

Introduction

A focus of recent attention in French linguistics has been the diglossia hypothesis,¹ according to which formal French has diverged to such a degree from everyday spoken language that native speakers now internalize two separate grammars, High (H) and Low (L), or in Benjamin Massot's terms *français classique tardif* (FCT) and *français démotique* (FD) respectively.² Variable liaison, which involves the realization in word-final, prevocalic

I am grateful to Bernard Laks, Aidan Coveney, Elissa Pustka, Zoe Boughton, Gasparde Coutanson, Tim Unwin and three anonymous referees for perceptive and helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper. Any remaining errors and misunderstandings are, of course, entirely my own.

¹ See Benjamin Massot and Paul Rowlett, 'L'hypothèse d'une diglossie en France', special issue of *Journal of French Language Studies*, 23 (2013). Massot's doctoral thesis 'Français et diglossie: Décrire la situation linguistique française contemporaine comme une diglossie: arguments morphosyntaxiques' (Université Paris VIII Vincennes-Saint Denis, 2008) focusses exclusively on the spoken language, while an earlier article by Peter Koch 'Diglossie in Frankreich?', *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur*, 107 (1997), 219-49, specifically posits diglossia between modern spoken (*Mündlichkeit*) and written language (*Schriftlichkeit*).

² For Rowlett H and L are 'modern (or standard) French' and 'contemporary (or colloquial) French' respectively (Rowlett, *The Syntax of French*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 8-9), while Anne Zribi-Hertz prefers *grammaire standard* (H) and *grammaire dialectale* (L): Zribi-Hertz, 'Pour un modèle diglossique de description du

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position of consonants which have been lost in other environments, is particularly associated with elevated speech styles, and would appear to be a marker *par excellence* of FCT (or ‘H’ variety) speech. Our purpose here, therefore, is to illuminate both the diglossia debate, and our understanding of stylistic variation in French more generally, by examining variable liaison in two contrasting speech styles. We begin by reconsidering first the claims of the diglossic model, and then an influential model of liaison developed by Pierre Delattre.

Diglossia in contemporary French

Charles Ferguson’s original conception of diglossia emphasizes functional separation of closely-related High (H) and Low (L) varieties within a speech community.³ H may well represent ‘in large part an earlier stage of L’ and has to be learned through formal education, while L is acquired as a mother tongue. As a number of commentators have observed, a gap has emerged between conversational and formal French which appears to mirror the diglossic H/L divide. Some forms associated with an earlier state of French (for example past anterior and past historic tenses, imperfect subjunctive mood) are now available only in FCT, the putative H variety; the L variety (or FD), furthermore, with its reduced agreement marking and levelled verbal paradigms shows simplification with respect to FCT, which accords with Ferguson’s claim that H is ‘often grammatically more complex’ than L. French abounds in what appear to be H/L lexical doublets (*travailler/bosser; livre/bouquin, médecin/toubib*), while FCT also meets Ferguson’s sociolinguistic criteria for H varieties in that it is highly standardized, stable and prestigious. Its strong literary heritage recalls the link between H and

français: quelques implications théoriques, didactiques et méthodologiques’, *Journal of French Language Studies*, 21 (2011), 231-56.

³ Charles Ferguson, ‘Diglossia’, *Word*, 15 (1959), 324-40.

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literacy which Ferguson emphasizes, and while Aidan Coveney insists that the diglossia model is ‘fundamentally concerned with varieties of spoken, not written, French’,⁴ other commentators have explicitly linked the H variety to scripted speech, or what Jacqueline Billiez and Laurence Buson call *écrits oralisés*.⁵

Support for the diglossia hypothesis is based largely on evidence that FCT and FD variants do not generally co-occur. To test this claim, Massot selects two grammatical variables for which a putative FCT and FD variant can be contrasted. The first, clitic doubling, involves use of noun phrase (NP) + clitic pronoun structures in non-emphatic sentences (*Jean il veut, les étudiantes elles arrivent*), has long been associated with informal speech,⁶ or FD in Massot’s terms; the corresponding non-doubled forms (*Jean veut; les étudiantes arrivent*) Massot identifies as FCT variants. In similar vein, deletion of the

⁴ Aidan Coveney, ‘A language divided against itself? Diglossia, code-switching and variation in French.’ In *Le français en contact : Hommages à Raymond Maugeon*, ed. by France Martineau and Terry Nadasdi (Quebec: Presses de l’Université Laval, 2011), pp. 51-85 (p.54).

⁵ Jacqueline Billiez and Laurence Buson, ‘Perspectives diglossique et variationnelle – Complémentarité ou incompatibilité?’, *Journal of French Language Studies*, 23 (2013), 135-49.

⁶ Clitic doubling as part of an emerging spoken French grammar is first examined by Martin Harris, *The Evolution of French Syntax: A Comparative Approach* (London: Longman, 1978), pp.97-132; for a pragmatic treatment see Betsy K. Barnes, *The Pragmatics of Left Detachment in Spoken Standard French* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1985).

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negative particle *ne* (for example in *il Ø veut pas*) is identified by Massot as an FD phenomenon, contrasting with *ne* retention in FCT (*il ne veut pas*).⁷ Massot infers from the absence of ‘hybrid’ FCT/FD clauses in his own corpus that speakers’ internalized grammars rule out both **Jean il ne veut pas* and **Jean veut pas*. This interpretation, however, remains controversial. While Rowlett agrees that: ‘Speakers switch between FD and FCT but do not use them both simultaneously, at least not within the context of an individual clause’,⁸ Coveney draws attention to the relatively small size of Massot’s corpus, and some contradictory findings in his own and other corpora:

The conclusion to be drawn from this discussion must surely be that the regularities posited by Zribi-Hertz, Massot and Stein are, for the most part, not categorical constraints, applying in 100% of possible cases, but are rather variable (probabilistic) linguistic constraints – or in some cases simply co-occurrence restrictions.⁹

The dispute here turns on the distinction between ‘variable constraint’ and ‘rule’, and the margin of tolerance allowed in identifying ‘categorical’ rules where co-occurrence of like

⁷ There literature on *ne* deletion in informal spoken French is extensive: for a good overview see especially William Ashby, ‘When does variation indicate linguistic change in progress?’, *Journal of French Language Studies*, 1 (1991), 1-19, and Aidan Coveney, *Variability in Spoken French: A Sociolinguistic Study of Interrogation and Negation* (Bristol: Elm Bank, 2002).

⁸ Paul Rowlett, ‘Do French speakers really have two grammars?’ *Journal of French Language Studies*, 23 (2013), 37-57 (p.37).

⁹ Coveney, ‘A language divided against itself?’, p.74.

