A HOLISTIC SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE ON THE GRAMMARIANS AND *OUISME* IN THE PHONETIC HISTORY OF FRENCH[1]

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„Ne pas signaler à l'étudiant que *il n'y a qu'à*, *tu n'as qu'à*, […], se réalisent le plus souvent comme /jaka/, /taka/, c'est l'exposer à perdre pied à chaque instant dans les échanges linguistiques avec le Français" – André Martinet (1990)

Abstract. This study investigates early-modern grammarians of French and their accounts of an intriguing and famous phenomenon called 'ouisme'. The research targets a gap in the field, as 'ouisme' has remained, paradoxically, little investigated. Drawing on sociolinguistic principles, the evidence base for the phenomenon is expanded, by treating the grammarians as legitimate subjects of study; scrutiny of their sociolinguistic attitude and behaviour is made an integral part of the explanation and analysis of 'ouisme', a vibrant variant of a linguistic variable, whose usage is examined in a complex social context. The results are rewarding, in two main respects: on the one hand, a completely new understanding of the phenomenon, its usage and the terminology employed to characterize it; on the other hand, the methodology of focusing on the grammarians' testimonies and sociolinguistic attitude and behaviour provides a potential template for future work on historical features of French and other languages.

Keywords: *ouisme, grammarians*, *French, historical sociolinguistics, descriptivism, prescriptivism, proscriptivism, sociolinguistic behaviour*, *linguistic variation*.

1. INTRODUCTION

In his discussion of *oüisme*[3], in early–modern French, Brunot (1906: 251) described the phenomenon as '[u]ne des questions les plus embrouillées de

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[3] This spelling of oüisme, with a diaeresis on *u*, is being used, only for the first time, in this study, the usual spellings in the literature being either ouïsme (with the diaeresis on *i*) or ouisme (without diaeresis). Justification for the new spelling will become clear by the end of this article. Henceforth (apart from instances of its use as a quotation), it will be spelt this way, left in roman font, and with 'i', rather than 16th century 'y'.

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l'histoire phonétique du français au XVI[e] siècle'. Later, he observed that "[l]es résultats de l'intervention des 'autorités' aboutissent souvent aux contradictions les plus singulières" (1947:177). The vehemence of these statements and their implications cannot be over–stated. It is, therefore, fairly surprising that relatively little investigation has been conducted into the operations of the 'authorities' (who, apparently, left behind a great deal of confusion and remarkable contradictions about oüisme) and into the nature of oüisme per se, in what has come to be known as'la querelle de l'ouisme'[4].

To the best of my knowledge, Holder (1970) is the only major work focused on the subject. He, like Brunot, acknowledged that oüisme was "une des plus curieuses [questions de phonétique] du point de vue linguistique" (p. 1); but, apart from a statement in his Conclusion that "[n]ous espérons avoir fait ressortir, de nouveau, l'importance du jeu entre les facteurs linguistiques et extralinguistiques qui semble être une constante de toute évolution phonétique" (pp. 141–42), there is no substantive extra-linguistic (≈ sociolinguistic) analysis in his work, beyond the reiteration of the sociolinguistic value judgements of the grammarians. This means that there is a gap in the understanding of this celebrated feature in the phonetic history of French. It is that gap that the present study intends to address, because it is believed that the practice of merely citing comments from the grammarians, without subjecting them to critical analysis, is not sufficient to do justice to a topic that has so much intrigued generations of scholars.

The objective of this article is multi-faceted and can be viewed from three broad perspectives: (a) to present and treat the 'authorities' as legitimate sociolinguistic subjects of study, and their *modi operandi* as typical sociolinguistic attitudes and behaviours, both based on general sociolinguistic realities of any language, past or present; (b) to scrutinize the nature of oüisme, much more than has been done before, both as a variant of a linguistic feature and as a term, in order to explain the true nature – sociolinguistically speaking – of the supposed confusion and contradictions inherent in the efforts of the 'authorities', as noted by Brunot; and (c) to contribute a viable, non–restrictive, non-language-specific methodology to researching historical states of languages, including French.

2. THE PHENOMENON

Attribute d to Tabourot (1587), oüisme was, apparently, a pejorative term applied to the use of *ou*, in place of *o*, in a number of French words, such as*amour*, as *soupir*, *beaucoup*, *Bourdeaux*, *chouse*, *goudron*, *Roume*. There has been absolute unanimity amongst modern historians of the language that the spelling *ou* was

[4] Some historians of the language have used the expression "la querelle des ouistes et des non-ouistes".

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pronounced [u], during the 16th and 17th centuries (see, for example, Brunot 1906, 1947; Rosset 1911; Dauzat 1930; Fouché 1956; Pope 1934; Holder 1970; Ayres–Bennett 1987, 1990, 1996, 2004, 2011; Lodge 1993, 2004; Posner 1997; Fournier 2007; Boudreau 2009; Cichocki and Beaulieu 2010; Keating 2011). A closer examination of the feature indicates, however, that modern understanding of the term might not be entirely correct. It becomes necessary to investigate whether *ou* in Tabourot's 'ouysme' was based on a different pronunciation and, if so, whether we could be dealing with a misnomer and its implications for an aspect of the history of French.

3. THE GRAMMARIANS

This is the collective designation for those early-modern linguistic thinkers, in Western Europe, who wrote variegated works on the emerging non-classical languages, and attempted to codify them. It is this miscellaneous group of scholars that Brunot called the 'authorities'. In this article, they will be referred to with the more general, and more neutral, label 'the grammarians'; the former appellation is too semantically loaded, particularly as, in this article, the grammarians will be scrutinized, without inhibition, as sociolinguistic subjects.

Modern scholarship on the grammarians is extensive, but there is some limitation as to how the accounts of the grammarians, not only of French, have been perceived and/or put to use, in modern times. Writing about the case of Spanish, Anipa (2001: 2) observed: "Unfortunately, […] one finds only isolated quotations taken from one or two of the many grammarians, […], on which firm conclusions are usually based". This observation obtains for modern use of the work of the grammarians of French as well. The contention is that there is much more to the grammarians' accounts than meets the eye. An enormous reserve of latent information in their records still remains to be tapped; and one of the best ways to harness that information is by filtering their accounts through the prism of established sociolinguistic principles.

To begin with, the grammarians' accounts are second to none, compared with any other source available to the historian of the language, as aptly noted by Thurot (1881: i): "[j]e n'ignore pas qu'il est d'autres témoignages; mais ils ne peuvent être interprétés qu'au moyen des témoignages des grammairiens. Ceux-ci donnent en quelque sorte une lumière directe; la lumière des autres n'est que réfléchie". This is an incontestable observation, because the grammarians lived, in flesh and blood, in the language of their day; they themselves used it, heard others use it around them all the time, reflected upon it, attempted to reduce it to rule and to dictate how it should be used. The fact that they were witnesses to, and actors in, the social milieu of their discussions of oüisme renders redundant the need to evoke the Uniformitarian Principle, to be able to make a case for the reality of their accounts and the wealth of inferences that can be drawn from them, towards building up a

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more realistic picture of early-modern French. In the process of portraying that reality, they left behind an abundant amount of linguistic value judgements, as well as inconsistencies, self–contradictions, etc. All of that is treasure trove for the historical sociolinguist and, by extension, for future advancement of the histories of the languages that we investigate.

3.1. On their "Civil War"

An important dimension of the grammarians is the fact that they did not operate as a homogeneous group, who consciously worked in harmony or cooperatively towards a common goal. The reality could not have been further off. They were bitter rivals amongst themselves, for various social reasons, including class consciousness, geographical origins, political-religious affiliation, and the extent of elitism and ideology of the standard that each one subscribed to.

