The Impact of Language Revival on Linguistic Structure: Neuter Subject Pronouns in Picard

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Abstract

This paper examines the impact that non-native speakers have had on the structure of Picard, a Gallo-Romance language spoken in northern France and southern Belgium. Focusing on neuter subjects, a construction that is characterized by a more complex system than the equivalent form in French (the other language spoken by all Picard speakers), we compare the systems used by native and non-native speakers. Given that all three forms are used by all speakers in our corpus, a variationist approach is adopted to determine whether the same syntactic and phonological factors govern the distribution of the three forms in the two types of speakers. This analysis confirms that non-native speakers have acquired many of the constraints that characterize the grammar of traditional speakers but shows that their dominant language, French, has weakened the effect of the syntactic factors.

The Impact of Language Revival on Linguistic Structure: Neuter Subject Pronouns in Picard

Julie Auger*

1 Introduction

Despite long-standing predictions concerning the dismissal of regional languages in France, recent movements recognizing the importance of local cultures have resulted in a revival of many languages on the brink of extinction (e.g., Basque, Breton, and Occitan). One consequence of this movement has been a shift in the sociodemographic characteristics of some of these languages. For instance, while Picard used to be a language associated primarily with factory workers and peasants, a 2004 survey by France's *Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques* (INSEE) reveals that professionals and intellectuals now constitute the largest socio-economic group who reports using Picard. Furthermore, many such speakers are individuals who grew up with a passive competence in this endangered language and who decided to embrace it during adolescence or early adulthood. Thus, for them, Picard is not a native language.

This paper examines the impact that these neo-speakers have had on the structure of Picard, a Gallo-Romance language spoken in northern France and in southwestern Belgium.[1] Focusing on clauses that contain neuter pronominal subjects, a construction that is characterized by a more complex system than its equivalent forms in French, the other language spoken by all Picard speakers, I compare the systems used by native and non-native speakers in order to determine how similar they are. The examples in (1) show that Picard has three different forms that correspond to the French forms *c'/ça* 'it': *ch'*, *a*, and a null form (Ø).

(1) a. *Tout o, ch'est pasqu'oz ons tè obligès d'partir.*   (Chl'autocar 50)
       Tout ça, c'est parce que nous avons été obligés de partir.   (French)
       'All that, that's because we had to leave.'
   b. *O, a n'li plaisoait point.*   (Réderies 43)
       Ça, ça ne lui plaisait pas.   (French)
       'That, that didn't please him.'
   c. *Et pis tout o Ø est catalodjé don din ch'live-leu.*   (Jérôme V., speech)
       Et tout ça c'est catalogué donc dans ce livre-là.   (French)
       'And so all that is catalogued in that book.'

Previous research has revealed that the three forms are not variants of a single pronoun, but that *a* and the null form (Ø) are allomorphs of one pronoun, while *ch'* is a separate pronoun. As will be summarized below, the distribution of these three forms is governed by a complex interplay of syntactic and phonological constraints (Auger 2010). In this paper, I will compare neuter pronoun usage by four speakers in order to determine whether the same constraints govern the distribution of the three forms by native and non-native speakers.

2 Picard, *dravie*, or French?

In Western societies, and possibly in every society, one frequently hears negative comments concerning the speech of younger people. In the case of endangered languages, such comments often revolve around grammatical simplifications and borrowings from the socially dominant language

    [1]The present paper focuses on the variety spoken in Vimeu, a region located in the westernmost area of the Somme *département* in France.

by speakers with limited proficiency in the language of their elders. In Picard-speaking areas, such speech patterns are referred to as *dravie*, a practice that consists of 'throwing a few vintage [i.e., Picard] words into a French structure' (*Vints d'amont*, my translation).

Evidence abounds that, after centuries of being devalued, Picard is currently the object of an important revitalization effort. A few indications of the positive value that is now associated with Picard include the great success of translations of Astérix and Tintin *bandes dessinées* into Picard, the recent publication of books for people who want to learn Picard (Dawson 2002, 2003), bilingual road signs in both French and Picard that welcome visitors to many Picard towns,[2] and Picard-language billboards.