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variants is less than 100%. The extent to which inconsistencies in co-occurrence patterns can be dismissed as ‘performance’, defined by David DeCamp as ‘the failure of data ever to fit a theory perfectly’,¹⁰ is problematical, but Rowlett’s rider ‘within the context of an individual clause’ offers a way out of this impasse by suggesting that homogeneity of H or L elements is to be expected within clearly defined, short sequences of talk. However, there seems no obvious reason other than their relative brevity to choose clauses as a yardstick, particularly as intraclausal code-switching is known to occur.¹¹ Evidence of hybrid H/L clauses would not therefore in itself invalidate the model because heterogeneity at clause level might belie homogeneity over shorter sequences. But as the stretches of talk over which ‘switching’ is licensed become ever smaller, the distance between the claims of the diglossic model (variation can be attributed to switching between discrete H and L varieties or macrovariants, identifiable by regular co-occurrence of ‘like’ variants) and of inherent variability (variation can be attributed to switching between independent microvariants within a single variety, with no absolute co-occurrence restrictions) becomes increasingly tenuous. We are left with a

¹⁰ A definition which troubles him: ‘Like many other linguists, I am tired of using the word *performance* as a convenient rug under which I can sweep everything I don’t yet have an answer for’. David DeCamp, ‘What do implicational scales imply?’, in *New Ways of Analyzing Variation in English*, ed. by Charles-James Bailey and Roger Shuy (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1973), pp. 141-48 (p. 145).

¹¹ Shana Poplack, ‘Sometimes I’ll start a sentence in English Y TERMINO EN ESPAÑOL: toward a typology of code-switching’, *Linguistics*, 18 (1980), 581-616.

diglossia hypothesis which, for all its plausibility, is ultimately untestable on its central criterion.

A stronger case for diglossia could be advanced if putative ‘H’ forms were found consistently to occur in one stylistic context while remaining absent in another. Françoise Gadet,¹² for example – not herself a proponent of the diglossia model – finds evidence of categorical *ne* deletion in her own speech over breakfast, and categorical retention in the formal part of a lecture. Like *ne* retention, variable liaison has long been associated with formal and scripted speech, and is seen to fall markedly in informal styles.¹³ Within a diglossic model, therefore, we would expect to find sharp differentiation, approximating to categorical liaison in formal styles and non-liaison in informal styles, for at least some categories of variable liaison within the context of a structured sociolinguistic interview.¹⁴ Given the complexity of the constraints affecting the phenomenon, however, we need first to review a typology of liaison environments first formulated in the 1940s and 1950s, which continues to inform recent work.

Delattre’s liaison typology

¹² Quoted in Coveney, ‘A language divided against itself?’, p.59.

¹³ ‘À mesure que le ton s’abaisse et devient plus familier on lie de moins en moins’. Pierre Fouché, *Traité de Prononciation Française* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1956), p.52.

¹⁴ See William Labov, *The Social Stratification of English in New York City*, second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp.136-54.

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Liaison involves *enchaînement*¹⁵ of six¹⁶ otherwise silent word-final consonants

/z/, /t/, /n/, /r/, /p/ and /g-k/¹⁷ before vowels or glides. Most descriptions of the phenomenon have broadly followed Delattre's tripartite division between *liaison obligatoire* (realized categorically by all native speakers, for example *ils [z] ont compris*); *liaison interdite* (never realized, for example *et Ø on l'a fait*), and finally *liaison facultative*, in which the link consonant is variably realized (*soldats [z]/Ø anglais; il commençait [t]/Ø à lire*).¹⁸ Here we

¹⁵ Liaison without *enchaînement*, in which the link consonant does not form the onset of the following syllable (e.g. in *C'est IMpossible!* [set.'ɛ̃.pɔs.ibl]), can occur, subject to certain constraints. See Pierre Encrevé, *La Liaison avec et sans enchaînement: phonologie tridimensionnelle et usages du français* (Paris: Seuil, 1998), pp. 30-43 and 267-71. It was, however, marginal in our data, affecting only 32 of 2365 tokens (1.35%) in which a liaison consonant was realized.

¹⁶ Marie-Hélène Côté also reports liaison with /l/ in Canada: 'Laurentian French (Québec): extra vowels, missing schwas and surprising liaison consonants', in *Phonological variation in French: illustrations from three continents*, ed. by Randall Gess; Chantal Lyche and Trudel Meisenburg (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2012), pp. 235-74.

¹⁷ Canonically /k/ in, for example, *un sang [k] impur* in *La Marseillaise*, though Delattre notes that both [g] and [k] are heard in *long*.

¹⁸ See Pierre Delattre, 'La liaison en français, tendances et classification', *French Review*, 21 (1947), 148-57; 'Les facteurs de la liaison facultative en français', *French Review*, 29 (1955), 42-49; 'La fréquence des liaisons facultatives en français', *French Review*, 30

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follow most modern treatments in substituting the less prescriptive ‘non-variable’ and ‘variable’ for ‘*obligatoire*/obligatory’ and ‘*facultative*/optional’ respectively. Delattre identifies a range of linguistic constraints, including prosody, phonetics, and especially the closeness of the syntactic bond between elements, but sees style as the most important determinant.¹⁹ He proposes the following style hierarchy:

récitation de vers

conférence

conversation soignée

conversation familière

In his example sentence:

Des (1) hommes (2) illustres (3) ont (4) attendu

he suggests that only liaison (1) would be realized in *conversation familière*, while (1) and (4) would be typical in *conversation soignée*. Liaison (2) would be introduced in a formal lecture (*conférence*), and (3) only in *récitation de vers*. For Delattre and other commentators, a high incidence of liaison is associated with styles which are not merely elevated, but scripted. For variable liaison, Delattre proposes a six-point frequency scale for three broad contexts (after plural nouns, verbs, and ‘invariables’, i.e. prepositions and conjunctions), as summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Delattre’s frequency categories for variable liaison

(1956), 48-54. References here to republished versions in Pierre Delattre, *Studies in French and Comparative Phonetics* (The Hague: Mouton, 1966), pp. 39-62.

¹⁹Delattre, ‘Les facteurs de la liaison facultative en français.’, p.58.