The propensity to discuss, question, frown on, make fun of, and disparage the way in which other people speak, is one of the basic human instincts − a universal sociolinguistic behaviour, even in societies with no standard languages to serve as points of reference. Natural as such behaviour is, it constitutes no objective or scientific treatment of languages; and denying the existence of the behaviour would be no less subjective and unscientific. The effects of the said instinct are magnified exponentially, when social variables are factored into an individual's linguistic behaviour. Extrapolating these facts to the grammarians opens up a new portal of knowledge that is crucial to understanding their accounts, which must be objectively vetted, alongside other sources of information, as part of a more rewarding approach (Anipa 2006).The discipline of sociolinguistics, which celebrates the variable usage of all native speakers of a language (irrespective of their social status), is the way forward, as it helps negotiate the limitations of traditional historical linguistics.

The fervent activities of the grammarians surrounding oüisme are fascinating and an outline of the social forces that served as the catalyst and driving force for those activities is worthwhile. Social stratification, a timeless and ubiquitous feature of human societies, was a burning issue in early-modern Western Europe[5]. Unsurprisingly, the grammarians exhibited that, as well as the intellectual capital that they hoped to draw from it, through a range of unflattering comments about their compatriots (including fellow grammarians). For example, they described other citizens as exhibiting behaviours (in their linguistic usage) that were as absurdly capricious as those of 'pregnant women'; they used such descriptions as 'nigauds', 'sottise', 'folie' about other speakers of French. Geographical variation

[5] Pierre de Ronsard (1565) was perhaps the grammarian, who most notoriously went to extraordinary lengths in stirring up snobbery amongst the upper classes against other French citizens, in direct relation to language usage (see Anipa 2001: xix, for a hint of that attitude).

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in languages is the most recognizable indicator of varieties of the same language. The grammarians did not hesitate in pointing out pejoratively the regions/provinces of France in which they *believed* that oüisme was used; neither l'Île-de-France nor Paris was spared condemnations. Political–religious affiliation was another (complicated) factor: we had, for instance, the interconnection of the Monarchy, the Church, the Ligue, the Fronde, etc., all imbued with the intoxicating atmosphere of the Reformation and Counter–Reformation. Sentiments based on such affiliations and inclinations had their effects on the linguistic debate, including on oüisme. Naturally, a grammarian who was anti-Monarchy and anti-Court would be more inclined to dislike the language usage of courtiers, and vice versa. And, since there was no separation between Church and State, an anti-Court grammarian was also anti-Catholic, and anti-Italian, and (unless areligious) most probably Protestant. The resultant tension could not but play out in linguistic discussions, such as oüisme. The level of acrimony embedded in Henri Estienne's (1582) "N'estes vous pas bien de grands fous" (see section 4.3, below), referring to courtiers in his native Paris, and similar pronouncements of other grammarians, could only be fully appreciated in context[6]. That tense and conflictive context was well captured in the title of the work of one of them, Alemand (1688), as a civil war amongst the French over the language: *Nouvelles observations ou guerre civile des François sur la langue*. For his part, Milleran (1692: 144) gave the following offensive description of the geographical origins of a fellow grammarian Honorat Rambaud: '[à] Arles, vile [*sic*] sur le Rhone, il y a une academie françoise, quoiqu'en Provence, où on ne parle françois que par accident' (cited by Thurot 1881: xxxvi)[7].

There are two aspects of the 'civil war' over the language that should be highlighted; they can be seen to have had *temporal* and *demographic* characteristics. On the temporal front, the 'civil war' had been raging for a century, before Alemand (b. 1643), and, having been a war of attrition, outlived him as well (d. 1728). Naturally, language and sociolinguistic behaviour are not phenomena that can easily fall under anyone's control, however powerful he might be.

[6] Henri Estienne epitomized the protestant, anti-Catholic, anti-Court and anti–Italian grammarian of 16th-century France. Forced to emigrate to Switzerland, he was in a good position to carry on disseminating his views, as he ran his own printing press. The following title of one of his published works speaks for itself: *Deux dialogues du nouveau langage françois, italianizé et autrement desguizé, principalement entre les courtisans de ce temps, de plusieurs nouveautez qui ont accompagné ceste nouveauté de langage, de quelques courtisanismes modernes, et de quelques singularitez courtisanesques*. Another example was Théodore de Bèze, who spent a good deal of time moaning about the decadence of the French language. Like all the grammarians, he was elitist and fervently believed that French pronunciation, in the Court, gradually deteriorated from the death of King Francis I (i.e., from 1547) – obviously, a well-known cross-cultural fallacy.

[7] Despite the fact that, in England, the bulk of the grammarians' activities occurred in the 18th century, there is earlier evidence of writers 'passing moral judgement on fellow writers on the grounds of incorrect language and innovations in speech' (Watts 2007: 505; see also Milroy and Milroy 1999 [1985]).

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Regarding the demographic aspect, the 'civil war' was being fought by only a minimally tiny proportion of the French population; obviously, Alemand's title did not reflect that reality.

In real life, whilst that tiny minority argued amongst themselves, the overwhelming majority of French society went about their daily lives, speaking their language as usual, hardly paying attention to what anybody was condemning or encouraging or discouraging. This point was encapsulated in the following reaction by a courtier (who was being criticized about violations of Greek and Latin etymologies in language usage in the Court):

> Il semble que vous imaginez une cour telle que pourroit estre une cour de parlement, où, à la vérité, on prend un peu garde à telle chose. Mais pensez–vous qu'en la cour du roy, quant au langage, on se regle sur ceux qui gardent quelques regles? Pensez-vous qu'on suive volontiers ceux qui tiennent le droit chemin? Au contraire, on prend plaisir d'aller à travers les chams à l'égarée, et principalement quand on sçait que quelque grand, ou, pour le moins, quelque mignon, a passé là, encore qu'il n'y soit passé sans trebuscher plusieurs fois (Estienne 1582: 84; cited by Anipa 2001: 21)

Indeed, the vast majority of the French population did not voluntarily follow 'ceux qui tiennent le droit chemin'. But the issue goes beyond that: 'le droit chemin', as used by the courtier, was heavily sarcastic, since he was making fun of the pedantic grammarian, who, erroneously, had believed that people were paying attention to his wishful thinking.

In language matters, and from the native speaker's perspective, *ipse dixit* can only be a fallacy (Hansen 2015). Coupled with this is the basic fact that one cannot be an expert in something that, scientifically speaking, is non–existent, but only imagined, such as a standard *spoken* language[8]. It is a sociolinguistic truism that not only does each individual speak differently, but the same individual does not speak in the same way all the time. Thus, the argumentation that there can be no expert in an *oral* standard language can be logically formulated (Pietroski 2014) as: "No person can be an expert in a non–existent phenomenon; a standard *spoken* language is non–existent; there can be no expert in a standard *spoken* language". That was the reason why the grammarians sometimes vented their frustration, because no average native speaker was even aware of their endeavours, let alone paying attention to them. French citizens had to be coerced, through State machinery – the Académie française – over a long period of time, in order to be

[8] Milroy and Milroy (1999 [1985]: 19) point out the imagined nature of standard languages: 'It seems appropriate to speak more abstractly of standardisation as an ideology, and a standard language as an idea in the mind rather than a reality – a set of abstract norms to which actual usage may conform to a greater or lesser extent', an assertion echoed by other sociolinguists, for example, that to teach standard spoken English requires that we take on the task of showing what it is (see Bex and Watts 1999), and that "there is no such thing as oral standard English" (Watts 2007: 501). This reality obtains for any language, including French, and, specifically, early-modern French.

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able to shift from the *individualist* mode to the *conformity* mode of linguistic behaviour (see Hudson 1996: 12).

4. HOW THE GRAMMARIANS TREATED OÜISME: ANALYSIS AND EXPLANATION

As outlined above, a much wider, universalist and non-restrictive perspective is what is needed, for better comprehension of oüisme as a phenomenon and as a term, since the traditional practice of simply citing comments from the grammarians does not do justice to the subject.