While there is much reason to rejoice in this new pride in the Picard language, linguists must wonder to what extent the changing sociolinguistic situation may affect the structures of the language. For instance, is it possible that, as is often the case with semi-speakers, second language learners do not fully master the complex rules that govern the use of specific linguistic forms and that their own linguistic usage might come to serve as a target for the next generations? What are the consequences of increased communication among speakers of different dialects? Specifically, might frequent communication with speakers who speak dialects with different rules favor the development of a Picard koiné and thus the disappearance of linguistic features or rules specific to one dialect? Finally, how might the frequent use of Picard in writing and the emerging literary movement affect a language which had for many centuries existed mainly in its spoken form?[3]

There is evidence that the depiction of Picard in some media portrayals suffers from some serious inaccuracies. Dawson (2008) discusses the linguistic infidelities in the movie *Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis*, a 2008 movie seen by over 20 million people, while Dawson (2006) and Landrecies (2006) concentrate on the Picard translation of a Lucky Luke comic book. In both cases, numerous ungrammatical structures and stereotyped uses are identified, and these are plausibly attributed to the incomplete linguistic competence of the movie's director and the translator of the comic book.

In this article, I will attempt to determine whether the complex system of neuter subject pronouns in the Vimeu region is undergoing simplification. This pronoun comprises three different forms, *ch'*, *a*, and a null form, as we saw in (1). The three neuter subject pronouns, which all coexist within the same grammar, as is illustrated by the examples in (2), all produced by the same author, share two important characteristics. First, they all impose default third person singular features on the verb with which they co-occur, and masculine features on predicate adjectives.[4] As can be seen in (3), morpho-syntactically singular *ch'est*, 'it is,' and *a soupe*,[5] 'it has dinner,' can refer to subjects overtly marked for plural number, and morphologically masculine *gris*, 'grey.masc,' can be a predicate of a grammatically feminine subject (*eine ruque*, 'a.fem bee'). Second, all three forms are compatible with *o*, the strong form of the neuter pronoun, as can be seen in (2).

(2) a. *Tout o ch'est à nous.*   (Lettes 4)
       'All that is ours.'
    b. *Mais tout o a n'est mie grave.*   (Lettes 114)
       'But all that is not serious.'
    c. *Tout o Ø est bieu.*   (Lettes 538)
       'All that is beautiful.'

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[2]It is interesting to note that a previous attempt to post Picard-language signs thirty years ago failed due to considerable resistance from the authorities.

[3]While many medieval texts were written in a Picard *scripta,* so much so that it is conceivable that Picard would have become the national language of France if the court had established itself in Amiens or Lille instead of the Parisian area, use of Picard in writing essentially ceased during the 16th century.

[4]However, note that nominal predicates can be plural, as seen in (3a). I attribute the difference between verbs and adjectives, on the one hand, and noun phrases, on the other, to the fact that number results from agreement in the former but is an inherent feature in the latter.

[5]Note that the 3sg verb form differs from its plural counterpart not just in its spelling (as it does in French, where *soupe* and *soupent* are both pronounced [sup]), but also in its phonological form. Indeed, the Picard 3pl verb form *soup't* is pronounced [supt].

(3) a. *Tous chés candidats ch'est des wépes.*   (Lettes 110)
   'All the candidates are interesting people.'
 b. *Pi des vius, a soupe éd boéne heure.*   (Chl'autocar 38)
   'And elderly people eat dinner early.'
 c. *Eine ruque Ø est gris.*   (Lionel D., 6/13/96)
   'A bee is gray.'

Given such similarities, we should wonder whether all three forms are allomorphs of the same pronoun or variants of the same variable. An analysis of their distribution in texts written by authors who had grown up speaking Picard and remained fluent speakers of the language rules out the possibility that the three forms might be variants of the same variable. Indeed, this analysis reveals mutually exclusive domains of use for each form which can be explained by two different factors. First, the type of predicate with which each form can be combined shows that *ch'* is a separate pronoun from *a* and the null form, with these latter two being allomorphs of a different pronoun. While the former, *ch'*, is the only neuter pronoun that can occur with nominal, prepositional, and clausal predicates, as well as in cleft constructions, the latter two are found with adjectival and verbal predicates. Second, the choice between *a* and the null form is governed by phonological factors: the null form occurs before non-high vowels, while *a* is found elsewhere. This is illustrated in (4) and (5) and summarized in Table 1 below.

