THE POLLYANNA PRINCIPLE IN ENGLISH AND FRENCH LEXIS: SOME RESULTS AND ISSUES OF METHODOLOGY

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Abstract

This article reports on a comparison of variable lexis in English and French through a questionnaire study. The study was designed to investigate the different rates at which young speakers of English and French introduce non-standard adjectives that have negative and positive reference (e.g. 'pathetic' and 'cool'). The research issues studied are twofold. We wished to test the validity of the 'Pollyanna Principle', a concept in linguistic pragmatics adapted from the 'Pollyanna Hypothesis' of psychology, and designed to account for the preference on the part of speakers for avoiding and/or mitigating negative terms and expressions. We examine critically here the hypothesis suggested by I. Opie and P. Opie (1959) that negative terms used by children and adolescents tend to be relatively stable, in contrast to the rapid turnover of terms of approval. Against this however, more recent research into sociolinguistic variation in French suggests that contrary to what has been reported for many languages (notably English, the most intensively studied language from a sociolinguistic viewpoint), variation in the lexis of French is more prominent than in its pronunciation (Armstrong 2001). If true, this might imply that French speakers coin lexical items (both negative and positive) more frequently than speakers of English. The objective of the study was therefore to test the cross-linguistic validity of the Pollyanna Principle, by comparing reported rates of lexical innovation in English and French. The results presented here suggest that Pollyanna does indeed have validity across the two languages, but that recent social mutations in the direction of greater informality have made possible the readier expression of negative emotions, especially through the increased acceptability of taboo terms.

1. Introduction

We discuss here the results of two questionnaire studies designed to examine the different rates at which young speakers of English and French appear to introduce innovations in lexis, in the form of adjectives expressing approval and disapproval. The studies were designed to investigate the operation of the Pollyanna Principle (defined and discussed below) in relation to lexical variation and change. This investigation implies an analysis of the following two related research issues:

(i) The cross-linguistic validity of the 'Pollyanna Principle' (Leech 1983: 147–8), developed in linguistic pragmatics to explain the supposed predominance of favourable over unfavourable lexical items across languages generally, as well as the unmarked status of favourable terms. The Pollyanna Principle derives from the 'Pollyanna Hypothesis' formulated by the psychologists Boucher and Osgood (1969). The hypothesis proposes a tendency to regard the good as the normal state of affairs as a basic and universal human characteristic, and that this is reflected linguistically in various ways, as discussed below.

(ii) The considerable sociolinguistic prominence in French of non-standard lexis. At the design stage of the experiment described here, the prominence of lexical variation in French was expected to find expression in a tendency for (especially young) French speakers to coin non-standard lexical innovations more frequently than what obtains in English, the language of immediate comparison here. It was hypothesised that some of these French lexical innovations would be in the semantic

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areas we propose to examine. This second issue therefore entails an analysis of the different reported frequencies of use by different social groups, in the present case adolescents and adults, of non-standard French lexical items having favourable and unfavourable reference.

Issues (i) and (ii) are connected in that one consequence of the validity of the Pollyanna Principle for lexical innovation should be a greater turnover in the coining of terms used to praise than to blame. This would endorse the suggestion of Opie and Opie (1959: 161) who observed impressionistically that in English, negative terms used by schoolchildren are relatively stable, while terms of approval are susceptible to more rapid replacement through coining, borrowing and semantic shift. If true, this may be partly because speakers constantly search for vividness in the description of areas of experience that they see as positive and important. We discuss this notion critically in a concluding section, after our results have been presented. A further issue of relevance is the possibility that these areas of experience, and the way in which speakers respond to them, are substantially more distinctive in their significance for certain social groups than others: perhaps most notably young as opposed to old. Thus young speakers stereotypically make much use of the pungent expression of praise or blame, as well indeed as of indifference. One issue that we examine here is whether this propensity is reflected in a more rapid turnover of both negative and positive terms adapted to it; or whether on the other hand negative and/or positive terms known to adolescents will also be known to older speakers, and are transmitted largely unchanged through the generations, with younger speakers using the terms more copiously. We now discuss these issues in turn, before presenting some results.

