Compensatory Stress Strategy Subsequent to Consonant Drops and Changes in Youth's Speech in Côte d'Ivoire

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Résumé: Cet article essaie de rendre compte du phénomène très caractéristique des chutes et changements de consonnes observés dans le français ordinaire de Côte d'Ivoire tel qu'il est pratiqué par les jeunes, en termes d'économie linguistique. Il établit que les consonnes fricatives sont les plus affectées par ce phénomène, à cause du plus grand effort articulatoire que leur production implique par rapport aux occlusives, et que les consonnes approximantes requièrent le moins d'effort articulatoire. Pour éviter les formes déviantes résultant des chutes ou changements de consonnes et éviter les erreurs d'interprétation, les locuteurs de ce parler ont recours à une stratégie prosodique de maintien du schèma accentuel du parler standard.

Mot-clés : *français ordinaire de côte d'ivoire, français populaire ivoirien, chutes consonantiques, parler des jeunes, français standard.*

Introduction

Abnormality may be thought as an action or a fact that comes counter to the rules or principles of how things are or are run. It can also be thought as behaving or running something weird regarding what is considered as normal. It has become quite usual that in grammar or linguistics, breaches in language uses, it is spoken or written, are subject to judgements spotting them out as being "erroneous" or "ill-formed" or even as "exceptions".

Addressing the question of abnormality in any aspect of a language amounts to question the nature of the norm or standard which comes into play in this respect, since as agreed on by all scholars, a language is a social product

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shared by members of a given community, the common means by which these members communicate with each other. In this view, as proposed by C. Baylon [2002], "norm" can be defined either as what he calls "norm of usage", that is the statistic "mean" representing "le registre des habitudes linguistiques sociales qui se régularisent par la vie en société" [Baylon, 2002: 162], or as "prescriptive norm", that is a "model to copy" which is "un registre de prescriptions écrites, imposé officiellement" [Baylon, 2002: 162]. These definitions raise the question of the homogeneity of the language structure and uses. There is indeed evidence that every language presents variations in different aspects (lexicon, syntax, phonetic/phonology, morphology…) which are the outcomes of both internal and external factors. Such variations tend to evolve into language varieties either actually noticeable in individual speakers or used by certain groups of speakers. In Côte d'Ivoire, French presents hierarchical varieties with regard to what is considered to be the standard form, which are termed "acrolect", the closest variety to the standard form, "mesolect" and "basilect", the farthest one from the standard form [Kouadio, 1999: 301]. Ivorian Ordinary French [Lafage, 2002] which is close to the latter variety reveals some violations of phonetic/phonological norms characterized by an articulatory oversimplification, that is consonant drops and changes, resulting in words, expressions and sentences which would be hard to recognize and interpret by co-speakers without resorting to stress pattern. The present paper tries to provide an explanation to such "abnormality" in terms of linguistic economy which can be stated as follows: Given the permanent antinomy between the communicative and expressive needs and the natural tendency toward minimum mental and physical activity [Martinet, 2005: 71], the speaker who seeks naturally to save muscular effort while aiming at making his discourse interpretable by his co-speaker will tend to drop any segment or group of segments which requires more muscular activity than those which require less activity. And he will compensate for the abnormality created by consonant drops by maintaining the stress pattern. In what follows, we first make a general sociolinguistic presentation of Côte d'Ivoire, and then we turn to generalities on the standard French phonological system and finally, we describe and analyze the phenomon of consonant drops and changes in ordinary Ivorian French as used by youth.

1. An Overwiew of Sociolinguistic profile of Côte d'Ivoire

Situated in western side of Africa, Côte d'Ivoire which spreads over an area of 422 640 km^2 formerly evolved under French colony and got independent in 1960. It shares its northern border with Mali and Burkina Faso, its western border with Guinea (Conakry) and Liberia, its eastern one with Ghana. It has a natural southern border represented by the Guinea Gulf. It is a mosaic of peoples and cultures. Its total population is estimated at 15.366.672 with the population of foreigners from Ecowas countries and other countries and areas of the world

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representing 4.000.047 (26%), as reported by Lafage (2002) base on the 1998 general census of population. But a rise in these estimates is plausible if we consider the recent estimates of total population which is 20.000.000 among whom the youth population represents 6.000.000 as reported by Kouadio & Boutin [2015: 257].