(4) a. *Sin pére ch'étouot un gros férmieu.*   (Viu temps 25)
   'Her father was an important farmer.'
 b. *Pi cho't topète lo ch'est pour ti!*   (Autocar 21)
   'And this flask is for you!'
 c. *Ch'est conme eu, pi point eutrémint.*   (Rinchétte 152)
   'It's like that, and not otherwise.'
 d. *Bah! Ch'est rièn.*   (Rinchétte 79)
   'Bah! It is nothing.'
 e. *Ch'est-ti quo vos mouqueu d'mi?*   (Gronnèe 6)
   'Is it the case that you are making fun of me?'
 f. *Ch'est à l'maison d'Ugène éq j'alloais.*   (Réderies 136)
   'It is to Eugene's house that I was going.'
(5) a. *Étoait tchér.*   (Réderies 151)
   'It was expensive.'
 b. *A n'est point tchér!*   (Réderies 86)
   'It is not expensive!'
 c. *Alloait sans doute trop vite pour élle.*   (Autocar 51)
   'It was probably going too fast for her.'
 d. *A iro d'pire in pire.*   (Lettes 9)
   'It will get worse.'

Ch'	*a/Ø*	
+ DP predicate (4a)	+ adjectival predicate (5a, b)	
+ PP predicate (4b, c)	+ verbal predicate (5c, d)	
+ quantifier (4d)	*a*	*Ø*
+ clausal predicate (4e)	__C (5b)	__V [-high] (5a, c)
cleft constructions (4f)	__V [+high] (5d)	

Table 1: The distribution of neuter subject pronouns in Vimeu Picard.

In French, the neuter subject system is much simpler. In standard French, *ce/c'* is used before any form of the verb *être* 'to be', while *ça* is used with other verbs, as illustrated in (6). In many varieties of colloquial French, *ce* is used before forms of *être* that are vowel-initial, while *ça* is used in all other cases, such that we can see the two forms as allomorphs of the same pronoun, as Zribi-Hertz (1994) does. Examples of *ça* before consonant-initial forms of *être* can be seen in (7).

(6) a. *C'est mon ami.*
         'It is my friend.'
     b. *C'est beau.*
         'It is beautiful.'
     c. *C'est à moi.*
         'It is mine.'
     d. *C'est rien.*
         'It is nothing.'
     e. *Ce serait bien.*
         'It would be good.'
     f. *Ça depend.*
         'It depends.'
     g. *Ça arrive.*
         'It happens.'
(7) a. *Ça n'est ni français ni picard.*   (Joël G., Vimeu French)[6]
         'It is neither French nor Picard.'
     b. *Alors j'lui dis ben non ça serait pas correct* .   (Fabienne A., Vimeu French)
         'So I tell him well no that would not be OK.'

Thus, as we can see in these examples, the crucial role played by predicate type in Picard is much simpler in French. Furthermore, the system described above appears to be restricted to the Picard variety that is spoken in Vimeu. While a full study of other Picard varieties remains to be conducted, a preliminary analysis reveals a reduced role for predicate type and a system closer to that of colloquial French.[7] Given that all Picard speakers are fluent speakers of French and that some of them have acquired Picard as a second language later in life, that French occupies a central place in the lives of all Picard speakers, and that contact with speakers of other dialects of Picard has become fairly common, especially for speakers who are involved in the revitalization movement, there exists a distinct possibility that the complex system described above may be changing and evolving toward a more French-like system. Specifically, we should wonder whether the neuter subject pronoun system of Vimeu Picard may have covertly shifted toward that of French, thus constituting one subtle piece of evidence that the language used in the region is no longer Picard but rather *dravie*, in the terms of local Picard speakers, or even whether it may have become a regional variety of French, as was claimed by Bernard Poignant in the report on the regional languages of France that he submitted to the French government in 1998.

