidarity would enable some British migrants to liberate themselves from the injunction produced by the dominating ideology, to integrate and to learn French, and to which Petitbois seems to agree with.

Although most autochthones wouldn't recognize themselves in such explicitly racist discourses, I would propose the interpretation that whiteness is more often less explicitly produced, as we have seen with the example of the 'newcomers' label. This is used by some British migrants to rearrange the language regime that as foreign migrants they are supposed to conform to and to obtain the recognition (Honneth, 2013) of Britishness as carrying compatible ideologies with that of the locals.

What is particularly paradoxical about their linguistic privilege is that it intersects with the consensual discourse among British migrants that 'integration' is a moral duty,

and that ‘making the effort’ to speak French, or at least to try to, is the moral duty of newcomers. All of the British migrants I interviewed agreed on this principle, and ‘making the effort’ is one of the most reproduced discursive motifs in the online forums and my interviews. As Extract 11 exemplifies, it is at least what is often expected from migrants in the UK, despite a multiculturalist policy:

Extract 11: MamaKubwa Posted on: 11/02/2010 at 10:39

I think Mackenvyn is right. If you go and live in a foreign country you should make an effort to learn at least enough of the language to have simple conversations. It's only polite**. I'm sure you've all heard people in UK ranting on about immigrants who don't speak English, don't integrate, wear their own funny clothes, shop in their own shops. Remember we are the immigrants here.** (...)

Most of the participants I met may have been bilingual because I was interested in points of contacts between autochthones and allochthones. Yet all of the actors I met during fieldwork underlined that most British migrants could not have conversations in French. They all expressed their frustration to me towards those non-francophone migrants. So while they professed an ideology that British migrants did not need to learn French, this was not generally followed in practice.

By reproducing these linguistic ideologies, migrants index a cultural and political proximity between the French and the British, including views of the others, the ‘immigrants,’ and their own moral duty. These discourses also provide the opportunity for migrants who actually learn French to show themselves as ‘good migrants’ who conform to the expectations of a northwestern European society, and do not question the constraints of the societal structure and dominant ideologies. But the fact that many British migrants bypass this linguistic regime, which is supposed to be followed by all, indicates that they are not as compelled by them as are the racialized migrants.

Before concluding this paper I would like however to slightly nuance the picture drawn here. From the local population’s perspective, British nationality is not systematically considered as positive. The privileges I have discussed do not protect the British from resentment and exclusion from some locals. Indeed, this resentment is sometimes precisely motivated by the perception of a hegemonic attitude from the British. I heard the phrase ‘*on est plus chez nous*’ (‘it is not home anymore’) a few times from the mouths of locals, showing how some may be upset by the changes they see and attribute to the British. This is sometimes supplemented by a fear of difference and a lack of understanding of their motivations for older generations living in rural areas:

Extract 12

Nadine quand on les a vu ach(e)ter ça on c'est dit 'mais ils sont fous'!/
[when we saw them buying those (houses) we thought 'but they are crazy'!/]
Aude mmm
Nadine quelle idée!/ nous on achèterait pas/ on se disait/ et c'est là que bon euh j(e) comprends pas/ bon y a aussi le le le tempérament breton mais de/ qui vit s- qui aime bien être euh/ comment dire/ qui a peur de l'étranger/
[what an idea!/ we would not buy it/ we thought/ and that's why well euh I don't understand/ well there's also the Breton tendency but to-/ that like euh/ how can I say that/ that is afraid of strangers/]
Aude ouais/
Nadine hein/ autrefois c'était souvent ça/ peur de l'étranger/ j'ouvre pas ma porte/ enfin c'est eux /m'enfin euh qu'est-ce qui veulent ?/ euh ils savent pas/
[see/ it used to be like that often/ fear of the stranger/ I don't open my door/ well it's them/ but well what do they want?/ euh they don't know/]

I would not want to give an overly simplified analysis of the tensions and social stakes here. Indeed, the British really are primarily considered to be 'strangers' in rural Brittany. Yet their otherness is privileged, in that they are able to claim an implicit similarity to local French-Bretons in their whiteness and difference from other migrants. This implicit similarity sometimes allows them to reconfigure the French linguistic regime, as they do not need language to prove their legitimacy as French residents. Beyond what I have presented here, other legitimation strategies, such as showing the bond between British and French-Bretons using historical or even phylogenetic criteria, are produced to reduce otherness. These efforts seem to be acceptable so long as some bit of otherness is still maintained—remember Jack and Kate who do not want to be 'too French.' At the same time, British migrants seem to be able to reconfigure the local French monolingual regime for themselves as long as they do not challenge the larger social order and still see learning French as an ideal for themselves, and a necessity for other migrants.

6. Conclusion: understanding the powers of regimentation

Thinking in terms of a regime of language enables the study of the flexible use of language ideologies and power relations to reproduce privilege in ambivalent and contradictory contexts. The research presented here shows how some individuals have the power to arrange regimes of language. If the ideological matrix in which social conduct is regimented matches, and if migrants have the appropriate resources (whiteness, English language, legal status, economic capital, etc.), it becomes possible to escape the regime's restrictions. It may not be a systematic and fully legitimated emancipation: most of the local Breton population still resents the lack of French knowledge from many British

migrants. However, there are at least margins where British migrants are less materially hampered then other migrants. Appearing as a rule for all, such regimes are in fact adaptable when they conflicts with the interests of those who (re)produce it. The example I have analyzed of privileged plurilinguism in France shows how monolingual ideologies can be first and foremost a disempowering tool that only apply to certain racialized others, rather than the universalist egalitarian policy it is claimed to be by state institutions.

British migrants have the possibility not to produce the proofs of loyalty to France that are asked from migrants of other origins. Their economic status cannot alone account for this privilege as it also relies on the production of whiteness. Here the illusion of class becomes necessary to maintain and justify racial privileges. Regimes of language, just like the matrix of domination, seem to have a variable flexibility according to who wants to bend them.

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