Since the independence, French has benefited from the special higher status of official language stipulated in the first article of the constitution of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire. It is the language of official communication of the media (radio, television programme), of the press (newspapers, reports, periodicals etc.), of education, of the administration etc. Besides, are more than sixty vernacular or local languages (ethnic groups) restricted to intra-ethnic, family uses and routine domestic communicative purposes etc.

From a geolinguistic viewpoint, these local languages are divided four linguistic branches all related to the Niger-Congo phylum. The languages of the kwa-branch are that spoken on the area covering the south-eastern part of the country. These are *baule, anyi, avikam, etoile, ajukru, alladian, abure, nzema, abbey, abidji, krobu, attie, mbatto, ebrie,* and *ega*, an enclave in the kru-branch; languages of the kru-branch are spoken on the south-western area of the country. The most representative of them are *bete, guere, dida, krumen, wobe*; the languages of the mande-branch are spoken in the north-western part of the country. The most representative ones are *jula, malinke (mahukakan, koyaga, worodugu etc.),* on the northern part of the area, and *dan (yakuba), gouro, yowre*, in its southern part. The gur-branch is the fourth one which includes languages spoken in north-eastern part of the area. *Senufo, kulango, tagbana, jimini, lobiri* are some of them.

The contact and coexistence of French with vernacular languages due to the diversity of contexts, situations and purposes of communication have not only given birth to local forms of French such as Ivorian Popular French (henceforth IPF), the oldest basilectal form of French, and an other variety close to it which Lafage [2002] termed "français ordinaire de Côte d'Ivoire" (ordinary French of Côte d'Ivoire, henceforth OIF). These forms have developed their own norm to fulfill a vehicular function with *jula tagbussi*, a language of "northern mande-branch spoken by every Moslem Ivorian or foreign mande speaker from the north who was born in the south of the country" [Braconnier et al., 1983 quoted by Lafage, 2002]. Besides OIF is also *nouchi*, formerly described as an Ivorian argot characterized by a mixing of French with Ivoirian languages (Jula, Baule, Bete…) and other European languages such as English, Spain etc. [Boutin & Kouadio, 2015] and classified by Kiessling and Maus [2004] as an "Urban Youth Language", characterized as developing language manipulation strategies. OIF is believed to have undergone IPF influence and has nowadays become the dominating means of communication in urban areas nationwide since it covers diverse communication needs of almost every

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member of social groups (literates, school dropouts, illiterates, teachers, sellers, youths and persons of older generation, workers and unemployed etc.).

2. Overview of the French Phonological System

This section will be devoted to presenting standard French phonemic systems, the common syllable templates and stress pattern for the obvious reason that segmental (consonant-vowel combinations) changes may be reflected in syllabic structures and by the way stress patterns of words or expressions involved.

2.1. Consonant System of French

There is no unanimity, in the literature, on the number of French phonemic consonants [Martin 1983:43; Dospinescu 2004:90-106; Builles 1998:183-196, etc.] but its full system seems to include 23 phonemic consonants [Delbecque (ed.), 2010:139-155] which can be arranged into classes based on the articulatory feature of manner of articulation as proceeded below and be classified in the chart that follows: 6 plosives subdivided into 3 voiceless: /p/, /t/, /c/ /k/ and 3 voiced: /b/, /d/, /ɟ/,/ɡ/; 4 nasals: /m/, /n/, /ɲ/, /ŋ/; 7 fricatives subdivided into 4 voiceless: /f/, /s/, /ʃ/, /h/ and 3 voiced /v/, /z/, /ʒ/; 1 lateral: /l/; 1 trill: /ʀ/ and 3 semi-vowels or approximants: /j/, /w/ et /ɥ/.