3 Methodology

The Picard of four different speakers will be analyzed in order to determine whether their use of neuter subject pronouns follows the rules that characterized the Picard of native speakers whose grammars may be hypothesized to be fairly immune from interference from French and other Picard varieties. Two of the speakers, Marc C.[8] and Joseph L., grew up speaking Picard as a native language. They differ in one important respect, however. Marc C. is what I call a *picardisant du cru*, that is, someone for whom Picard is simply a daily language. He is not involved in any revitalization movement, does not write in Picard, and rarely reads texts written in Picard. Joseph L. regularly participates in meetings of the *Picardisants du Ponthieu et du Vimeu,* a group of authors who meet once a month to read their texts written in Picard, and he is the author of numerous texts published in *Ch'Lanchron*, a magazine devoted to Picard literature. The other two speakers, Jean-Michel F. and Jérôme V., are second-language learners of Picard. Both grew up hearing Picard spoken by their grandparents and some neighbors, but it is not until they were young adults that

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[6]I thank Anne-José Villeneuve for providing these examples from her corpus of Vimeu French.

[7]Examples can be seen in (18) and (19).

[8]Subjects' names are pseudonyms. In order to preserve the anonymity of my subjects, I remain somewhat vague in describing the activities of the subjects involved in the Picard revitalization movement. For the same reason, I do not provide specific references to their written examples, even though all such examples are drawn from published sources.

they decided to learn the language. Both speakers are actively involved in the Picard revitalization movement, playing very active roles in numerous events that promote Picard literature and culture.

In addition to comparing four speakers, I will compare oral and written usage for the three of these four speakers who also write in Picard. In the past, such comparisons have revealed important differences in usage for some linguistic features (Auger 2003a). For instance, rates of subject doubling are consistently very high, even categorical, across speakers in both speech and writing. Examples are provided in (8), below. However, use of the auxiliary *avoér* 'to have' with verbs that, in French, are conjugated with the auxiliary *être* 'to be', which is illustrated in (9), differs greatly across speakers and media (i.e., spoken vs. written). The three of these speakers who are involved in revitalization efforts exhibit considerably higher rates of *avoér* usage than the other speaker, Marc C., both in their speech and in their writing.

(8) a. *Min grand-père i fsoait des serrules.*   (Joseph L., speech)
        'My grandfather, he made locks.'
     b. *Fonse i n'étoait point lo.*   (Joseph L., writing)
        'Alphonse, he wasn't there.'
(9) a. *Il est vnu amon d'min grand-père.*   (Joseph L., speech)
        'He has come to my grandfather's house.'
     b. *Sin pére il a vnu hiér.*   (Joseph L., writing)
        'His father, he has come yesterday.'

Oral data for this study come from sociolinguistic studies that I conducted between 1996 and 1998 and from radio shows aired during the 1990s. The written data are extracted from published texts. In order to determine the degree to which use of neuter subject pronouns conforms to the system that characterizes fluent speakers, every token was collected and classified as either expected or unexpected based on the rules summarized in Table 1. Examples that illustrate the coding procedure are given in Table 2:

Native-like uses	Non-native-like uses
Étoait tchér	*Ch'étoait tchér*
'It was expensive'	*A étoait tchér*
Ch'est rièn	*Est rièn*
'It's nothing'	*A est rièn*
A sroait boin	*Sroait boin*
'It would be good'	*Ché sroait boin*

Table 2: Examples of native-like and non-native-like uses.

4 Analysis

Table 3 tallies the data collected. For each speaker, the percentage of native-like uses and the number of tokens is provided for each form of the neuter subject pronoun. For instance, Marc C. used the null pronoun in a native-like fashion 88.9% of the time, or 8 times out of 9. Overall, this table reveals that with an overall target-like rate of 96.4%, the neuter subject system is largely mastered by these four speakers. Furthermore, the individual rates, which vary between 92.7% and 100%, indicate that all four speakers have managed to acquire the syntactic and phonological conditioning that governs the distribution of the three forms.