4.1. Descriptivism and Oüisme

One of the fundamental principles of linguistics as a social science is that linguists do not prescribe usage; that is a philosophy that we proudly profess. Linguists are expected only to *describe* whatever features native speakers of a given language use. In practice, however, there is no sharp dividing line between prescriptivists and professional linguists, since the former do describe as well, whilst the latter equally prescribe, even if only unwittingly. As Cameron (1995: 9) has put it, "[w]e are all of us closet prescriptivists − or as I prefer to put it, verbal hygienists" (but see section 4.3, below). There is evidence in the accounts of the grammarians of French that they carried out a degree of descriptivism of oüisme; herewith a small, but representative, sample:

> (1) Et toutes fois autant y a il de difference en leur prononciation qu'il y a entre deux gottes d'eau […] I'entens bien qu'on me dira que si nous escriuons *amor* qu'on prononcera cest *o*, […]. Mais aussi diray ie qu'on le pourra aussi bien prononcer clos comme on fait en *tondre*, *noz*, *hoste*, *compaignon*, et en assez d'autre: esquelz certainement la prononciation est toute telle qu'en *amour*, *pour*, *courir*, *pouuoir* […]. Et à ce que ie puis cognoistre nous ne trouuons ceste diuersité de prononciation qu'auecq' *r*. Car deuant les autres consonantes il me semble qu'il se prononce tousiours clos: et s'il s'en trouue de prononcez ouuerts, ils sont bien rares (Meigret 1542, in Thurot 1881: 241)
> (2) Nous pouuons dire qu'en nostre langue, tout ainsi qu'en la Grecque, il se trouue vn *o* petit et vn *o* grand […] lesquels nous confondons en l'orthographe, faulte de charactere, quoy que neantmoins nous y facions bien entendre de la difference en prononçant (Du Val 1604, in Thurot 1881: 243)
> (3) On fait usage de la lettre *o* pour peindre deux sons qui different en ce que l'un est clair et l'autre sourd. Ce deuxième approche du son *ou*; et quoique la brieveté ne répugne pas à sa nature, […], il est toujours long suivant les endroits où il est placé (Harduin 1757, in Thurot 1881: 244)

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(4) *Tholose* se prononce *Thoulouse* […]. *Du Molins* se prononce *Du Moulins* […]. *Noe* se prononce *Noue* (Patru 1674, in Thurot 1881: 251–265)
(5) On trouve des Parisiens qui disent *norir* pour *nourrir* (Dumas 1733, in Thurot 1881: 254)

4.2. Language Codification and Oüisme

The classic framework of language standardization comprises four stages (Haugen 1966): (a) *Selection* (i.e., the choice of a language or variety of it, on which the desired standard should be based); (b) *Codification* (i.e., the set of operations designed to bring about minimal variation in form); (c) *Elaboration* of functions or *Intellectualization* (i.e., refinement aimed at achieving maximal variation in function); and (d) *Enforcement* (i.e., the promotion of the standard norm by control over speech and writing habits through orthoepy and orthography).

In modern times, specific individuals and bodies are officially charged with language planning tasks, normally as a consequence a given State's language policy[9].That did not exist explicitly in early-modern times and, for that matter, not in France (at least, until the establishment of the French Academy). For that reason, the grammarians were self-appointed language codifiers; but that does not take away from the fact that they had a set of well-meaning aspirations. In fact, in the literature on the histories of Western European languages, the label 'the codifiers' is synonymous with 'the grammarians', a testimony to their massive contribution to the process that culminated in today's written standard languages and their socio-political functions in modern States.

A close look at the grammarians, through the classic framework of standardization, reveals that their operations compressed all four stages of the process in to a single, multi–dimensional one. Thus, even the variety of the language on which to base the standard was undecided: oüisme, in nearly all varieties of French, was praised by many of them, condemned by many, and simultaneously condemned and praised by all of them. In the absence of any central directive at work, their overall performance may come across to modern historians of French, such as Brunot, as confused, disorganized and contradictory.

Language standardization entails having 'to make some embarrassing decisions' (Haugen 1966: 932), since it invariably involves ironing out variation, by stigmatising forms found in regional or working–class varieties (Poplack *et al* 2002: 89). Therefore, the comportment of the grammarians towards other native users of their own mother tongue should not be overly surprising.

[9] Kaplan and Baldauf Jr. (1997: xi) remind us that 'language planning' and 'language policy' are not one and the same, but 'actually represent two quite distinct aspects of the systematised language change process'.

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4.3. Prescriptivism and Oüisme

Although sociolinguists (who thrive on language variation) are, sometimes, unable to escape entirely their own *bête noire* – prescriptivism – it would be unwise to assume that they have the same attitudes as prescriptivist grammarians (past or present), because such an assumption would amount to arguing, for example, that passive smokers have identical attitudes to smoking as real smokers do, based on the similarity in the end results of either act (if passive smoking could be called an act; it should be an experience, rather than an act). "To prescribe and to proscribe seem to have been coordinate aims of the grammarians" (Baugh and Cable 1994: 273).

One reason for the unwelcome lumping together of genuine prescriptivists and those who prescribe inadvertently is the traditional blurring of the two concepts of prescriptivism and proscritivism into a polysemic term *prescriptivism*: two sides of a coin do not constitute the same side of a coin. In other words, care must be taken to separate the deontic concepts of 'ought to be'/'desirable' (prescriptive) from that of 'must not'/'forbidden' (proscriptive) ones (Anipa 2007: 114–115). This is fundamental to the accounts of the grammarians, who actively engaged in both facets of deontic attitudes and behaviours. In a section entitled 'Weakness of the Early Grammarians', Baugh and Cable (1994: 280–281) make this pertinent observation:

> While acknowledging the results attained by the […] grammarians […], it is necessary to emphasize the serious limitations in nearly all of them. Their greatest weakness was, of course, their failure, except in one or two conspicuous cases, to recognize the importance of usage as the sole arbiter in linguistic matters. They did not realize, or refuse to acknowledge, that changes in language often appear to be capricious and unreasonable – in other words, are the result of forces too complex to be fully analyzed or predicted. Accordingly they approached most questions in the belief that they could be solved by logic and that the solutions could be imposed upon the world by authoritative decree. Hence the constant attempt to legislate one construction into use and another out of use. In this attempt little or no recognition was shown for the legitimacy of divided usage. […] At the root of all their mistakes was their ignorance of the processes of linguistic change.

The authors add that '[s]imilar weaknesses characterized the attempts to reform the vocabulary at this time. Everyone felt competent to "purify" the language by proscribing words and expressions because they were too old or too new, or were slang or cant or harsh sounding, or for no other reason than that they disliked them'[10]. A sample of the grammarians' prescription of oüisme follows:

[10] Obviously, this modern linguistic stance is diametrically opposed to the expectations of such historians of the French language as Brunot, Rosset, etc., who, taking the grammarians to be authorities, were unaware of the latters' weaknesses, and have only sought, via *ad verecundiam*, to perpetuate their value judgements on variation and usage.