MANNER OF ARTICULATION \ **POINT OF ARTICULATION**			***BILABIAL***	***LABIO-DENTAL***	***ALVEOLAR***	***PRE-PALATAL PALATPALATAL***	***PALATAL***	***VELAR***	***UVULAR***
PLOSIVES	*ORAL*	*VOICELESS*	p		t		c	k	
		VOICED	b		d		ɟ	ɡ	
	NASAL	*VOICED*	m		n		ɲ	ŋ	
FRICATIVES	*ORAL*	*VOICELESS*		f	s	ʃ			
		VOICED		v	z	ʒ			
LATERAL	*ORAL*	*VOICED*			l				
TRILL	*ORAL*	*VOICED*							ʀ
APPROXIMANTS	*ORAL*	*VOICED*					j, ɥ	w	

Chart 1: The Phonemic Consonants of Standard French

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2.2. Standard french vowels

A look through our different sources in the literature led us to conclude that French has 16 phonemic vowels: But, as noted in Delbecque [2010], this system tends nowadays to evolve toward a system of ten vowels distributed in 4 classes on the basis of the feature of aperture: 3 high vowels: /i/, /y/ /u/; 3 mid-high vowels: /e/, /ø/, /o/; 6 mi-low vowels: /ɛ/, /ɛ̨/, /œ/, /œ̨/, /ɔ/, /ɔ̨/; 2 low vowels: /a/, /a̧/

	FRONT				***CENTRAL***		***BACK***	
	UNROUNDED		***ROUNDED***		***UNROUDED***		***ROUNDED***	
	ORAL	***NASAL***	***ORAL***	***NASAL***	***ORAL***	***NASAL***	***ORAL***	***NASAL***
HIGH	i		y				U	
MID-HIGH	ɛ		ɐ̟				O	
MID-LOW	ɛ	ɛ̨	ɐ̞	ɐ̞̃			ɔ	ɔ…
LOW					a	a…		

Chart 2 : The Phonemic Vowels of Standard French

« …Les locuteurs du français standard font de moins en moins la différence entre les timbres mi-fermés et mi-ouverts [e]-[ɛ], [ø]-[ɐ̞], [o]-[ɔ]. De même, la distinction entre les deux « a » ([a]-[ɑ]), et celle entre les nasales [ɛ̃]-[ɐ̞̃] tendent à disparaître. » [Delbecque, 2010: 151].

2.3. French syllable templates and stress pattern

The syllable can be defined as a phonological unit that a speaker's hearing perceives in one bit. It consists of one highly voiced phonic unit, i.e. the syllable center or syllable peak or syllable core (more generally a vowel, V henceforth) which is eventually combined with preceding or following less voiced phonic elements, i.e. marginal constituents (more generally consonants, C henceforth). So, in consonant-vowel combinations, the occurrence of a vowel will mean presence of a syllable. French words have a diversity of syllable templates. Some of them can be instantiated as below:

Syllable template	**French Word**	**Glosse**	**Syllable openness**
(1) V	Eau [o]	« water »	Open syllble template
(2) CV	Son [sɔ̨]	« sound »	
(3) CCV	Plaie [plɛ]	« wound »	
(4) CCCV	Croix [krwa]	« cross »	
(5) VC	Elle [ɛl]	« 3rd Pers. Sg. Femin. »	Closed syllabe template
(6) VCC	Autre [otR]	« other »	
(7) VCCC	Astre [astR]	« star »	
(8) CVC	Sac [sak]	« bag »	
(9) CVCC	vendre [vɑ̧dR]	« sell »	
(10) CVCCC	Tartre [taRtR]	« tartar »	

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There are suprasegments which come along with consonant-vowel combinations and come into play in the elaboration of meaning in discourse and which take syllables as their bearing units in words and in speech chain. *Stress* for example, which can be defined as the higher load of energy used by the speaker, falls on different syllables of the speech chain which are therefore contrasted with the other syllables (in pitch, intensity and duration), depending on the structural properties of the language. In French, in which it has a fixed position, stress always falls on the last syllable of the word or of the rhythmic group, i.e. combinations of words into phrases (noun, verb, adjective, adverb etc.), showing its demarcative function (i.e. indication of (syntactic) limits between groups of words or sentence constituents). In examples that will be presented below and henceforth, stress is represented by a superscript before the stressed syllable:

(11) a. *intention* [ɛ̟t̟a̟ˈsjɔ̟]"purpose" → *intentionnel* [ɛ̟t̟a̟sjɔ̟ˈnɛl] « (done) on purpose » → *intentionnellement* [ɛ̟t̟a̟sjɔ̟nɛləˈma̟] « purposely » (successive suffix-derived words),

b. *mauvais* [moˈvɛ] « bad » + *garçon* [gaRˈsɔ̟] « boy » → *mauvais garçon* [movɛgaRˈsɔ̟] « bad boy » (Noun phrase)

3. Analyzing consonant drops and changes in youths' speech

Our attention in the study of youths' use of OIF has been drawn on the general tendency in youths' speech toward phonemically unpredictable consonant drops and changes resulting in sorts of weird clips which can not be ascribed neither to borrowing nor to "form neology" [Guilbert, 1975].

3.1. Data

The data that will be examined here are largely collected from authentic conversations between young speakers of French recorded in several areas in Abidjan (schools, markets, home, street etc.). The data have been transcribed phonetically. For clarity of data exposition and easiness of data analysis, the orthographic original standard version of each item followed by its phonetic transcription (SF) is provided in the left-hand side while in the right-hand side, we have the OIF phonetic version followed by its contextual use and then the orthographic version of what the speaker means. Data presentation is based on the item's word-class: nouns, verbs, pronouns, preposition and a set of locutions and common expressions.

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- **Nouns**

SF	**OIF**
(12) a. L'argent [la☼ˈ🌜ą̃] >	[lą̃ᗒą̃] in [jaˈpalą̃ˈą̃] *Il n'y a pas <u>d'argent</u>* « There's no money »
b. maison [mɛˈzɔ̃] >	[mɛˈɔ̃] in [ˈjɛaˈlealamɛˈɔ̃] *je vais aller à la <u>maison</u>* « I want to go home »
c. plaisantin [plɛzą̃ᗒtɛ̃] >	[plɛą̃ᗒtɛ̃] in [sɛˈɛ̃plɛą̃ˈtɛ̃] *c'est un <u>plaisantin</u>* «He's just joking »
d. tantie [tą̃ᗒti] >	[ą̃ᗒti] in [bɔ̃ˈ🌜uą̃ˈti] *bonjour <u>tantie</u>* « Good morning aunty »
e. papa [paˈpa] >	[aˈpa] in [mɔ̃aˈpaɛmaˈlad] *mon papa est malade* « My dad is sick »

Some of the nouns refer to concrete entities, others to kinship relationship.

- **Pronouns**

SF	**OIF**
(13) a. je [🌜★] >	[ɐ̃e] in [jemą̃ˈɛ] *<u>je</u> m'en vais* « I'm leaving »
b. il [il] >	[i] in [iˈvatəkɔ̃ˈe] *<u>il va</u> te cogner* « He will kick you »

We have first person and third person singular subject pronouns.

- **Verbs**

SF	**OIF**
(14) a. vais [vɛ] >	[ɛ] in [jemą̃ˈɛ] *je m'en <u>vais</u>* « I'm leaving »
b. on va [ɔ̃ˈvaaˈle] >	[ą̃aˈle] in [vjɛ̃ˈą̃aˈle] *viens <u>on va aller</u>* « Come, we are leaving »
c. mélanger [melą̃ᗒ🌜e] >	[melą̃ᗒe] in [ɛlaˈtumelą̃ˈe] *elle a tout <u>mélangé</u>* « She's completely set everything upside down »
d. regarde [☼⌲ᗒ♈a☼d] >	[ɐ̃eᗒad] in [jeˈadiˈsi] *<u>regarde ici !</u>* « Just look here !»
e. cogner [kɔᗒ🡅e] >	[kɔ̃ᗒe] in [iˈvatəkɔ̃ᗒe] *il va te <u>cogner.</u>* « He will kick you »