A closer look at the data reveals interesting differences between the oral and the written data, on the one hand, and between the native and non-native speakers, on the other. While the overall difference between speech and writing may appear small (92.2% vs. 98.9%), it is statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 19.4$; $p = 0.000$). Thus, it appears that these three speakers better approximate the norm of their elders when they have the opportunity to edit their usage. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that the same speakers sometimes correct themselves in their oral interviews. For example, Joseph L. corrects his use of the null form with a prepositional predicate in (10), while Jérôme V. corrects his use of *ch'* with an adjectival predicate in (11).

		Native Speakers				Non-native Speakers				Total	
		Marc C.		Joseph L.		Jean-Michel F.		Jérôme V.			
		%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Oral	Ø	88.9	9	100	15	100	7	92.3	13	95.5	44
	A	100	4	100	13	100	16	95.9	73	97.2	106
	Ch'	95.6	45	98.7	79	82.0	79	91.4	175	91.2	388
	Total	96.6	58	99.0	97	94.1	102	92.7	261	92.2	538
Written	Ø	--		100	13	100	28	93.3	15	98.2	56
	A			100	40	100	44	96.4	28	99.1	112
	Ch'			100	99	95.9	74	100	73	98.8	246
	Total			100	152	97.9	146	98.3	116	98.8	414

Table 3: Individual rates of target-like use of neuter subject pronouns in speech and writing.[9]

(10) *Est vrai, est conme- ch'est conme en français, hein?* (Joseph L., speech)
    'It's true, it's as- as in French, right?'
(11) *Ch'est- est dur, est dur, euh, est dur à foaire, hein?* (Jérôme V., speech)
    'It's- it's hard, it's hard, uh, it's hard to do, right?'

If we examine each speaker individually, a clear distinction emerges between Joseph L., on the one hand, and Jean-Michel F. and Jérôme V., on the other. Indeed, even though the rate of non-target-like pronouns is higher in speech than in writing for all three speakers, the difference is significant only for the two non-native speakers (Jean-Michel F.: $\chi^2 = 13.9$; $p = 0.00$; Jérôme V.: $\chi^2 = 4.71$; $p = 0.03$), but not for Joseph L., for whom it is negligible ($\chi^2 = 1.43$; $p = 0.23$). Moreover, if we look at each pronoun separately, it becomes clear that *ch'* is the only one that differs across the two media. While this difference does not reach significance for Jean-Michel F. ($\chi^2 = 0.865$; $p = 0.35$), probably due to his relatively small number of tokens, the difference is significant for Jérôme V. ($\chi^2 = 6.66$; $p = 0.01$). What this means, specifically, is that the two non-native speakers tend to use *ch'* in constructions in which native speakers would use *a* or its null counterpart. All such cases involve adjectival predicates, as seen in (12–15), that is, in constructions in which the null pronoun would have been expected. Similar structures can also be observed in the speech of native speakers, as illustrated in (16) and (17), but with a frequency clearly inferior to that observed among non-native speakers.

(12) *Ch'est pas pasque ch'est viux, qu'ch'est pas boin.[10]* (Jean-Michel F., speech)
    'It's not because it's old that it's not good.'
(13) *Ch'est pas boin pour min cholesterol, hein.* (Jean-Michel F., speech)
    'It's not good for my cholesterol, right.'
(14) *Ben oui, ch'est vrai.* (Jérôme V., speech)
    'Oh well, it's true.'
(15) *Ch'est vraimint abominabe.* (Jérôme V., speech)
    'It's really terrible.'
(16) *Ch'est point tout à foait péré.* (Joseph L., speech)
    'It's not quite the same.'
(17) *Mais ch'est déwerwigné.* (Marc C., speech)
    'But it's messed up.'

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[9]A few instances of French *c'/ça* occurring in otherwise Picard passages have been excluded from this table. Furthermore, a few instances of *cha*, a form typical of the Picard variety of Ponthieu, an area that borders Vimeu, have also been excluded. Interestingly, the latter are attested only in the speech of the two non-native speakers who live on the border between Vimeu and Ponthieu. All forms are restricted to the spoken data.

[10]Another notable aspect of Jean-Michel F.'s examples is the fact that they contain negative *pas* instead of *point* or *mie*. Auger (2003a) reports that use of *pas* is only observed in oral data and that it is frequent in two speakers: Marc C. and Jean-Michel F. I will return to this aspect of Jean-Michel's speech in the conclusion.