Frequency category		Liaison type	Example
A	<i>très fréquente</i>	Être+ adjective	<i>C'était impossible</i>
		Monosyllabic preposition or adverb + noun	<i>Chez un ami</i>
B	<i>assez fréquente</i>	Verb + past participle or adjective	<i>Il avait attendu</i>
		After polysyllabic adverb or preposition	<i>Souvent absent</i>
C	<i>mi-fréquente</i>	Verb + complement	<i>Il m'apportait un cadeau</i>
		After negative adverb	<i>Pas important</i>
D	<i>peu fréquente</i>	Plural noun + adjective	<i>Des enfants intelligents</i>
		After monosyllabic conjunctions	<i>Mais il ne comprend pas</i>
E	<i>rare</i>	Plural noun or adjective + verb or conjunction	<i>Les enfants arrivent</i>
		After polysyllabic conjunctions	<i>Cependant on l'accusait</i>
F	<i>très rare</i>	After singular nouns ending in <i>s</i> or <i>t</i>	<i>Un mot aimable</i>
		After <i>-er</i> infinitive	<i>Aimer un enfant</i>

Delattre's typology is based on intuition rather than empirical data, and his model is that of a privileged class. There is also evidence that liaison norms have changed in the

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seventy years since his observations were first published,²⁰ which will lead us to reconsider his *obligatoire* category in particular. Nonetheless, his model offers a useful template for our own experiment, which we set out below.

The Four Cities Corpus

Fieldwork was conducted in four francophone cities: three in France (Lille, Strasbourg, and Perpignan) and one in Belgium (Mons).²¹ Within each city, two schools were chosen: one a traditional *lycée*, the other a more vocationally orientated *Lycée d'Enseignement Professionnel* (LEP),²² in each of which twelve students (six male, six female) aged between fifteen and twenty were interviewed on general topics. After about five minutes participants were asked to read aloud twenty-one short stimulus sentences (see Appendix), containing a total of 54 potential liaison sites, each of which was treated as a separate, numbered variable. The sentences were drawn or adapted from a range of sources, and bore no relationship to each other. They included three forms unambiguously associated with FCT (two verbs in the past historic and a question by inversion), which were unlikely to occur in spontaneous

²⁰ See Marie-Hélène Côté, 'La liaison en diatopie: esquisse d'une typologie', *Journal of French Language Studies*, 27 (2017), 13-25.

²¹ The data provided scant evidence of regional variation. Our focus here is purely on the style dimension; social and geolinguistic factors affecting liaison are discussed in [AUTHOR], *Norm and Ideology in French: A Sociolinguistic History of Liaison* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming), Ch.7.

²² The *lycée/LEP* divide approximates to *athénée/CEFA* in Belgium.

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speech. Care was taken to include less frequently-occurring contexts, featuring all six liaison consonants, and sample all of Delattre's frequency rankings A-F from Table 1. For each informant, therefore, a scripted Reading Style (RS) for the sentences and an unscripted Interview Style (IS) for the rest of the interview were obtained. While every effort was made to put informants at their ease, it should be recalled that the interview format, in which power was asymmetrically distributed between interviewees and a researcher who was both older and unfamiliar, was likely to steer informants towards the more formal end of their repertoire even in IS, and we would accordingly expect greater use of liaison than in informal styles used outside of interview conditions.

Variables were analysed auditorily using Praat,²³ and coded according to the conventions of the *Phonologie du Français Contemporain* project²⁴ for length (1 for monosyllabic words; 2 for words of more than one syllable) and then for presence (1) or absence (0) of a liaison consonant, with that consonant (prescriptively correct or not) noted after the link word, thus:

trop [p] aimable trop1 1p aimable

beaucoup [t] aimé beaucoup 21t aimé

Two further codings were available for the second digit: (2) for *liaison non-enchaînée*, and (3) for uncertain or ambiguous cases, which were excluded from analysis.

²³ Paul Boersma and David Weenink 'Praat: doing phonetics by computer.'

<http://www.fon.hum.uva.nl/praat/> [Computer program, Version 6.0.10, 2016]

²⁴ Jacques Durand, Chantal Lyche, and Bernard Laks, 'Protocole d'enquête PFC'. *Bulletin PFC*, 2002, 7-20

Liaison in Interview Style (IS) and Reading Style (RS)

To compare liaison usage across the two styles, it is necessary first to determine what should be considered variable. As considerable variation has been noted within Delattre's *obligatoire* category, and Delattre's own account is ambiguous on occasions, it was decided that all liaison sites would be monitored as potentially variable, with the exceptions of (a) *determiner + noun* sequences and (b) *clitic + verb* sequences. The latter environments showed categorical liaison for all speakers, and were excluded from analysis.

Taken globally our data, unsurprisingly, show higher rates of liaison in RS than in IS, but a score of 32.6% for RS suggests far from categorical usage in the scripted style, and the gap between the two styles, at 12.7%, offers little evidence for the sharp differentiation predicted by the diglossic model. Aggregate scores mask a good deal of internal variation, however, and must be treated with caution. Furthermore, the range of potential liaison sites in RS as selected by the researcher is unlikely to mirror that which occurred spontaneously in IS, making broad-brush comparisons dangerous. A clearer picture can be obtained from a breakdown of the data by morphosyntactic category.

Table 2. Variable liaison in two speech styles: RS and IS

	Total	Liaison	No Liaison	Liaison %
IS	3366	671	2695	19.9
RS	5191	1694	3497	32.6
Total	8557	2365	6192	27.6

Delattre's Liaison Obligatoire

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A total of 17 variables in RS would be classified as *obligatoire* in Delattre’s model. These included Variable 24.*attend-on*, a clitic inversion, for which liaison was expected, and proved, to be near categorical (97%), with only three of ninety-five informants for whom data were available not producing a liaison consonant. The unfamiliarity of this form in the spoken language perhaps explains why eleven participants hesitated when reading this sequence, following the orthography by realizing /d/ rather than the canonical /t/. The sixteen remaining variables fell into three categories: (a) prenominal adjectives; (b) monosyllabic prepositions and (c) monosyllabic adverbs, after all of which liaison rates in RS were high, but far from categorical as would be expected for ‘obligatory’ sequences. Table 3 below shows overall liaison rates in IS and RS in the three morphosyntactic categories (a)-(c) identified above: the global figure again shows only a modest (11%) increase in the scripted style.²⁵

Table 3. *Liaison obligatoire in IS and RS: three morphosyntactic categories*

	Interview Style (IS)			Reading Style (RS)		
	Tokens	Liaison Realized	Liaison %	Tokens	Liaison Realized	Liaison %
Adj+N	65	60	92	885	580	66
Monosyllabic Prepositions +	276	268	97	190	160	84

²⁵ In some cases during the reading exercise participants reread or ‘corrected’ liaison sequences. To ensure the same number of tokens per informant where comparisons within RS are involved, only the token from final reading has been counted. We return to these cases below.