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- **Preposition**

SF	**OIF**
(15) a. avec [a✂vɛk] >	[aˈɛ] in [ˈmwaaˈɛabu] *moi <u>avec</u> Abou* « Me and Abou »

- **Locutions and common expressions**

SF	**OIF**
(16) a. ça veut dire [sa✂v✂di☼] >	[sa✂e✂di] in [sa✂e✂dikwa] *ça veut dire quoi ?* « What does it mean ? »
b. quelque part [kɛlk✂pa☼] >	[kɛkeˈpa] in [jetɛaˈlekɛkeˈpa] *j'étais allé quelque part* « I had gone somewhere »
c. c'est comme ça que c'est [sɛkɔmˈsa(kə)✂sɛ] >	[sɛkɲˈąsaˈe] *C'est comme cela que c'est* « That's the way it is »
d. parce que [pa☼s★✂k✂] >	[paˈe] in [paˈetjɛˈla] *<u>parce que</u> tu es là* « Because you're here »
e. voici [vwaˈsi] >	[waˈi] dans [wa✂isai✂si] *<u>voici</u> ça ici* « Here it is »

3.3. Analysis, results and discussion

It seems from a close look at our data that the phenomenon in question involves certain classes of consonants depending on their word and syllabic occurrences.

- In initial position, the single case of consonant drop is that of the voiced labiodental fricative consonant *v* when followed by labial approximant *w* as in [vwaˈsi] > [waˈi] (16 e). Beside this, speakers also resort to consonant substitution as in [☼✂ŋ͡ma☼d] > [ɟe✂ad] (14d) where the oral palatal *j* substitutes for the initial trill *R* and in [ʝ★] > [ɟe] (13a) where the yod once again substitutes for the prepalatal voiced fricative *ʝ*.

- In medial position, consonants or consonants clusters are rather dropped, giving sometimes rise to subsequent vocalic assimilation and drop. Among the classes of consonants involved are the occlusive stops such as *t* in [tą✂ti] > [ą✂ti] (12d.); *p* in [paˈpa] > [aˈpa] (12e); *k* in [a✂vɛk] > [aˈɛ] (15a) and ŋ͡m [☼✂ŋ͡ma☼d] > [ɟe✂ad] (14d). The trill consonant *R* the lateral *l* are also dropped in medial position as in [☼★✂ŋ͡ma☼d] > [ɟe✂ad] (14d) respectively [il] > [i] (13b) and [kɛlk✂pa☼] > [kɛkeˈpa] (16b).

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Another aspect of the phenomenon of particular relevance for this study is the drop of fricatives in medial position: [mɛˈzo̱] > [mɛˈo̱] (12b); [vwaˈsi] > [waˈi] (16e); [melą̱✂e] > [melą̱✂e] (14c); [vɛ] > [ɛ] (14a); [o̱ˈvaaˈle] > [ą̱aˈle] (14b); [a✂vɛk] > [aˈɛ] (15a). Such is also the case of some odd trill-fricative combinations (i.e. *ms, rʒ, rs*) drop in medial position: [sɛkɔmˈsa(kə)✂sɛ]> [sɛko̱ˈą̱saˈe] (16c); [la☼ˈą̱] > [lą̱✂ą̱] (12a); [pa☼s★✂k☜] > [paˈe] (16d). In addition, nasal consonants seem to drop after nasal assimilation of a preceding vowel which in turn spreads the nasal feature to a following contiguous low or mid-low one that remains after another consonant (combination) drop. This is instantiated by (16c) [sɛkɔmˈsa(kə)✂sɛ] > [sɛko̱ˈą̱saˈe] and (14e) [kɔ✂e] > [ko̱✂e].

- In final position, a trill consonant is not maintained: [kɛlk☜✂pa☼] > [kɛkeˈpa] (16b). And as our data show there seems to be no consonant in final position just as if consonants were deleted in final position. So the language lacks closed syllable.