How can we explain the non-native speakers' pattern of use of neuter pronouns? The examples of self-correction show that these two speakers know the rules that determine the distribution of the three neuter forms among older, fluent speakers. Furthermore, their (near-) categorical native usage in writing suggests that when authors have a chance to edit their production, they choose to make their own usage more similar to that of the older native speakers analyzed in Auger (2010). However, in spontaneous speech, that is in settings in which self-monitoring is more difficult, we can attribute the generalization of *ch'* at the expense of the other neuter pronouns to the influence of French. As we saw in (6), French does not distinguish between nominal and adjectival predicates, for instance, and uses *ce* or its variant *ça* with all predicates introduced by the copula. In addition, we can invoke the possible influence of other Picard varieties. Data collected from texts written by speakers from the neighboring Amiénois region (18), from messages posted on the Achteure discussion list (19), and from advertising campaigns (20) reveal that *ch'* is commonly used with adjectival predicates in many Picard dialects.

(18) a. *Ch'est point si grave qu'éd t-ête un assassineu.*   (Tchot Phane 85:39)
       'It's not as bad as being a murderer.'
     b. *Ch'est point croéyabe.*   (Tchot Phane,Tchuin d'ziu, 16/6/09)
       'It's not believable.'
(19) a. *Mais ch'est pu parel!*   (Fernand Merchez, Achteure, 2/1/2005)
       'But it's no longer the same!'
     b. *Pi ch'est libe!*   (Alain Dawson, Achteure, 7/6/2010)
       'And it's free!'
     c. *Ch'est utopique.*   (Annie Bacouet, Achteure, 12/22/2007)
       'It's a utopia.'
(20) *Ch'est biau, pratique et pas ker.*   (Ikea billboard, 2007)
       'It's beautiful, practical, and not expensive.'

Given that adjectival predicates appear to be the main problematic construction for non-native speakers, let us examine that structure more closely and compare spoken and written usage for the same three speakers we have already examined, as well as for Thomas S., whose distinct sociolinguistic history will be discussed below. These numbers are reported in Table 4.

	Joseph L.		Jean-Michel F.		Jérôme V.		Thomas S.		Total	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Oral	92.3	26	0	43	46.3	41	9.2	109	24.2	219
Written	100	45	66.7	48	72.1	86	100	11	78.9	190
Total	97.2	71	35.2	91	63.8	127	17.5	120	49.6	409

Table 4: Neuter subject pronoun usage in adjectival predicates.

Once again, we observe important differences across speakers and media. Joseph L., the only native speaker, uses the "right" pronoun more than 90% of the time in his spoken language, and categorically so in the written language. Jérôme V. has a native-like performance in approximately half of his tokens in speech, but this proportion increases to 72% in writing. Jean-Michel F. shows an even more extreme difference, with no native-like tokens in speech, but a rate of 67% native-like tokens in writing. Once again, these results provide evidence that both speakers know the rules but that monitoring is required for overcoming interference from French.

Table 4 includes data from Thomas S., a speaker that I have not yet examined. Thomas S. grew up in a village in which Picard was, relatively speaking, better preserved than elsewhere. He heard a considerable amount of Picard while he was growing up even though his parents made an effort not to speak the language too much around their children. Yet, Thomas S. quickly developed an interest in the language and started attending meetings of the *Picardisants du Ponthieu et du Vimeu* at the age of 13. In spite of this early exposure, he rarely uses the "right" neuter subject in spontaneous conversation. As a matter of fact, most of the tokens that are target-like are found in contexts of self-correction as shown in (21). As can be inferred from his 9.2% native-like usage

in spoken language, most such occurrences are not corrected. In some cases, target-like occurrences are "miscorrected," as can be seen in (22),[11] thus providing more evidence of his uncertain mastery of this complex pattern. Yet, as is the case for the other speakers, his written data,[12] where he attains 100% native-like usage, provide evidence that he knows the rules that characterize older speakers and can use them when given a chance to monitor his usage. Surprising though it may seem that someone who acquired Picard at an earlier age than the other non-native speakers analyzed in this paper fares "worse" in his use of neuter subject pronouns, the fact that he has spent a significant part of his adult life in other Picard-speaking areas and that, as we saw above, the neuter pronoun system in those varieties resembles that of French more than that of Vimeu Picard, constitutes a plausible explanation for Thomas S.'s usage.