Monosyllabic Adverbs +	415	85	20		496	300	60
Total	756	413	55		1571	1040	66

The surprising finding here is that, for two of the three categories, the pattern observed is the reverse of that which was expected, with near-categorical liaison in IS but not in RS for Adjective+Noun sequences and after monosyllabic prepositions. In the former case, this is almost certainly explained by the range of contexts which occurred in each style. As can be seen in Table 4, liaison rates in RS range from 96% to 42% (95% to 24% when prescriptively incorrect liaisons are excluded). The reading exercise prioritized inclusion of a full range of liaison sites at the expense of some more commonly-occurring sequences (for example with forms of *être*), and consequently included a number of sequences with link consonants other than /z/ or /t/, for which liaison tends to occur less frequently. For the sequences produced spontaneously in IS, by contrast, all but four of the sixty Adj+N sequences in which liaison occurred involved /z/ or /t/, and in all five cases where no liaison occurred (after *simples*, *autres*, *plusieurs* and *grandes*) liaison would appear to have been inhibited by a consonant cluster.

Table 4. Liaison in Adj+N sequences in RS

No.	Variable Sequence	Liaison %
46	<i>grand exploit</i>	96
19	<i>petit écureuil</i>	95
30	<i>second enfant</i>	83
42	<i>anciens étudiants</i>	72
53	<i>certain ami</i>	62
23	<i>long été</i>	55

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34	<i>long apprentissage</i>	54
49	<i>autres appartements</i>	49
39	<i>léger incident</i>	42

Two monosyllabic prepositions *en* and *chez* occurred in the reading exercise, the former defying expectations with a higher score in IS than in RS. RS data however come exclusively from Variable 12.*en une demi-heure*), for which some informants misread *en* as *dans*, some of them pausing to correct themselves and emphasizing (unliaised) *en* in the reread.

Table 5. Liaison with monosyllabic prepositions in RS and IS

	Interview Style (IS)			Reading Style (RS)		
	Tokens	Liaison Realized	Liaison %	Tokens	Liaison Realized	Liaison %
<i>en</i>	148	143	97	89	66	74
<i>chez</i>	6	5	93	96	89	93
Total	154	148	96	185	155	84

Only for monosyllabic adverbs do we see anything resembling a pattern consistent with diglossia (Table 6). Liaison rates are however subject to considerable internal variation even in RS, with scores for individual variables featuring the relevant items ranging from 89% (Variable 31.*bien aimable*) to 41% (Variable 40.*pas été*).

Table 6. Liaison after monosyllabic adverbs in IS and RS

	Interview Style (IS)	Reading Style (RS)
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	Tokens	Liaison Realized	Liaison %		Tokens	Liaison Realized	Liaison %
<i>pas</i>	248	3	1		188	74	39
<i>bien</i>	38	7	18		97	83	86
<i>trop</i>	20	3	15		210	141	67
Total	306	13	4		495	298	60

One might reasonably speculate that high RS liaison scores for Variables 31.*bien aimable* and 38.*trop aimable* (86%) stem from their familiarity to informants as set phrases, which favour liaison, but both *bien* and *pas* highlight the potential dangers of treating morphosyntactic categories, or even individual lexical items, as determiners of liaison frequency. In the case of *bien aimable*, for example, the adverb is closely bound to the following adjective which it qualifies, whereas in ‘j’aimerais bien être institutrice’ (from IS) it qualifies the preceding verb and the bond with the following word is accordingly looser. In all seven cases of liaison after *bien* in IS, the adverb qualifies a following adjective or past participle (only in one such case is no liaison realized); for the thirty remaining cases where no liaison occurred *bien* shows a stronger syntactic link with the preceding element. Similar remarks apply for *pas*, the near absence of liaised tokens for which, in IS at least, provides strong support for Laks and Peuvergne’s claim that ‘pas...présente, en temps apparent, une évolution brutale vers la non liaison’.²⁶

Even in Delattre’s *obligatoire* environments, liaison proves rather less than categorical, and offers no compelling evidence for the sharp H/L division predicted by the model: indeed in some cases the data appear to point in the ‘wrong’ direction. Delattre saw

²⁶ Laks & Peuvergne, ‘La liaison en français contemporain dans la parole publique’, p.69.

his *liaison facultative* sites as most sensitive to style, however, and therefore most likely to show marked differentiation between IS and RS.

Variable liaison

For sites classified by Delattre as *facultative*, liaison rates are again higher in RS than in IS, but they remain very low in both styles, with well over 80% of liaison consonants unrealized even in RS:

Table 7. Delattre's liaison facultative sites in IS and RS

	Total tokens	Liaison Realized	Liaison %
Interview Style	2469	216	9
Reading Style	3521	556	16

Average frequency rates within RS broadly mirror Delattre's six-term hierarchy (see Table 1), our single category A *très fréquente* variable 33.c *'était un* scoring highest with 82%, well above the category B *assez fréquente* average of 22%, with the category F *très rare* post-infinitival environment (variables 6.*aller aussi*; 28.*chanter en chœur* and 37.*aller à Marseille*) showing the lowest average liaison rate overall (4%). Delattre focuses primarily on (a) plural nouns (b) verbs and (c) *invariables* (discussed above). Liaison rates after plural nouns (RS 11%; IS 3%) are slightly lower than the global figures for variable environments, and in line with Delattre's own expectations ('cette liaison va de peu fréquente à rare').²⁷ A detailed analysis is required, however, for the post-verbal context, for which he claims 'Cette catégorie de liaisons facultatives couvre toute la gamme de fréquences'. While overall liaison rates in this category broadly mirror the global figures (RS 21%; IS 6.0%), a breakdown by

²⁷ Quotations here from Delattre, 'La fréquence des liaisons facultatives en français', pp. 48-54.

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the seven ordered sub-categories identified by Delattre reveals considerable internal variation, as can be seen in Table 8:

Table 8. Post-verbal liaison in RS and IS

	Description	Frequency (see Table 1)	Interview Style (IS)			Reading Style (RS)		
			Tokens	Liaison Realized	Liaison %	Tokens	Liaison Realized	Liaison %
1	Impersonal <i>être</i>	<i>très fréquente</i>	531	44	8	90	73	81
2	Verb + past participle or adjective	<i>assez fréquente</i>	164	25	15	93	67	72
3	Verb + Adverb	<i>assez fréquente</i>	80	0	0	366	25	7
4	Verb + complement	<i>mi- fréquente</i>	715	33	5	676	98	14
5	Plural past participle +	<i>rare</i>	7	0	0	ND	ND	-
6	Singular past participle +	<i>très rare</i>	17	3	18	ND	ND	-
7	Infinitive <i>-er</i> +	<i>très rare</i>	227	1	0.4	272	12	4

ND: No data

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The general pattern observed is one of low scores in RS, and single-figure or negligible ones in IS; only for subcategories 1 and 2 do we see evidence of sharp differentiation between IS and RS. Our data for subcategory 2 are unfortunately limited to Variable 25.*sommes allés*, which was specifically selected as a less common spoken language form (frequently replaced by *(on) est allé* in conversational French: the single occurrence of *sommes* in IS was liaised – incorrectly – in *sommes* [st] *arrivés*), and offers a poor basis for comparison.²⁸ But an interesting pattern emerges for subcategory 1, broken down further in Table 9 below.