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(1) C'est [*arroser*] qu'il faut dire, & non pas *arrouser*, quoy que la plus part le disent & l'escriuent, cette erreur estant nee lors que l'on prononcoit *chouse* pour *chose*, *cousté*, pour *costé*, & *foussé* pour *fossé* (Vaugelas 1647: 219–20). […]. Il faut dire *portrait*, & non pas *pourtrait* auec *u*, comme la plus part ont accoustumé de le prononcer, & de l'escrire (ibid., p. 340)
(2) *Bourdeaux*: nos pères écrivoient plus communément *Bordeaux*… Mais *Bourdeaux* est mieux aujourd'hui, et il faut toujours le prononcer ainsi, quoique communément ceux du pays prononcent *Bordeaux*' (Trévoux 1752, in Thurot 1881: 263)
(3) Il faut dire indubitablement *nourrir*, *nourice*, et non pas *norir*, *norice*' (Ménage 1672, in Thurot 1881: 253)[11]
(4) L'usage es pour *nourriture* et non pas pour *norriture*, qui ne se dit que par le petit peuple […]. *Nourrissier*: lorsqu'on veut parler comme les honnêtes gens, on dit *nourrissier* et non pas *norrissier*' […]; '*coulombier*, *colombier*: on ne dit plus présentement que *coulombier*, et tel est le bon plaisir de l'usage' […]; '*porcelaine*, *pourcelaine*: l'un et l'autre se dit, mais le premier est le plus usité (Richelet 1680, in Thurot 1881: 254)
(5) Les Parisiens disent *colombier* et non pas *coulombier*, c'est donc comme il faut écrire et parler (Bérain 1675, in Thurot 1881: 254)

4.4. Proscriptivism and Oüisme

Proceeding from the points made in the previous section, here is a sample of the grammarians' proscription of oüisme:

(1) [*C*]*hose* est prononcé ridiculement par un grand nombre de gens comme *chouse*; celui qui cherche à parler purement ne doit pas partager cette sottise' (Martin 1632, in Thurot 1881: 246)
(2) Il est tellement vray qu'il ne faut pas dire *arrouser*, qu'on ne permettroit pas mesmes à nos Poëtes de rimer *arrouse* auec *ialouse* (Vaugelas 1647: 220) […] depuis dix ou douze ans, ceux qui parlent bien disent *arroser*, *fossé*, *chose*, sans *u*, & ces deux particulierement, *fousse*, & *chouse*, sont deuenues insuportables aux oreilles delicates (ibid., p. 340)
(3) [S'adressant aux courtisans] Si tant vous aimez les *ou* doux, N'estes vous pas bien de grands fous, De dire *chouse* au lieu de *chose*? De dire j'*ouse* au lieu de j'*ose*? (H. Estienne 1582, in Thurot 1881: 242)
(4) Les courtisans d'auiourd'huy prononcent assez grossierement […] pour *chose*, *gros*, *repos*, etc., *chouse*, *grous*, *repous*. Ce que l'on dit auiourd'huy vn *o* en forme d'*où* à la cour, c'est un langage courtisan affecté, sans raison, qui n'auoit lieu anciennement qu'en ces mots *mol*, *col* et *fol* (Tabourot 1587, in Thurot 1881: 242)
(5) Quelques nigauds disent *chouse*; je ne voudrais pas conseiller de les suivre. *Chouse*, *feble*, *veage*, sont prononcés par pure manie de nouveauté par quelques courtisans et autres gens de cette espèce, qui s'abandonnent à d'absurdes caprices comme des femmes enceintes (Duez 1639, in Thurot 1881: 247)

[11] As far as oüisme is concerned, the most staunch prescriptivist of all the grammarians was Ménage; his trademark expression "Il faut dire indubitablement" was a constant.

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It is understandable that, in many cases, a single statement by a grammarian contains both facets of deontic attitudes. Also, a number of statements that apparently have only prescriptive intentions leave proscription implicit and must be understood as such. Consequently, the last paragraphs of the current sub–section equally hold for the previous section. Overall, when we reflect on Cameron's (1995: x) observations that '[t]he linguistic questions laypeople care most about are questions of right and wrong, good and bad, "the use and abuse of language"', that "most everyday discourse on language is above all evaluative discourse", and that "[t]his overriding concern with value is the most significant characteristic that separates lay discourse on language from the expert discourse of linguists", it becomes clear that the operations of most of the grammarians fall squarely within lay discourse, because, "[a]s scientists, professional linguists aspire to objectivity and not to moral or aesthetic judgement" (ibid.).

Viewed from this scientific perspective, the grammarians should be understood as agents who did not treat their languages objectively and that, as a result, their observations and statements and stigmatizations and condemnations and fury about variation, etc., require a much more targeted, critical re-examination than has been carried out before, in order to bring out the full and more objective usage picture of oüisme. Moreover, they did not think carefully about the sociolinguistic behaviour of their colleagues (i.e., whether their fellow grammarians were describing, prescribing or proscribing), let alone their own. A good example of that is when Péletier mistook Meigret's description of oüisme for prescription. He railed against the latter, thus: 'qui t'accordera qu'on doiue prononcer *troup*, *noutres*, *coute*, *clous*?' Meigret responded that he never prescribed anything ('Ou a' tu trouué qe j'aye dit q'il le falhe fère? Tu deuoès premièremènt sauoèr de moè si j'auouè cete façon la d'ecrire') (cited by Thurot 1881:242), adding that, whenever he submitted manuscripts, he always left to the printers' discretion the choice between *o* and *ou*. This fascinating example confirms that most of the grammarians were often carried away by their own social–ideological stances, which they erroneously took to be objective facts. To rise above that flaw is one of the duties of the modern sociolinguist interested in the work of the grammarians[12].

Generally speaking, the grammarians had three operational methods: (a) reason, (b) etymology, and (c) drawing on examples of Latin and Greek. Baugh and Cable (1994: 275) note that *reason* was commonly taken to mean *consistency* or *analogy*, and that '[a]nalogy appeals to an instinct very common at all times in matters of language, the instinct for regularity'. Language usage combines features that are logical and illogical, reasonable and whimsical, and etymological and non–

[12] Brunot, for his part, readily sided with Péletier, by saying that Meigret was first confused and, then, brought back to his senses by Péletier; but Brunot did not reflect on Meigret's intelligent explanation, in which he took Péletier to task for having misconstrued and misrepresented his mere description of usage as prescription. Meanwhile, Péletier himself wrote *Prouuançaus*, *Perigourdins*, etc.

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etymological. The reaction of Henri Estienne's courtier (see section 3.1, above) sufficiently addresses this issue. Resorting to Latin and/or Greek does not always solve much, because the emerging non–classical languages had taken on lives of their own. It comes as no surprise that even Vaugelas (1647: 504) believed that the uneducated, who had no Latin or Greek, spoke the best French in the land (even though it is not difficult to understand that, by his elitist usage principles, he was not referring to just any unschooled speaker)[13]:

> Or est-il que les personnes qui parlent bien François & qui n'ont point estudié, seront des tesmoins de l'Vsage beaucoup plus fidelles & plus croyables, que ceux qui sçavent la langue Grecque, & la Latine.

In asserting the secondary nature of the historical dimension in linguistic usage, Saussure (1972 [1915]: 117–128) could not have been clearer:

> La première chose qui frappe quand on étudie les faits de langue, c'est que pour le sujet parlant leur succession dans le temps est inexistante: il est devant un état. Aussi le linguiste qui veut comprendre cet état doit–il faire table rase de tout ce qui l'a produit et ignorer la diachronie […] La synchronie ne connaît qu'une perspective, celle des sujets parlants, et toute sa méthode consiste à recueillir leur témoignage.

It becomes evident that any operation that attacks and/or seeks to destroy 'le témoignage des sujets parlants' may be a gallant endeavour, but not a scientific one.

For the same reasons, approaching oüisme from individual lexical perspectives only yields a partial picture, linguistically speaking[14]. Even *Tabourot* (the name of the author of the term oüisme) was oüisme induced: *Tabourot* / *Taborot*. The same applies to *Bourgogne/ Borgogne*, Tabourot's native region (he was born in the regional capital Dijon). It is fascinating that the name and region of the 'Seigneur des Accords', to whom we owe the term oüisme, bore the seal of oüisme.

Along the same lines, resorting to the phonological environments in which the variants were used does not achieve much. Following in the footsteps of Thurot, Brunot, Rosset, etc., Holder (1970) studied the subject according to

[13] The name of Juan de Valdés (1535) irresistibly comes to mind. The Spanish prescritivist–cum–proscriptivist, par excellence, devoted the last chapter of his *Diálogo de la lengua* to comparing features in Castilian, Tuscan and Latin, and often cautioned against the influence of Latin on modern languages (Anipa 2014). Like him, who condemned a number of Latinist words, phrases and constructions, all along his work, Vaugelas sometimes viewed Latinisms in French as barbarisms. In effect, the dilemma about Latinisms in modern languages was a two–edged sword and linguistic hot potato in humanist linguistic circles, a topic outside the scope of this article.