(21) a. *Ch'est point fréquent, oui... est point fréquent.*   (Thomas S., speech)
          'It's not frequent, yes, it's not frequent.'
      b. *Ah ben ch'est point si mal- est point si mal.*   (Thomas S., speech)
          'Ah well it's not so bad- it's not so bad.'
      c. *Ch'n'est point, a n'est point gênant, quoi.*   (Thomas S., speech)
          'It's not, it's not a problem, right.'
(22) *Ch'est vrai qu'est point- ch'est point aisé quoi.*   (Thomas S., speech)
      'It's true that it's not- it's not easy, right.'

5 Conclusion

In this paper, we have seen that the Picard used by non-native speakers differs from that of native speakers in subtle ways. While all four of the speakers analyzed in this paper use the three neuter subject forms and usually follow the same rules as their elders, the native speakers and non-native speakers differ in their use of the *ch'* pronoun. Interestingly though, such differences are found in the oral data ($\chi^2 = 15.0$; $p = 0.002$), but not in the written data ($\chi^2 = 3.0$; $p = 0.224$). Furthermore, the difference between native and non-native speakers does not appear to result from a complete collapse of the syntactic and phonological constraints that govern the distribution of *ch'* and *a/Ø*, but rather from the generalization of *ch'* to all non-verbal predicates. Thus, while non-native speakers use *a* and its null allomorph in the same contexts where native speakers use them, their frequency in these contexts is decreasing as a result of *ch'* encroaching upon the contexts traditionally reserved for the other neuter pronouns.

What does this mean for the Picard that will be used by future generations? Given the lack of transmission of the language from parents to children and the growing gap, in terms of both age and social background, between native speakers and neo-speakers, it is likely that non-native speakers who are actively involved in revitalizing Picard culture now have the strongest impact on the form of the language that will serve as input to new generations of learners. This is precisely the type of situation that Labov (2007) refers to as diffusion, as opposed to transmission. Whether new learners will acquire the traditional pattern of their ancestors or the new pattern will depend in large part on whether their input comes mostly from written or spoken Picard. Based on the research carried out so far, on numerous interviews with *picardisants du cru* and militants, and on my personal observations during field work, my belief is that writing is already playing a central role in the maintenance and revival of the Picard language and that this role is likely to increase in the future. While it is true that attitudes toward Picard have greatly improved and that many people who used to restrict their use of the language to private settings from which all *horzains* (that is, strangers) were excluded now feel a sense of pride in singing Picard songs or attending Picard plays and cultural events, it is also true that the language is rarely used in everyday interactions.

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[11]Interestingly, (22) is not a case of what Jacques Dulphy (*Ch'Lanchron* director, personal communication) describes as *hypervimeusismes*, that is, instances where *a* or its null allomorph occurs instead of the expected *ch'* pronoun. E.g.:
   (i)   *Est conme eu.*   'It's like that.' = 'That's how it is.'
   (ii) *Étouot un gros fërmieu*   'It was a big farmer.'
[12]Obviously, we must take care in interpreting these data, given the small number of tokens collected for this author. The small quantity of written texts for Thomas S. is precisely the reason why this speaker is not included in my larger sample.

Thus, apart from greetings and occasional codeswitches into Picard, oral uses of Picard most often involve performances based on written texts: plays, storytelling, readings, songs, etc.

The relative importance that writing has recently taken in the diffusion of Picard and the role that authors and editors have played in establishing the rules characteristic of the latest generations of native speakers stand in stark contrast with what has characterized the development of Picard for most of its life. Indeed, it is possible to attribute the prevalence in Picard of structures that teachers have long condemned in French (e.g., subject doubling, use of the conditional in *si*-clauses, use of *avoér* with pronominal and movement verbs) to the fact that, since Picard was excluded from classrooms and from "serious" written usage, its structures were not the object of overt corrections. Thus, Picard may represent what French might have looked like if it had not been subject to centuries of prescriptive pressures on the part of teachers and other linguistic authorities.