It seems that to account for facts properly, it might be necessary to consider all together (a) the classes of consonants involved from an articulatory point of view, (b) the syllable structure before and after consonants drop i.e. whether the stress pattern is maintained or not after consonants drop and (c) the cost of these modifications in terms of meaning and interpretation.

A careful look at the extension of the phenomenon to the consonant classes and the position in which it occurs, entices to say that fricative consonants particularly voiced ones are the most involved in the phenomenon. These consonants in fact require the most important articulatory activity while the approximants *j* and *w* require the least important one. But occlusive stops require less articulatory activity compared to fricatives. The difference in articulatory activity between occlusive stops and fricatives can be argued on psycholinguistic grounds by setting forth the universal evidence that occlusive stops are first acquired by children in the process of native sound acquisition [Delahaie, 2009: 23]. The difference in articulatory activity can also be accounted for by turning to the fact that the articulatory gesture for occlusive stops in French implies only a firm closure against the outward airflow at a given point of the vocal tract (lips, alveolum, palate, etc.) followed by a sudden release of closure with burst, in a lapse of 70-140 thousandth second for voiceless, and 40- 80 thousandth second for voiced stops. But fricative consonants on their side require articulatory gestures which create and maintain a bottleneck closure with continuous outward airflow in a lapse of 80-120 thousandth second for both voiceless and voiced [Landercy & Renard, 1977: 116-125].

There seems to be a greater articulatory activity with voiced fricatives than with voiceless ones due to the complex combination aerodynamic, muscular and elastic forces involved in phonation (voicing). As A. Marchal [2011: 53] puts it, phonation consists of a cyclic alternation of an aerodynamic retro-aspiratory effect known as 'Bernoulli effect' causing the glottis (vocal

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folds) to close gradually from front to back side and the transglottic pressure to fall down, the subglottic pressure increasing then to open the glottis slot before falling down again, and so on and so forth. That is a plausible explanation of why fricatives tend in favorable context to drop. What we mean by "favorable context" is the context of occurrence where their deletion would not alter the meaning of the word or expression which contains them or would not make it impossible to interpret. So in (16e), *v* drops in initial position because it shares a labial feature with *w* and the stress pattern is maintained: [vwa-ˈsi] (CCV-ˈCV) > [wa-ˈi] (CV-ˈV). One may object to the fact that in (14b), [vjɛ̨] in [vjɛ̨ˈa̧ˈle] in which *v* in initial position and followed by *j* doesn't drop. The obvious reason here is that *v* is phonetically different from *j*. Because it requires the least important articulatory activity, *j* tends to substitute for an initial fricative phonetically close to it or a trill which doesn't drop: [ɕ★] > [ɾe] (13a) and [☼★✂ɲa☼d] > [ɾe✂ad] (14d). The higher articulatory activity of voiced fricatives explains why they tend to drop in medial position.

But independent data can be provided in favor of why voiced fricatives tend to drop in youth speech in OIF. These data are based on the unstable phonological status of fricative consonants in Jula ("Tagboussi" as it's often called), Baule and Bete, three Ivorian languages from which most Ivorian languages loanwords found in nouchi, an urban language most spoken among youth and the local French closest to OIF, are borrowed [Dodo, 2017].

As evidenced by K. Tera [1983: 34, 41-42], /f/, /s/ and /z/ are the only phonemic fricatives of Jula although /z/ is found in very few loanwords, allowing thus for very few phonemic oppositions, and is sometimes preceded by nasal consonant n- where it's interpretable as contextual realization of /f/. D. Creissels and J. Kouadio, in their pioneering work on Baule [1977: 54-55], acknowledge that despite their phonemic status in the language, /f/, /s/, /v/ and /z/ are found in very few words and some French loanwords, /v/ and /z/ being most of the time used in words in which they occur after nasal consonants, as a result of the voicing of /f/ and /s/ in combination with the nasal consonant. Like Baule, Bete appears to only have the four fricatives /f/, /s/, /v/ and /z/ [Werle 1976; Vahoua, 2003:14].