[14] One admirable aspect of that approach on the part of the grammarians, however, is that they did not neglect proper names, a practice relegated in modern sociolinguistics to onomastics (like the general treatment of lexical items in linguistics − Hudson 1996: 21–22).

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whether the variable occurred in pre–tonic, tonic, atonic, oral tonic, or nasal tonic positions. That is phonologically sound, in its own right; however, like Saussure's diachrony (and etymology), those descriptions explained little about practical usage, because the average speaker of French, as he pronounced his [o] like [ou], did not think about what phonological environment his pronunciation fell into. As a result, Holder's statement that "[L]es grammairiens ont réussi à débarrasser de la langue de ce phonétisme, et dans le courant du XVII^{e} siècle, il a été relégué au niveau des patois" (ibid., p. 2), apart from being anachronistic, since oüisme continued to be discussed by the grammarians well into the second half of the 18th century, is more of a cliché (just as his wholehearted reiteration of Vaugelas's "offensif aux oreilles delicates") (p. 4) than a statement of substance.

Rather than individual lexical items and/or phonological environment[15], the overall issue was arbitrary, as can be seen in the spellings (and subsequent pronunciations) of a number of words that have retained their oüisme credentials into modern French: *accroupir*, *amour*, *Angoulême*, *août*, *assoupir*, *aujourd'hui*, *bandoulière*, *beaucoup*, *bouclée*, *bouc*, *Boulogne*, *broussaille*, *couleur*, *couleuvre*, *couleuvrine*, *coup*, *couper*, *couronne*, *courroie*, *cousin*, *courir*, *courtier*, *détourner*, *douleur*, *doux*, *moulin*, *épouvanté*, *épouse*, *étouffé*, *fourchu*, *fourmi*, *fourniture*, *glouton*, *goudronner*, *goulu*, *limousine*, *mousquetaire*, *St Moulins*, *mouvoir*, *nourrir*, *oublier*, *ouvert*, *pour*, *pouvons*, *retourner*, *roucouler*, *semoule*, *soulagé*, *souliers*, *souris*, *Toulouse*, *tourmenter*, *tourner*, *tournesol*, *Toulon*, *troupe*, *vigoureux*, *vouloir*[16].Although not exhaustive, this list is representative of where oüisme won, the words being part of standard modern French, and not of some so–called 'patois'.Eventually, /owism/ in early-modern French died out, only when the diphthong /ou/, as copiously reported by the grammarians, monophthongized to /u/, much later.

4.5. Ideology, Sociolinguistic Behaviour and Oüisme

'The grammarian set himself up as a lawgiver […] He was not content to record fact; he pronounced judgment. It seems to have been accepted as self–evident that of two alternate forms of expression one must be wrong' (Baugh and Cable 1994: 272; see also Milroy 1992). It has already been noted that the grammarians were a collection of self–appointed language codifiers. Without a

[15] Rosset (1911: 68) was, clearly, taken aback by the fact that, in the *Agréables conférences* – which he had already firmly identified as a typical source of oüisme – there were many cases of non-oüisme: 'Il est d'autant plus étonnant que l'on rencontre dans les *Conférences* quelques mots qui, ayant régulièrement en français moderne le son *ou*, sont cependant écrits en *o*'. It should be easy to understand why he was surprised, having been betrayed by his a priori conviction that 'la forme correcte est en *o*'.

[16] This list is exclusively taken from the accounts of the grammarians of French, and does not even include derivatives, antonyms, etc., of the words cited.

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degree of eventual coercion, their ideological influence could not have overridden the sociolinguistic behaviour of the average native French speaker. Countering his fellow grammarians of English, Priestley (1762, cited by Baugh and Cable 1994: 278) rightly asserted:

> In *modern* and *living* languages, it is absurd to pretend to set up the compositions of any person or persons whatsoever as the standard of writing, or their conversations as the invariable rule of speaking. With respect to custom, laws, and every thing that is changeable, the body of a people, who, in this respect, cannot but be free, will certainly assert their liberty, in making what innovations they judge to be expedient and useful. The general prevailing custom, whatever it happen to be, can be the only standard for the time that it prevails.

Thus, in pre–standard language societies, *ad verecundiam* does not automatically apply. Due to class consciousness, some members of the elite class(es) were keen to treat languages as if they '[did] not belong to all its speakers – only to a select few' (Milroy 2002: 13)[17]. There is no surprise, however, since language is a massive source of symbolic power (Bourdieu 1991); but to treat language as belonging to a select few is tantamount to arguing, for example, that a country's road network belongs only to supercar drivers, and not to drivers of any other vehicle, or to any other road user. Saussure (1972 [1915]: 21–22), at least, at a theoretical level, felt strongly about the impropriety of language discussions being in the hands of just a few specialists: "Il serait inadmissible que son étude restât l'affaire de quelques spécialistes; en fait, tout le monde s'en occupe peu ou prou".

Writing about the grammarians of English, Milroy (2002) made a range of perceptive observations about ideology in linguistic issues, a sample of which is worth citing:

> [W]e need to look more closely at how the ideology of the standard language […] affects historical accounts. This ideology has language–internal and language-external aspects (p. 8) […]. The intrusion of social, and even moral, judgements into a subject that is alleged to possess a scientific and objective methodology could not be clearer (p. 12) […] what has been described as sixteenth century standard pronunciation would be more correctly labelled: *the pronunciation of gentlemen and persons of rank including members of the Royal Court*[18]. […] These scholars seem to have created between them something amounting to a myth, which is that *the history*

[17] Vaugelas's declarations about two distinct kinds of usage comes close to that: 'Il y a sans doute deux sortes d'Vsages, vn bon & vn mauuais. Le mauuais se forme du plus grand nombre de personnes, qui Presque en toutes choses n'est pas le meilleur, & le bon au contraire est composé non pas de la pluralité, mais de l'élite des voix' (p. Préf. II). It is self-evident that, from a modern sociolinguistic perspective, a statement of this nature is unacceptable.

[18] Unlike the case of the grammarians of English, the condemnations by those of French did not know any boundaries; they viewed and treated the Parisian Court as a legitimate target.

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> *of English pronunciation since 1500 is a unilinear and exclusive history of 'polite' or 'elite' English*. Other varieties did not exist, or were unacceptable English, or were not important (original italics) (p. 13).

In sociolinguistics, there is nothing intrinsically special about standard languages. Hudson (1996: 34) says that they have an '*unusual* character', are "perhaps the *least* interesting kind of language for anyone interested in the nature of human language (as most linguists are)' (original italics), and are 'pathological in their lack of diversity". This stance is, obviously, at odds with the layman's view of a standard language, but the issue at stake is that of the scientific status of varieties of languages and linguistic features.

5. MODERN MISCONSTRUCTION OF OÜISME

In addition to discussing the grammarians, the *internal* morpho-phonology of the term oüisme (rather than *external* phonological environments, as has been done, hitherto) is the other focus of this article. This section, therefore, aims to present and discuss evidence for the fact that the grammarians of French were fully aware that oüisme was related to the diphthongized pronunciation of *ou*. The key question to be considered is whether they had the technical phonological know-how to have been able to distinguish between a diagraph and a diphthong, and whether they manifested that knowledge during the course of discussing oüisme.

Of all the early-modern grammarians of French, the best known was Claude Favre de Vaugelas[19]. His fame was largely due to the fact that his 1647 work found favour with the French Academy in their codifying endeavours. That being the case, it has been deemed appropriate to begin with him and to give him a little more coverage than the rest of the grammarians[20].