Table 9. Liaison with impersonal *être* in RS and IS

Variable Sequence		Interview Style (IS)			Reading Style (RS)		
		Tokens	Liaison Realized	Liaison %	Tokens	Liaison Realized	Liaison %
33	<i>c'était +</i>	34	0	0	74	58	78
	<i>c'est+</i>	495	43	9	16	15	94
	<i>c'est+un(e)</i>	249	24	10	16	15	94

Here a clear majority of informants (78%) who read Variable 33.*c'était un* correctly liaised; a further sixteen informants misread this variable as *c'est un*, all but one of whom also inserted the liaison consonant /t/. These high RS scores stand in stark contrast to the

²⁸ The relatively high score of 18% for category 6 in IS resulted from two occurrences of the set phrase 'mis à part', both liaised, from the same informant, and an unexpected *velours* in 'je suis né [z] en Belgique' from another.

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corresponding figures for IS (0% and 9%), offering the strongest evidence we have found for a sharp style differentiation consistent with the diglossic model. Data for these high-frequency demonstratives and for third-person *être* forms are not however in line with Delattre's *facultative* category more generally. No categories of variable liaison prove common in IS, in spite of an experimental protocol which appeared to favour more formal usage, and liaison rates even in scripted RS are also meagre for the most part. Moreover, there is some evidence that our informants were not merely failing to use the prestige variants in RS, but were in fact actively avoiding them.

Perhaps because the high concentration of variable liaison sites made the sentences difficult to read, informants frequently stumbled when reading sequences where liaison was possible. In all, sixty-three of the ninety-six informants read one or more sequences involving a potential liaison consonant for a second time, producing a total of 120 rereadings, as summarized in Table 10 below.²⁹

Table 10. Rereadings of RS liaison sequences

		First reading		
		Correct	Zero	Incorrect
Second reading	Correct	24	16	15
	Zero	4	33	16
	Incorrect	1	4	7 (3)*

*3 changes; 4 repetitions

²⁹ For Variable 24. *attend-on?* we accepted [t] but not [d] as the prescriptively correct liaison consonant, on the grounds of a potential contrast with *attendons*. There was one instance of a correct > incorrect rereading ([t] > [d]), two incorrect > correct rereadings ([d] > [t]), and a further three where the incorrect consonant was repeated ([d] > [d]).

Although not in this case elicited directly by the researcher, these rereadings are analogous to the repetitions of *fourth floor* in William Labov's famous New York department store survey,³⁰ where the additional focus prompted greater use of the prestige /r/ variant in non-prevocalic position. Surprisingly, no such pattern is evident here. For the twenty-nine cases in which the prescriptively correct liaison consonant was selected on first reading, informants generally repeated their first choice (twenty-four tokens), opting for zero in four cases and a different consonant on one occasion. But where zero or an incorrect consonant was selected on first reading, informants were more likely to choose zero (thirty-three and sixteen tokens respectively) than the correct consonant (sixteen and fifteen tokens) on second reading. In a further eleven cases, the same or a different incorrect consonant was selected on second reading, meaning that in only around a third of possible cases ($31/91 = 34\%$) did rereading actually produce a change in favour of a prescriptively correct liaison consonant.

The failure of prestige forms to appear in precisely the context where one would most expect to find them demands explanation. We will suggest below that the relative paucity of liaison forms in our data may in fact have been an artifact of the very experimental methodology designed to elicit them in the first place. But to understand the behaviour of our own rather reluctant liaison users, it is helpful first to consider a very different category of speakers, for whom previous studies have consistently reported high incidence of liaison.

Interlude: professionnels de la parole publique

³⁰ Labov, *The Social Stratification of English in New York City*, pp. 40-57.

A number of studies have concluded that individuals for whom speaking in public is an essential part of their profession – those whom Pierre Encrevé has labelled *professionnels de la parole publique*³¹ – realize a significantly greater number of liaisons than those with no such occupational requirement. John Ågren's early study of liaison in broadcast media examined conversational speech taken from 134 twenty-minute editions of the radio programmes *Tribune de Paris* and *Club des Jeunes* from 1960-61, featuring mostly journalists, writers and politicians.³² Variable liaison rates here were found to be high – 97% after *est*, for example – but Ågren offers no breakdown by individual speaker or sub-group within his sample. Politicians, for whom public speaking is not merely a professional requirement but a matter of public record, have attracted particular scholarly interest.³³ Encrevé's findings for twenty-one high-profile French politicians active between 1978 and 1981 show an average liaison rate across a range of speech situations which, at 48.6%, is considerably higher than our own. This figure masks considerable variation between

³¹ Pierre Encrevé, *La Liaison avec et sans enchaînement: phonologie tridimensionnelle et usages du français* (Paris: Seuil, 1988), p.55.

³² John Ågren, *Étude sur quelques liaisons facultatives dans le français de conversation radiophonique : Fréquences et facteurs* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1973), p.2.

³³ See Encrevé, *La Liaison avec et sans enchaînement*; Bernard Laks (2009) 'Les hommes politiques français et la liaison (1908-1999)', in *Le français d'un continent à l'autre. Mélanges offerts à Yves-Charles Morin*, ed. by Luc Baronian and France Martineau (Quebec: Presses de l'Université de Laval, 2009), pp. 237-69.

individuals, with scores ranging from 18.8% (for *Parti Communiste* leader Georges Marchais) to 66.7% (for former diplomat, Academician and Justice Minister Alain Peyrefitte). Liaison rates for speeches were found to be noticeably higher than those for debates or interviews, a finding echoed by Laks and Peuvergne³⁴ for their own corpus of forty-one prominent figures active between 1999 and 2015. Encrevé also alludes briefly to newsreaders and notes the growing importance of what was then a relatively innovative style he labels ‘style faussement parlé’,³⁵ in which the scripted nature of speech is disguised through use of autocue. However, in spite of a blurring of the boundary between scripted and spontaneous speech, and moves in recent years towards a more informal style of presentation in which, for example, the viewers are directly addressed in their living rooms (‘Madame, Monsieur, bonsoir. Les titres de ce journal de vingt heures...’), newsreaders continue to use a wide range of variable liaisons,³⁶ including those classified by Delattre as ‘très rares’, for example after infinitives ending in *-er*,³⁷ to a significantly higher degree than do most

³⁴ Laks and Peuvergne, ‘La liaison en français contemporain dans la parole publique (1999-2015)’ p.67.

³⁵ *La Liaison avec et sans enchaînement*, p.262.

³⁶ Sentences 1 and 2 from the reading exercise (see Appendix), for example, were taken from a contemporary TF1 news bulletin in which the following liaisons (Variables 1-4) had been realized: *subit* [t] *une*; *pays* [z] *européens*; *Sachez* [z] *encore*; *occupent* [t] *actuellement*. The highest RS liaison score registered among these variables was 17%, for Variable 3 *Sachez encore*.