The oddity or weirdness of the remaining structure, after consonants drop is reduced through maintaining its global syllabic organization (i.e. stress pattern). Ex: [mɛ-ˈzɔ̨] (CV-ˈCV > [mɛˈɔ̨] (CV-ˈV) (12b); [vwa-ˈsi] (CCV-ˈCV) > [waˈi] (CV-ˈV) (16e); [plɛ-za̧-✂tɛ̨] (CCV-CV-ˈCV > [plɛ-a̧-✂tɛ̨] (CCV-V-ˈCV) (12c). Taken as a single word in IPF where standard French analyses it as a combination of preceding article *le/l' + argent*, [la̧✂a̧] is obtained after double consonant drop: the final trill *R* of the first syllable of [la☼-ˈɕa̧], on the basis of the conclusion made above that this language lack closed syllables, and the fricative *ɕ* of the second syllable. The remaining oral vowel of the first syllable is then nasalized by the nasal vowel remaining in the second syllable. A phenomenon of triple consonant drop is observed in [pa☼-s★-✂k⌲] > [pa-ˈe]:

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The trill that closes the first syllable, the voiceless fricative *s* (with schwa *ə* known to be a weak vowel) and occlusive stop *k* in the third syllable. Although it has lower articulatory activity, *k* drops because the stressed syllable remains the same whose vowel shifts from rounded ɒ̫ to unrounded *e*. Quite the same way, the fact that the number of syllables and the stress pattern is maintained can account for the possibility of occlusive stops drop in [tą̰-ʞti] (CV-ˈCV) > [ą̰-ʞti] (V-ˈCV) (12d.) and in [pa-ˈpa] (CV-ˈCV) > [a-ˈpa] (V-ˈCV) (12e).

The argument developed above to account for medial voiced fricatives drop doesn't fundamentally differ from what we propose for [ɔ̰-ˈva-a-ˈle] > [ˈą̰-a-ˈle] (14b): the drop of the voiced fricative *v*. Subsequently, the raining vowel of the second syllable *va* fuses with the preceding nasal vowel *ɔ̰*, representing a French general impersonal pronoun into a single mixed form *ą̰*. Through it, the stressed pattern of the original structure is maintained: two stresses.

The original French *c'est comme ça que c'est* [sɛ-kɔm-ˈsa-(kə)-ʞsɛ] has become stereotyped in youths' speech as [sɛ-kɔ̰-ˈą̰-sa-ˈe] (16c). Here again, by virtue of the lack of closed syllable, syllable final *–m* drops after spreading its nasal feature onto the preceding vowel *ɔ*. After the drop of third syllable initial *s*, the remaining vowel gets in turn nasalized by the preceding vowel *ɔ̰*. The fourth syllable *kə* represents the French relative pronoun which is here used as a focalizer *c'est…que*. In IPF, such morpheme are omitted as in *c'est lui que j'ai vu* > *c'est lui j'ai vu* …This explains why it's omitted in (16c). In addition, the last syllable *sɛ* represents a French short form of a predicative marker *c'est* which is rendered in IPF by its full (two-syllable) from *ça est* pronounced [sa-ˈe]. This stereotyped expression comply with the original stress pattern, the first stress falling on the reduced third syllable while the second one falls on the last syllable of the full form of the predicative marker.

Conclusion

This study tried to provide satisfactory answers to questions related to unusual consonant drops or change in youths' speech in one form of local French. The striking fact is that in youths' speech voiced fricatives are the consonants which the phenomenon involves the most since they are characterized by more articulatory activity than voiceless fricatives and occlusive stops while approximant consonants are characterized by least articulatory activity.

If there seems to be a general rule which forbids the occurrence of consonants in final position, it's relevant to note that there is no rule which determines the possibility of a given class of consonants to be dropped in medial position. That is where the speakers employ the prosodic strategy of original stress pattern maintaining as linguistic clues to help his co-speakers avoid weird or odd forms that would lead to erroneous interpretation.

From a viewpoint of language evolution, there are grounds to believe that we are in the presence of a phenomenon which aims at reducing to a

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minimum the phonological system of this variety of local French and it would be interesting to study the impact of this phenomenon on local French mainly from a pedagogical viewpoint.

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