5.1. 'Yes' 'No' and 'Yes': Vaugelas on Oüisme

Ayres-Bennett's (1987) close study of Vaugelas's work (his Arsenal manuscript and the printed version of his *Remarques*) reveals, amongst other things, numerous instances of hesitations, inconsistencies and contradictions in his thinking. In addition to examples of his prescription and proscription (outlined in section 4.3, above), he made this interesting comment: "Il faut escrire *conuent*, qui vient de *conuentus*, mais il faut prononcer *couuent*, comme si l'on mettoit un *u* pour l'*n* après l'*o*; cela se fait pour la douceur de la pronunciation"(1647: 502).

Before commenting on this particular prescription, it must be noted that, just as in the case of Alemand (see section 3.1, above), the 'civil war' had been raging,

[19] Even in the 18th century, Vaugelas was *the* reference and model for the grammarians of English.
[20] It is possible that Thurot did the same, for the same reasons, in his Introduction.

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long before Vaugelas was born, and it outlived him, by nearly a century. Now, he (a) prescribed oüisme (*trouuer*, *prouuer*, *esprouuer*), (b) proscribed oüisme (*arrouser*, *pourtrait*), (c) described and proscribed widespread oüisme amongst the majority of French speakers (*arrouser*, *fousse*, *chouse*), and (d) prescribed oüisme (*couvent*). Needless to say, this linguistic behaviour on the part of Vaugelas epitomizes intra-personal usage variation in a single linguistic variable. Oüisme in the phonological environment in (d) (i.e., *o* preceding a nasal) was widely prescribed by many grammarians, decades before Vaugelas's birth (e.g., Sylvius 1530, Péletier 1549) and well after his death (e.g., Dumas 1733, Féraud 1761). And amongst their comments, some coincide with those of Vaugelas, such as Du Val's "Lorsque ceste voyelle *o* se rencontre deuant vne double *mm* ou double *nn*, elle est prononcee ainsi que *ou* diphtongue" (1604: 74), or Renaud's (1697: 574) "Dans la conversation et le discours familier, on prononce *st houme*, *lez houmes*, *des houmes*", whilst others say the exact opposite, as in Oudin's (1633: 24) "L'*o* françois se prononce fort ouuert, contre l'opinion impertinente de ceux qui le veulent faire prononcer comme *ou*, quand il est deuant *m* ou *n*", or Bérain's (1675: 102) "Il faut dire et écrire *homme* et non pas *houme*".

Thus, there was nothing special about Vaugelas prescription of oüisme, for reasons of euphony. In Oudin's terms, therefore, Vaugelas was one of those with 'l'opinion impertinente', who were advocating oüisme in this phonological environment. Things can hardly get more interesting than that. It has to be said that the inconsistent and crisscrossing nature of the treatment of oüisme, in this phonological environment alone, is a microcosm of that of the oüisme phenomenon across the language as a whole, but there is no space in this brief work to cover it in detail. Consider the following words, taken from a long list of those in which oüisme was actually prescribed by a number of grammarians (see Thurot 1883: 511–25), but which eventually failed to catch on: *bous* 'bons', *coudition* 'condition', *coumander* 'commander', *countre* 'contre', *demoustrations* 'demonstrations', *dounne* 'donne', *houmme* 'homme', *houneur* 'honneur', *Moucieur* 'Monsieur', *moun* 'mon', *oumbre* 'ombre', *oun* 'on', *ouncle* 'oncle', *poume* 'pomme', *renoum* 'renom', *Roume* 'Rome', *soumme* 'somme', *soun* 'son', *trou* 'tronc'.

5.2. /u/ or /ou/?: AdditionalEvidence

Determining whether or not Tabourot's oüisme was based on a diphthongized, 16th–century pronunciation is crucial to understanding the true nature and breadth of the phenomenon. A careful study of the discussions of the grammarians confirms the fact that they were no novices to phonetic and phonological description, or to knowledge of the differences between orthographical and phonological realities. Collectively, they left behind a range of evidence, the following being some of the most noteworthy:

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(1) They made efforts to describe the pronunciation of *ou* as close to a long or double /o/
(2) They characterized the pronunciation as "approchant de la diphthongue"
(3) They referred to the pronunciation as a sound between /o/ and /ou/
(4) They described the sound as "comme si l'on mettoit un *u* […] après l'*o*"
(5) They described the phone as "occup[ant] le tems de deux voyelles breves"
(6) Vaugelas acknowledged a diphthongized pronunciation of *ou*: "Il est vray qu'on a fort long-temps prononcé en France l'*o* simple comme s'il y eust eu vn *u* apres, & que c'eust esté la diphthongue *ou*, comme *chouse*, pour *chose*, *foussé*, pour *fossé*, *arrouser*, pour *arroser*, & ainsi plusieurs autres" (1647: 340)
(7) Just as in modern-day auditory phonetics, whereby /o/ and /ou/ sound very similar, the grammarians described the pronunciation in identical terms: "et toutes fois autant y a il de difference entre leur prononciation qu'il y a entre deux gottes d'eau". Certainly, that could not have been said of the /o, ɔ/ <> /u/ contrast[21]. That being the case, when a native speaker of any language says that the difference between two phones is as subtle as the difference between two drops of water, that information must be taken seriously.
(8) Several of them (including Vaugelas) used the term 'diphthongue' in their description of oüisme
(9) They even provided a succinct definition of what a diphthong was: "un amas de deus voyèlles prononcées en vne même syllable"
(10) There is evidence, in spelling, that they sometimes used diaeresis to signal the diphthong /ou/, as in *despoüilles*, *joüissons*, *loüanges*, *Loüis*, *oüir*, etc.[22]

This evidence does not support Brunot's (1906: 266) assertion that the existence of *ou* in the 16th century (many decades, before Vaugelas) "est un pur archaïsme, qu'on serait tout d'abord enclin à regarder comme simplement graphique". That was not the case. It must be added that, even if we went out of our way to attribute these orthographic representations of the diphthong /ou/ to the printers of the *Remarques*, that would only reinforce the point that oüisme was well alive and thriving in the 17th century. One can only imagine the amount of diaeresis over *u* that would have been present in the grammarians' works, had diacritics been used commonly in early–modern times.

Even though the above evidence is clear, self–corroboratory and needs no further analysis, it should be worthwhile appending some brief, statistical

[21] Although auditory phonetics seems not to have had as much attention as its articulatory and acoustic sister branches, it could well be the most practical of all three. This is because no one goes around, carrying a spectrograph or IPA chart, ready to answer any pronunciation question that he might be asked. But every speaker of every language goes about his daily chores with his auditory apparatuses–outer, middle and inner ears, and brain. And no healthy native speaker (without knowledge of phonetics) can easily mistake /o/ for /u/.

[22] All these examples are deliberately taken from Vaugelas's metalanguage (not object language): /-pouj/ (> /-puj/), /ɜoui-/ (> /ɜwi-/), /-owãɜ/ (> /-wãɜ/), /-owi(s)/ (> /-wi(s)/), and /owi-/ (> /wi-/).

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information. In a section that Thurot (1881: 240–66) dedicated to *o* and *ou*[23], the grammarians used the word *prononcer* and its derivatives in their metalanguage, as many as 76 times. To that figure could be added counts for the words *ouïr*, *parler* and *son* and their derivatives (since they refer to pronunciation and its auditory perception); together, they amount to 13 tokens. Counts for the word *dire* and its derivatives (116 tokens), although possibly referring mainly to pronunciation[24], have been left out, due to the polysemic nature of the verb: whilst *dire* shares the same semantic field with *prononcer*, the former can sometimes mean *to use* or *to write* (as in 'we do not *say* that in academic writing'). Thus, far from being naïve amateurs in phonetics and phonology, the grammarians knew what they were talking about. Finally, and tellingly, there is no indication whatsoever of the so–called non–oüistes ever attempting to argue that *ou* represented the monophthong /u/[25]. The evidence is too clear for it to be called a labialized *o* (which would still be virtually identical to a diphthong, on the one hand, and too distinct from /u/ to make any difference, on the other hand).