³⁷ There may, however, be a change in progress. Elissa Pustka, Marc Chalier, and Luise Jansen find no liaison in any of the fifty-nine *-er* infinitive contexts in their corpus of data from journalists reading news: see Elissa Pustka, Marc Chalier, and Luise Jansen, ‘À la

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speakers in spontaneous speech. Data from television and radio journalists in three different speech styles, analysed by Elissa Pustka, Marc Chalier and Luise Jansen suggest higher rates for these speakers after *est* and in plural noun + adjective contexts when reading the news than in a guided interview.³⁸ Pustka has also examined liaison use in audiobooks, often read by actors,³⁹ and found not only significantly higher rates of occurrence than in spontaneous speech, but also a high number of liaisons which she qualifies as *erratiques*, notably after singular nouns (for example *un instant [t] encore*) or second person present verb forms (*Tu es [z] à Paris?*). The term *erratique* has been borrowed from Encrevé as a non-prescriptive equivalent for Delattre's *interdite*, but Pustka stresses that this phenomenon is far from haphazard or unsystematic in her data, as the term would suggest: liaison occurs frequently after singular nouns but never, for example, after *et*. Delattre makes no specific mention of 2nd person verb forms, but his position on liaison after singular nouns is in fact nuanced: it is presented in his *Tableau détaillé* as 'interdite',⁴⁰ but in a later article⁴¹ liaison after singular

recherche d'une norme de prononciation: le modèle des présentateurs de télévision', *Journal of French Language Studies*, 27 (2017), 101-15. They describe this finding as 'une surprise'.

³⁸ Pustka, Chalier and Jansen, *ibid.*

³⁹ Elissa Pustka 'L'écrit avant l'écriture: la liaison dans les livres audio pour enfants', *Journal of French Language Studies*, 27 (2017), 187-214.

⁴⁰ 'La liaison en français, tendances et classification', pp. 43-48.

⁴¹ 'La fréquence des liaisons facultatives en français'.

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nouns ending in < s > or < t > is described as ‘très rare’ outside of poetry recital, and is absolutely ruled out only after final < n > in this context.

For a final example, we turn to a *professionnel de la parole publique* of a very different kind. Renaud Séchan (‘Renaud’), has enjoyed considerable chart success since the 1970s with songs famous for witty lyrics, and liberal use of informal or vulgar lexicon. His 1986 hit *Miss Maggie*, a tongue-in-cheek paean of praise to all of womankind (except for the then British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher), has been chosen as a good example of the singer’s earthy humour (‘Je me changerai en chien, si je peux rester sur la Terre/Et comme réverbère quotidien, je m’offrirai Madame Thatcher’).⁴² Its lexicon is pitched strongly at the most informal end of the spectrum, using items (*putain, boudins, queue, pisse, cons, pauvres tarés, gonzesses*) which would be classified as R1 or R1* in Malcolm Offord’s model, the least formal styles in which, *inter alia*, variable liaison is not used at all.⁴³ The song, however, confounds Offord’s predictions in respect of liaison: in eight of thirteen possible contexts a liaison consonant is realized. Two of these occur after *est* (*n’est* [t] *assez minable*; *n’est* [t] *assez vulgaire*), a context described as ‘très fréquente’ by Delattre. The liaison consonant is realized in one of five possible cases after a plural noun (*Palestiniens* [z] *et Arméniens*), a context seen to range from ‘peu fréquente’ to ‘rare’, and in three of four contexts involving *pas* (three instances of *pas* [z] *une femme*; no liaison with *pas* Ø *aussi con que*), which is classified by Delattre as ‘mi-fréquente’. But perhaps most surprising are two

⁴² For lyrics, see <http://paroles2chansons.lemonde.fr/paroles-renaud/paroles-miss-maggie.html>, accessed 2.8.2017.

⁴³ Malcolm Offord, *Varieties of Contemporary French* (London; Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), p. 123.

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liaisons after *-er* infinitives (*Pour l'employer* [ɛ] *à tour de bras/ Pour astiquer* [ɛ] *un revolver*), an environment described as 'très rare' by Delattre and 'extrêmement rare' by Laks and Peuvergne. It is, of course, as Peter Trudgill demonstrates,⁴⁴ not unknown for pop singers to target a style in singing which differs greatly from their normal interview style. But nonetheless the use of variable liaison in this case raises important questions. Firstly, if variable liaison is simply a stylistic convention applied in singing, perhaps to avoid hiatus, then why is its use here inconsistent? And more puzzlingly, why do the rarest and most marked formal liaisons occur alongside highly informal or vulgar lexical selections? From the perspective of the diglossia model, we are faced with a bewildering juxtaposition of FCT and FD elements. What light, then, might the usage of *professionnels de la parole publique* shed on that of our own speakers?

Conclusions

We set out in this paper to test the diglossia hypothesis by comparing liaison usage in one context designed to elicit putative H forms (RS), and another where L forms would be expected (IS). We accordingly expected high variable liaison rates in RS and low ones in IS. Certainly the second part of the hypothesis has been borne out: even an interview setting which slightly favoured formal usage elicited few variable liaison forms as defined by Delattre, and liaison proved less than categorical even in supposedly 'obligatory' sequences. While scores in RS were certainly higher, we saw little evidence of sharp differentiation except after *c'était* and *c'est*. There was, moreover, some evidence of avoidance of prestige

⁴⁴ 'Acts of Conflicting Identity: The Sociolinguistics of British Pop-song Pronunciation', in Peter Trudgill, *On Dialect: Social and Geographical Perspectives* (Oxford & New York: Basil Blackwell and New York University Press, 1983), pp. 141-60.

forms in RS, and of style shifting in the ‘wrong’ direction. One might therefore be tempted to conclude that the bulk of our data is in fact consistent with inherent variability within a single variety, rather than variation between two macrovariants H and L as in a diglossic model. Nonetheless, the diglossia hypothesis still cannot entirely be ruled out. While truly invariable liaisons such as determiner + noun sequences (for example *les [z] amis*) form part of mother-tongue competence, variable liaison might be seen as part of competence in H which has to be formally learned,⁴⁵ as Ferguson suggests. Negligible scores in IS would then not be unexpected, and low scores in RS would simply reflect the fact that H norms have not been properly mastered. Support for this view might be found in high observed rates of *pataquès* (or ‘false’ liaison) for some variables in RS (30% for example for Variable 34.*long [z]/[t] apprentissage*; 13% for Variable 38.*trop [z]/[t] aimable*), and perhaps also in evidence of speakers ‘correcting’ towards non-liaison when rereading (see Table 10). Non-occurrence would be consistent both with a ‘strategy of neutrality’⁴⁶ in the face of a complex norm,⁴⁷ and with longer-term H to L language shift which Ferguson’s diglossia model predicts:⁴⁸ indeed,

⁴⁵ In fact, relatively little is known about acquisition of variable liaison. See Pustka ‘L’écrit avant l’écriture’, p.187.