Recent research that compares the linguistic usage of different speakers in speech and in writing reveals differences that can be attributed to the development of a literary standard, the concomitant increased awareness of the ways in which Picard differs from standard French, and the choice of a Picard norm that clearly differs from that of standard French (Auger 2003b). While written usage accurately reflects oral usage for many linguistic features (e.g., vowel epenthesis, Auger 2002; subject doubling and resumptive pronouns in relative clauses, Auger 2003a), other features differ in very interesting ways. For instance, Auger (2003a) observed a striking difference between oral Picard, which makes use of three different adverbs in negative clauses, as illustrated in (23), and written Picard, in which only two different adverbs, *point* and *mie*, are attested. Furthermore, I provided evidence that strongly suggests that written usage affects spoken usage. Indeed, that study revealed that Marc C., our *picardisant du cru*, favors French-like *pas* as his most frequent negative adverb (75.4%). For their part, the three militants use *pas* much less frequently, with frequencies ranging from 3.4% for Jérôme V. to 37.8% for Jean-Michel F. I argued that these reduced rates in their spoken language are partly due to the efforts made by the same three speakers to avoid any uses of *pas* in their writing.

(23) a. *Ej n'y croés <u>point</u> gramint.*   (Jérôme V., speech)
          'I don't really believe it.'
      b. *"Ah mais mossieu, i n'a <u>mie</u> d' raison."*   (Jérôme V., speech)
          'Ah but sir, there's no reason.'
      c. *Mais j'vas <u>pas</u> vous dire toute.*   (Jérôme V., speech)
          'But I'm not going to tell everything.'

The extent to which writing influences the structure of Picard has yet to be determined by examining additional structures and additional speakers. However, the research conducted so far has already uncovered evidence that some speakers exhibit larger differences between speech and writing than others. Not surprisingly, native speakers like Joseph L. appear to vary little across the two mediums. Jean-Michel F., on the other hand, varies considerably for many features, as we can see in Table 5.

	Oral		Written	
	%	N	%	N
Avoér auxiliary	66.7	36	88.9	36
Pas 'not'	37.8	98	0	80
Subject doubling	77.8	27	95.5	137
Resumptive pronoun in subject relative	89.5	19	100	26

Table 5: Jean-Michel F.: oral vs. written usage for 4 linguistic features.

Additional evidence that Jean-Michel F. better approximates the rules of native speakers in writing than in speech comes from the distribution of *tout/tous* and *toute*. Among native speakers, the distribution of these two elements, which are variants of the universal quantifier, is governed by prosodic factors rather than by gender, as is the case in French: the *tout/tous* forms, which are pronounced [tu], occur inside prosodic phrases and the *toute(s)* forms, pronounced [tut], occur at

the end of intonational phrases and utterances (Petrush & Auger 2010), as illustrated in (24):

(24) a. *Pasqu'i voloait cacher <u>tous</u> chés pieutes fèes.*   (Jean-Michel F., written)
         'Because he wanted to chase all the small fairies.'
      b. *I djérissoait quasimint d'<u>toute</u>.*   (Jean-Michel F., written)
         'He would heal from almost everything.'

In his spoken data, Jean-Michel F. shows a considerable degree of uncertainty, since he uses *toute* in phrase-internal position 13% of the time (instead of *tout*, which is expected in this context) and equal numbers of *tout* and *toute* at the end of utterances (instead of categorically using *toute*). Once again, though, his written usage reveals that he is aware of the prosodic distribution of the two forms, with only one non-target-like use in phrase-internal position (out of 104 tokens).

Who would have guessed that Picard would still be spoken in the 21st century and that a significant literary movement would have given it a prominence not enjoyed since the Middle Ages? In this article, I have shown that new speakers and an increased reliance on writing have changed the language's grammar in subtle ways but revealed a strong will to preserve the regional grammar through the development of a local literary standard for Picard. Reliance on diffusion through written texts may, in the case of Vimeu Picard, constitute this endangered language's best chance to ensure that the grammar of its fluent speakers will be acquired and preserved in future generations.

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