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This research has transcended, by a fair margin, the frontiers of traditional practice in the field, not only in the approach adopted (who the grammarians were, what they represented and should represent, and the nature and usage of oüisme, as a linguistic feature), but also in the results obtained. Launched from established

[23] There are other sections and sub–sections of Thurot's work, where oüisme is indirectly covered, but I have limited myself to the representative section that he specifically devoted to *o* and *ou*.

[24] Some cases are explicit, for example, "quoy que la plus part le disent et l'escriuent"; "mais ceux qui parlent mieux disent cousin"; "quelques uns disent et écrivent".

[25] Such overwhelming evidence raises a question about /wism/ being present today in some varieties of Canadian French, Québec having been founded in early 17th century, at the time when the oüisme debate was on-going, in France. Do today's speakers of those varieties of French in Canada really say /pum/ ('pomme'), /kum/ ('comme'), /kumã:se/ ('commencer'), /kunɛ/ ('connaît'), etc. (see, for example, Cichocki and Beaulieu 2010; Keating 2011), rather than something close to /poum/, /koum/, /koumã:se/, /kounɛ/, etc. (or labialized variant of /o/)? Whilst, in these words, it is not impossible for later monophthongization of /ou/ to /u/ to have combined with spelling to produce /wism/ in Québec, rather than /owism/, the trouble is that, when one goes into researching this phenomenon, with a firm a priori conviction that the debate amongst the grammarians of French was about /wism/ ('ouisme' / 'ouïsme'), rather than /owism/ (oüisme), the likelihood of one hearing /u/ is high. This is a question worth re–considering in future research into this phenomenon, always bearing in mind Meigret's description of the subtlety between /o/ and /ou/ being like two drops of water. That auditory similarity (especially involving a falling diphthong /ou/) obtains in the present, as a universal phonetic reality; cf. oüiste Galician *Ourense* and Portuguese *touro* with non–oüiste Castilian *Orense* and *toro*, the differences being hardly perceptible in normal speech. So, oüisme is not a quintessential early–modern French phonetic phenomenon, after all (examples could be found even in non–Indo–European languages).

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insights of (historical) sociolinguistics, and based on close examination of the implicatures of the grammarians' accounts, the subject of oüisme has been holistically studied, from the perspective of applied macro-sociolinguistics (i.e., the social embedding of attitudes and behaviours towards language variation and variants of linguistic variables, moral and aesthetic judgements, the ideology of standard, standardization processes) and of applied micro-sociolinguistics (i.e., oüisme as a variant of a linguistic variable, the status of the variants in question, evidence for inter-personal variation in the usage of those variants, evidence for intra-personal variation, the eventual net effects on the language).

Sociolinguistic attitudes and behaviours of the grammarians of French have been placed under the microscope (individually and collectively). The grammarians of French have been appropriately treated not only as informants, but as legitimate subjects of study and not as authorities on spoken French of their day. And the nature of oüisme has been seriously re-examined, beyond the existing boundaries of their treatment. The overall results are significant. On the one hand, the grammarians did not only proscribe oüisme and prescribe another variant in its place, but they also objectively described it. We have the unique benefit of eye witnesses' accounts of what really was happening on the ground, in terms of actual usage. On the other hand, it has emerged that the grammarians left behind, in their accounts, a deep footprint of their sociolinguistic behaviours about oüisme, recording (sometimes inadvertently) how variation in usage of the feature permeated French society, diatopically, diastratically, inter-personally, intra-personally, and even diachronically and diaphasically. It is equally worthwhile noting that the fact that variation in the variable in question persisted in speech for so long is a sociolinguistic fact. Saussure (1972 [1915]: 109) acknowledged this sociolinguistic reality, reiterating and emphasizing it in his linguistic thought: "Ce qui domine dans toute altération, c'est la persistance de la matière ancienne; l'infidélité au passé n'est que relative. Voilà pourquoi le principe d'altération se fonde sur le principe de continuité".

This research has also discovered that the so–called 'querelle des ouistes contre les non-ouistes' was far from reality, because, upon closer examination, there never was a dividing line between advocates of the two perceived rival camps (see Pope 1934: 211). On the contrary, the so-called non-oüistes were equally oüistes; and the so-called oüistes, such as Meigret, were equally non-oüistes. Even more intriguing is the fact that, whilst the name (and region) of the perceived archetypal non-oüiste Tabourot was *oüisme induced* (i.e., Tab*ou*rot< Taborot), conversely, the name of the perceived archetypal oüiste Meigret, the 'champion de l'*ouisme*', as Fournier (2007: 95) has characterized him, was *non-oüisme induced* (i.e., L*o*ys > Louis).

Apart from just one brief indication of self-awareness, the grammarians, so much engrossed in disparaging others' speech habits, seemed to have been oblivious of their own usage of *ou*. They were almost entirely unaware of the fact

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that everyone is inescapably caught up in a 'tug-of-war of linguistic variability' (Anipa 2001), or that 'each individual is a battle-field for conflicting linguistic types and habits' (Martinet 1953). In other words, they were victims of 'a combination of other perception and self-deception' (Labov 1966: 471). The brief indication of self-awareness, on the part of the grammarians, was an instance, when Tabourot, having just *prescribed* oüisme, through the back door ("Quelques-vns riment avec les mots en *ouse*, ostant l'*u*, et disent *Tholose*, *espose*, et tout le contraire des ouystes" – 1587, in Thurot 1881: 245), and realized his self-contradiction, went into a defensive mode, with a circular argument that, by prescribing oüisme, he did not intend to become an oüiste: "non pas que ie vueille deuenir ouyste, mais parce que nos poetes françois tout au contraire rendent *ou* en *o*") (ibid., p. 250).

Similar evidence has been unearthed for Vaugelas, when he, on different occasions, implied 'yes' and 'no' and 'yes' to oüisme. There is nothing linguistically bad or unusual or strange about such lack of consistency on the part of the grammarians, because "[i]n linguistic matters consistency (so-called) means inaccuracy" (Jones 1917: x). This means that the grammarians' inconsistent accounts are more accurate than our expectations of consistency in their judgements of oüisme. That being the case, the wide-ranging discrepancies between Vaugelas's manuscript and his published *Remarques* (as duly reported by Ayres-Bennett 1987) should be viewed as a manifestation of his internal linguistic tug-of-war. A focused, micro-study of Vaugelas's inconsistencies (in the metalanguage of his manuscript and definitive *Remarques*) could be an important contribution to the field[26].

In their bid to impose an imagined usage of a vaguely defined privileged elite (see Ayres–Bennett 1987) on society, the grammarians had no other choice, but to make a range of what Haugen called embarrassing decisions (see section 4.2, above) and pronouncements. One of those can be seen in Trévoux's prescription of oüisme, in the word form *Bourdeaux* /bou–/ (see section 4.3, above), despite acknowledging that the natives of Bordeaux, themselves, pronounced the name of their city without oüisme /bo–/.The mere weirdness of someone arguing that the natives of a place do not pronounce the name of their own community properly is self-evident[27].

[26] A study of the tug-of-war effect on the most prominent, 16th century prescriptivist-proscriptivist grammarian of Spanish Juan de Valdés, revealed a 91% deviation from all the grapho-phonological, morphological, morpho-phonological, morpho-syntactic, and syntactic features that he proscribed, in the very work in which he proscribed them. The fascinating discovery is corroborated by 88% deviation in his personal letters (Anipa 2007). These statistics are neither trivial nor negligible.

[27] Given that the debate over oüisme took place in pre–standard French times, an exotic example of how, in the absence of a standard language, variation in the pronunciation of the name of a town could be perfectly normal and informative, should be worthwhile. There is a town in the Volta Region of Ghana, West Africa, whose name is spelt *Xevi*, and has the following pronunciations: (a) [xəvɪ], (b) [xəvi:], (c) [xevi:], (d) [xeve], (e) [heve], and (f) [hevi:]. Also, it is a minority of Ewes,

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Of most interest is the fact that the grammarians have been very influential on modern historians of languages. The challenge is that of resisting successfully the ideological influence of early-modern grammarians, because "[u]nsurprisingly, there have been discernible effects of their views on scholars of later generations, who have been influential in their turn" (Milroy 2002:13). That formidable challenge has been successfully resisted in this investigation.