⁴⁶ Carol Myers-Scotton, ‘Strategies of Neutrality: Language Choice in Uncertain Situations’, *Language*, 52 (1976), 919-41.

⁴⁷ Pierre Fouché’s *Traité de Prononciation Française* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1956) for example devotes 33 pages to liaison alone.

⁴⁸ See Alan Hudson, ‘Outline of a theory of diglossia’, *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 157 (2002), 1-48.

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any difference, however small, between RS and IS could plausibly be explained in terms of a diglossic model with $H > L$ leakage. Experimental manipulation of the style dimension succeeded only in yielding data which for the most part lend themselves to two conflicting interpretations. Once again the diglossia model has proven untestable, the criterion of intraclausal co-occurrence having fared no better, as we saw above. The debate between pro- and anti-diglossia camps for French can often appear theological to outsiders, and is not (or at least not yet?) one which can be resolved empirically. But even if the diglossic model cannot be ruled out entirely, we have seen that it offers a poor fit for our data in many respects.

Liaison and style in the media age: towards a new model?

If findings from our own data were confusing and contradictory in some respects, the brief survey above of *professionnels de la parole publique* appeared only to muddy the waters further. On the one hand, we found high (if, apparently, falling) rates of liaison among political figures,⁴⁹ notably when the discourse is overtly scripted, as in set-piece political speeches. Readers of audiobooks were also found to use liaison forms which were rare to the point of non-existence in conversational speech. High liaison rates were evident among newsreaders, even when the scripted nature of discourse is masked through autocue, and in

⁴⁹ Laks and Peuvergne suggest that women are leading a change towards declining liaison use among *professionnels de la parole publique*: ‘La liaison en français contemporain dans la parole publique’, pp. 65-67. For *non-professionnels de la parole publique*, however, preliminary findings from Céline Dugua and Olivier Baude for seven Orléans speakers suggest that liaison rates have remained stable over the last fifty years: ‘La liaison à Orléans, corpus et changement linguistique : une première étude exploratoire’, *Journal of French Language Studies* 27 (2017), 41-54.

spite of moves towards a more relaxed presentational style in recent decades. Finally, a singer who revels in highly informal lexicon was found to use marked liaisons associated with the most formal speech styles. The performance of all of these professionals seemed greatly at variance with that of their target audience: the variable liaison rate for Georges Marchais, for example, at 18.8% the lowest in Encrevé's sample, was still substantially higher than the 3% rate observed by Laks among adolescents in Marchais' own constituency of Villejuif in 1975. An obvious explanation for this finding is that *professionnels de la parole publique* have mastered the norms of their trade in a way that most people simply do not need to. But this leaves unanswered the question of why such forms – lost for the most part from conversational French – continue to appear at all.

Thus far we have not seriously questioned the link between liaison and formality, nor have we questioned the assumption, made implicitly both by Encrevé and by Laks and Peuvergne, and explicitly by Labov in his New York study, that scripted styles can be placed at the formal end of a single style continuum. In fact, there are good reasons for treating reading aloud – not a common activity outside school – separately from spontaneous speech.⁵⁰ It is helpful at this point to recall what liaison consonants actually are. In Peter Rickard's words, liaison 'recalls the early OF period, when final consonants were still pronounced in all circumstances',⁵¹ but in doing so it draws attention to the orthographic residue these lost consonants have left behind, providing a strong auditory cue to written discourse: a bridge between writing and speech. Rather than seeing them as markers of

⁵⁰ See especially Allan Bell 'Language Style as Audience Design', *Language in Society*, 13 (1984), 145–204.

⁵¹ Peter Rickard, *A History of the French Language*, second edition (London: Routledge), p.150.

formality, therefore, it may be more helpful to view them as a resource available to speakers to signal scripted or prepared speech, and equally importantly a speaker's commitment to the latter, in a culture known to prize the written language above all as the embodiment of 'good' French.⁵²

From this perspective, high liaison rates by newsreaders lend the authority of the written word to reporting, by suggesting it has been carefully prepared and drafted (and can therefore be trusted),⁵³ even as the autocue disguises the scripted nature of discourse, and the

⁵²Cf. Encrevé, *La Liaison avec et sans enchaînement*, pp.283-84:

Puisque l'orthographe est intouchable, divinité archaïque dont les sectateurs sont assez puissants pour imposer à toute la communauté un culte exigeant des sacrifices incalculables, il ne serait pas étonnant que les locuteurs empruntent, petit à petit, la seule voie demeurée ouverte pour un rapprochement: prononcer comme on écrit, puisqu'il paraît exclu qu'on puisse jamais écrire légitimement comme on prononce.

⁵³ Broadcasters in Britain similarly need to accommodate audience expectations regarding the credibility of news output, but here authority stems less from the written language per se than from the accents of power, notably RP. Lynda Mugglestone cites the example of Wilfred Pickles, a much loved broadcaster of the 1940s and 1950s, who was asked by the BBC to read the news in the accent of his native Yorkshire during the Second World War, apparently in an attempt to confuse the Nazis: see Lynda Mugglestone, *Talking Proper: The Rise of Accent as Social Symbol*, second edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 270-72. The experiment was abandoned following complaints from listeners that they could no longer believe the news they were hearing. While broadcasters in recent years have striven for greater inclusivity, objections to news presenters with

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speaker projects the relaxed persona of a trusted guest in the viewer's living room. In the case of audiobooks, high rates of occurrence and use of rare or archaic liaison forms underline the literary quality of a classic work such as *Madame Bovary*, and perhaps also evoke a past temporal setting for the listener as would period costumes or sets in a visual medium.

For politicians, a difficult balance must be struck. On the one hand, they must project the authority that comes with the leadership roles they seek – an authority which derives strongly, in francophone culture, from the written word. On the other, they need to appear empathetic, and intellectually nimble enough to respond swiftly to crises or unexpected turns of events. Set-piece policy statements, speeches or press briefings, all of which come with an expectation of carefully prepared discourse, accordingly show higher liaison rates than televised debates or interviews, which demand spontaneity. In the latter, apparently unscripted,⁵⁴ events variable liaison, sparingly used, can still evoke the authority of the written language, sending a signal, at the same time as the speaker is demonstrating an ability to think on his/her feet, that he/she has in fact taken time beforehand to reflect upon the issue under discussion. Its overuse in such circumstances, however, might suggest inflexibility, or

marked regional accents continue to be heard.