Scrutiny of oüisme has ascertained that the term, as has been known and employed in modern French, is a misnomer and that it resulted from a misconstruction of Tabourot's label. Specifically, the problem was first generated by the received knowledge that the Medieval /ou/ monophthongized early, by the end of the 14th century (see Brunot 1905; Pope 1934), and exacerbated by the lack of diaeresis on the *u* of Tabourot's 'ouysme' / 'ouyste' / 'ouyster'[28]. Consequently, it transpires from the evidence presented, that what the so–called oüistes and non–oüistes argued over were variant pronunciations /o/ versus /ou/, and not /o/ versus /u/.

Equally interesting is the observation by Rosset (1911: 67–68) that 'jamais *ou* ne remplace *o*' in words containing *eau* and *iau*, even in the *Agréables conferences*. Although, surprisingly, he did not provide any thoughts as to the possible reasons for what he had observed, this is an important piece of information. To begin with, an obvious, but necessary, disambiguation: the *Agréables conférences* were politically-motivated writings, produced by well-educated intellectuals, and not by the low-class people, whose speech habits the authors purported to mimic. In linguistic terms, therefore, every word in those writings should be attributed to the authors, not to the characters in the stories, and should be appreciated as part of the linguistic repertoires of those intellectuals[29]. With that in mind, it should be appreciated that the authors of the *Agréables conferences* were aware that *ou* could not alternate with *eau* and *iau*. And there is a viable linguistic explanation for that, which is that *eau* / *iau* had not yet monophthongized into /o/, to have been associated with /ou/. Because of that, it was beyond the wildest imagination of speakers of French–however low their social class or status–to have identified *eau* and *iau* with /o/. In other words, it

who use variant (a) (but they include the natives of Xevi). Moreover, they and members of many sub–ethnic groups of Ewes use (a), (d), and (e) to mean 'a forest of birds', but (b), (c), and (f) to mean 'a bird'. In purely phonetic terms, the only feature that prevents a homonymic clash in the variant pronunciations of the people of Xevi is the [ɪ]–[i:] contrast, because [ɪ] (common in some varieties of British English, for instance) does not exist in all varieties of the Ewe language. Overall, each variant carries some sociolinguistic information, which the language codifier – like the grammarian – ends up destroying.

[28] It is common knowledge that diacritics were not always used, in early-modern times.

[29] Anipa (2005, 2012) has argued before that doing the opposite, i.e., attributing the language in stories to characters (which is not uncommon), is flawed, since that would imply that we would have, for instance, the Spanish of dogs, the English of rabbits, etc., since there are many stories in which animals feature as characters. This is no trivial matter and, although unexciting, it is at least true.

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would have been scandalous on the part of the authors of the *Agréables conferences* to have attempted to introduce instances of alternation between *ou* and *eau* / *iau*, as in *bou** (for *beau*, *biau*), *Poirou** (for *poireau*), or *morçou** (for *morciaux*), since those authors were aware that the readership of their works (the upper classes, in the main, rather than the lower classes) would have found such inventions absolutely ludicrous, not without consequences for the reception of their writings.

It appears that early scholarship on the history of French, including Rosset's work, was too firmly anchored in modern French pronunciation to have contemplated an explanation for the reason why *ou* never alternated with *eau* / *iau*. Thurot (1881: 281), for his part, explicitly stated that, in the 16th century, *eau* was pronounced as a triphthong[30]. In his effort to reinvent oüisme as a typically low–class feature, Rosset leaned rather heavily on the Mazarinades as the archetypal source of the feature[31].

As recapitulated in these concluding remarks, this research has made several discoveries, including the fact that the correct pronunciation of Tabourot's labelshould be [owism], based on a diphthong /ou/, and *not* [wism], based on a monophthong /u/. This calls for the term to be spelt differently, as oüisme (with a diaeresis on *u*), in order to reflect that fact; the grammarians were absolutely clear about that, making 'ouisme', as known and used in modern times, a (costly) misnomer. Balzac's observation about widespread oüismeis an important indicator, in that respect[32]. The notion of 'ouistes' and 'non-ouistes' is not accurate either, since every so-called 'ouiste' was, at the same time, a 'non-ouiste', and vice versa. And, rather than being authorities on how French should be spoken, the grammarians were an integral part of the vast speech community and, by being intrepid enough to have put their heads above the parapet, exhibited a wide range of sociolinguistic attitudes and behaviours in their accounts. This is a special portal

[30] It is, therefore, a curiosity that, in a section entitled 'Diphtongues' (which he opened with: 'Au xvie siècle, on prononçait encore six diphtongues anciennes, *ai, ei, oi, ui, au, ié*, et la triphtongue *eau*'), he did not include the famous *ou*, particularly as his work was based on pronunciation 'd'après les témoignages des grammairiens', the grammarians having said, over and over again, that *ou* was a diphthong.

[31] The highly pejorative term 'patois' – not quite appropriate in modern sociolinguistics – is what Rosset largely attributed oüisme to, in contrast to the accounts of the grammarians (part of the subtitle of his work). In a section entitled 'Inappropriate nomenclature', Anipa (2012: 175) cautioned against continued use, in sociolinguistics, of a number of unfortunate labels, including such ingrained ones as 'vulgar', 'rustic', 'plebeian', etc. Society has changed a great deal, to the extent that being openly disdainful to lower-class people has ceased to be a heroic act, at least, in certain parts of the world. Suffice it to reflect upon a recent case, when a British cabinet minister was forced to resign, as a result of allegations that he had called someone a 'pleb'. Sociolinguistics will need to adjust to this social reality.

[32] Rosset (1911: 67) quoted [Pierre de] Balzac (1475–c. 1530) as having observed that the words *Rome* and *lionne* were still pronounced *Roume* [roum] and *lioune* [ljoun] 'par toute la France'. This is food for thought.

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of essential information and clues to be harvested towards enhancing research in the field. Considered together, their accounts unequivocally tell a different story of oüisme in early-modern French from that of traditional histories: no 'ouïsme' [wism], but widespread oüisme [owism], across the full spectrum of speakers of French.

All in all, if the notion of 'observer nettement les faits', from Brunot's (1906: 251) "les grammairiens du temps, emportés par leurs passions et leurs querelles, ne sont pas arrivés à observer nettement les faits", is scientifically applied, then, the grammarians did *just that* (both individually and collectively). They did so by having observed and reported the rather messy facts on the ground: pervasive pronunciation, across the entirety of France (as stated by Balzac), of the diphthong /ou/, alongside its monophthong counterpart /o, ɔ/, in addition to sometimes conflictive and far from unidirectional attitudes of speakers towards not just one, but both, variants of the variable. Objective facts do not necessarily have to be pretty. What remain to be accomplished by historians of the French langauge are the exploiting and processing the rich mine of eye-witness accounts. It is gratifying that the grammarians, by the very nature of their operations, experienced no inhibition, when they carried out their discussions and recorded their observations. This is because they could not have contemplated the possibility of their accounts ever being scrutinized by sociolinguists, many centuries after them. That renders their records even more special, comparable to the recording of speakers without their knowledge, obviously, ethically unacceptable in present–day practice, but, none the less, the ideal authentic language use and linguistic behaviour per se. The broad-based, historical macro-cum-micro-sociolinguistic methodology employed in this study could be a useful template for future studies towards achieving that goal of harnessing systematically the treasure trove of eye-witness testimonies − the grammarians' 'lumière directe', in Thurot's words – toward simproving our knowledge of sociolinguistic facts in the past.

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