⁵⁴ These are often, of course, rather more 'scripted' than they appear:

Le caractère spontané de l'interview reste discutable, dans la mesure où il s'agit pour les participants d'un exercice auquel ils sont rompus, et pour lequel ils disposent généralement d'éléments de langage préparés à l'avance.'

(Laks and Peuvergne, 'La liaison en français contemporain dans la parole publique (1999-2015)', p.58.)

an inability to depart from a prepared script,⁵⁵ which might be damaging politically. A politician must also be wary of projecting an unhealthy distance from his/her voters, who generally use few variable liaisons. Finally, a different kind of engagement with the written word is demonstrated by the surprising use of liaison in Renaud's *Miss Maggie*.⁵⁶ Here the writer signals through use of highly marked liaison forms that, for all their resolutely informal lexicon and earthy sentiments, his song lyrics are carefully crafted, witty and reflective: the artist, in a nutshell, cannot resist flaunting his artistry.

The contrast with our own speakers could hardly be greater. A highly artificial reading test, specifically designed to accentuate the difference between scripted and spontaneous styles, succeeded in practice only in presenting informants with an exercise with which real engagement was all but impossible. Its twenty-one contrived and decontextualized sentences offered no cohesive narrative, expressed no point of view, and bore no relevance

⁵⁵ Or, possibly, the self-importance associated with needless reference to one's own authority? Delattre observes in an aside:

Tel recteur d'université, ayant, nous supposons, le sentiment de son importance, nous disait (en conversation intime) il y a quelques mois: *C'est un droit tindéniable!*. ('La fréquence des liaisons facultatives en français', p. 53)

⁵⁶ Jeff Tennant (p.c.) has alerted me to similar contrasts between low-register lexicon and high-register use of liaison in the work of Georges Brassens; Tim Unwin (p.c) by contrast notes the lack of liaison in Renaud's 'Toujours Debout' (2016), which may be consistent with a recent observed decline in usage among *professionnels de la parole publique* (see above).

whatsoever to our own speakers' concerns or interests. While informants may have been (consciously or unconsciously) aware that liaison was appropriate in reading aloud,⁵⁷ their involvement with the script they were asked to read was minimal and, as *non-professionnels de la parole publique* faced with a complex norm, they appear to have opted, except in familiar, high-frequency contexts such as *c'était* or *c'est*, for a strategy of non-liaison. Style shifting between IS and RS was therefore relatively limited, and indeed in some cases did not happen at all.

What the comparison between our own data and those of *professionnels de la parole publique* did suggest, however, was that liaison might be more profitably explored by decoupling the formal/informal and scripted/unscripted dimensions, which are often unhelpfully bracketed together in conceptions of style, including notably the diglossic model we set out to test. Seen through the prism not of formality, but of commitment to written or prepared discourse, we can envisage a reconception of Delattre's original four-term style typology, updated for the modern era of twenty-four-hour news media, internet, autocue, downloads and audiobooks. In a model based on this parameter, we would expect the highest level of engagement with scripted discourse in what we might term *style lu*, in which attention is drawn overtly to the fact that content is written, in order to highlight its seriousness or veracity (as in political speeches), or its literary qualities (as in audiobooks). Pustka's findings suggest important differences between this and Encrevé's *style faussement parlé*, in which the scripted nature of discourse is masked by use of autocue. Encrevé's and Laks & Peuvergne's evidence indicates that liaison rates are higher in *style faussement parlé*

⁵⁷ Although the focus of the study was not revealed by the researcher, three informants asked whether they should read 'avec les liaisons'. They were told to read as they wished, and gave no indication of greater or lesser use of liaison than other informants.

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than in what we might in turn label *style faussement spontané*, in which politicians, under pressure to respond spontaneously in political interviews or debates, invoke the authority of the written language to suggest their responses are nonetheless considered ones. Finally, there is *style spontané*, in which speech is neither prepared nor scripted. It is of course debatable, particularly in the case of political figures, whether *professionnels de la parole publique* ever truly feel their remarks are ‘off the record’, but one might expect to find this style in interactions where the speaker’s professional expertise and/or authority are not at issue (for example a news journalist talking at home about his or her family, or a politician expressing support for the constituency football team during a good run in the *Coupe de France*). We leave open the question of whether differences between these four styles might be expected to be quantitative (higher liaison rates across the board) or qualitative (a different or broader range of liaisons in some styles than in others), or some combination of the two. For Encrevé, stylistic differences are quantitative, a position which appears to find support in Laks and Peuvergne’s data. Pustka’s findings, however, raise the possibility of qualitative differences between styles, at least between *style lu* and *style faussement parlé*,⁵⁸ but studies of liaison among *professionnels de la parole publique* are relatively few in number⁵⁸ and the data for the most part too fragmentary to draw firm conclusions. We would endorse Pustka’s call for a much larger corpus, and suggest that a four-style model along the lines sketched above may yield more fruitful insights into the complexities of liaison use than the strictly binary, and rather limiting, approach examined here.

⁵⁸ For summary, see Pustka, Chalier & Jansen, ‘A la recherche d’une norme de prononciation: le modèle des présentateurs de télévision’, pp. 103-104.

Appendix: Reading exercise sentences

1. La France subit une vague de froid depuis quelques jours, tout comme d'ailleurs la plupart des pays européens.
2. Sachez encore que les sans-papiers qui occupent actuellement la cathédrale d'Orléans souffrent, eux aussi, du froid.
3. Je vais aller aussi voir des films anciens, qui ne sont pas amusants.
4. Les agents immobiliers arrivent en une demi-heure.
5. Jean a été le dernier à parler, mais le premier à parler de manière intelligente.
6. Les étudiants écoutaient encore le professeur, mais Anne regardait un petit écureuil dans la forêt.
7. Jean-Paul est modeste, mais il est beaucoup aimé.
8. Ce fut un long été.
9. Alors, pourquoi attend-on ?
10. Nous sommes allés chez une copine.
11. Depuis une paire d'années, ils aimaient chanter en chœur.
12. Nous attendons un second enfant.
13. Je le trouve bien aimable et extrêmement intelligent.
14. Pour Paul, c'était un long apprentissage.
15. Aujourd'hui, il vient à Strasbourg ; demain, il doit aller à Marseille.
16. Vous êtes trop aimable !

17. Cela n'a été qu'un léger incident, lors duquel la victime n'a pas été beaucoup agressée.
18. Ses anciens étudiants américains annoncèrent un grand exploit.
19. A Lille, il y a des appartements à louer à des loyers élevés, mais d'autres appartements à des loyers plus modestes sont disponibles ailleurs.
20. Ils n'ont pas trop apprécié un certain ami de Mme Lefebvre.
21. Qu'un sang impur abreuve nos sillons !