2.1 Sociolinguistic variation in the lexicon

The issue of the sociolinguistic prominence of lexical variation in French is relevant to the present study because variation between standard and non-standard pairs of lexical items appears to be a more salient feature of spoken French than of English (Lodge, 1989; Armstrong, 1998, 2001). Pairs of lexical doublets or alternants having near-identical reference but differing socio-stylistic value are numerous in French, and appear to reflect the particularly wide gulf between the standard and non-standard varieties of the language, wider perhaps than in other comparable (i.e. standardised Western) languages. Armstrong (1998; 2001), in a study of variable lexis in children and adolescents, quantified 237 different lexical pairs of this type in a corpus of spoken French. One example from this lexical set is the pair *ennuyeux* (standard) and *barbant* (non-standard), both of which have the equivalent reference translatable by English ‘boring’. In what follows, we italicise French examples and put English examples in quotation marks. While *ennuyeux* might be described as ‘neutral’ socio-stylistically, following George’s (1993: 157) formal–neutral–informal tripartition, *barbant* is informal, depending of course on the social characteristics of the speech community in question. The set of French lexical alternants covers several word categories, nouns, verbs and adjectives being the most frequent. We focus here upon adjectives.

It was stated above that lexical variation appears to be a prominent feature of French. This is based partly upon impressionistic observation, and partly on quantitative results: Armstrong’s 1998 Labovian-type quantification of patterns of lexical variation derived from a corpus of spoken French recorded in 1990 in Dieuze, a small town in Lorraine, north-eastern France, showed quite sharply differentiated results in a speaker sample differentiated by gender and age: 11–12 and 16–19 years.

The informants were recorded in two styles, designated 'interview' and 'conversation'. In interview style, each informant was recorded one-to-one with the researcher. Conversation style was elicited by the use of 'peer interviews', i.e. the recording of two or three informants of the same age and gender, in the absence of the researcher. This elicitation method was the same for every informant. Interview style was assumed to be the more formal of the two. The independent variables of age and gender were taken into account as influencing factors on the informants' linguistic behaviour; the influence of social class was excluded from the analysis when no systematic patterning by class was observed at the pre-sampling stage. Most informants were in any event drawn from the intermediate social classes, as defined by parents' occupation, and were therefore not sharply differentiated along this dimension. The corpus was recorded principally with a view to analysing variable phonological behaviour in the speaker sample.

The older males showed by far the greatest use of non-standard lexis, both in terms of numbers of tokens and of the range of different individual items used. The shift across styles shown by this group is also very striking. In interview style, a very neat sex-related pattern was observed, with both female groups using fewer non-standard terms than the male groups. This result conforms to the 'sociolinguistic gender pattern' reported in many other studies (e.g. Labov 1966; Trudgill 1974; Eckert 1988; Milroy 1987). In conversation style, the patterns relating the speaker groups involved both gender and age; in the older groups, males used approximately twice as many terms as females (679:372), and this relation also obtained for the younger groups at a lower numerical level (200:113). Patterns of variation across the two styles recorded were also sharp, with an age effect showing older males and females shifting massively across the two styles compared to their younger counterparts.

These results give no direct information regarding the relation between synchronic variation and diachronic change in lexis, which is the research issue of central interest here. It has of course often been observed that very sharp patterns of differentiation both between speaker groups and across speech styles may be indicative of linguistic change in progress (Chambers and Trudgill, 1998: 70–5). This is because the independent social variables that condition variable linguistic behaviour are interconnected: as Eckert (1989: 248) expresses the situation: "Labov's original (1966) findings in New York City clearly lined up socio-economic class, style, sound change, prestige, and evaluation on a single axis"; and further (p. 249): "sex differences placed along this [socio-economic] continuum are seen in relation to it [...]". To sex or gender we may add the other demographic variables (age, ethnicity, etc.) that are governed, or in some way influenced, by social-class variation, if it is assumed that social class is generally the principal axis of variation, to which variation conditioned by other social variables refers symbolically. Against this interpretation, or perhaps complementing it, the sharp patterns of lexical variation in the Dieuze corpus can also be interpreted in the light of the greater sociolinguistic salience of lexis compared to the other linguistic levels of phonology and morpho-syntax that are more commonly studied in a variationist optic. The higher degree of awareness of the socio-stylistic value of non-standard lexis was illustrated in the Dieuze corpus by abundant examples of explicit comments and repair by the informants on their own and others' use of non-standard lexis.

In summary, what these results show for the purposes of the present investigation into the Pollyanna Principle is a highly polarised set of differentiation patterns in a French speaker sample that demonstrably indicate a high degree of

awareness on the part of the speakers of the sociolinguistic value of non-standard lexis; in turn this awareness may indicate non-standard lexical change in progress. Among the few examples of studies of frequent lexical items in English that show socio-stylistic patterning are Kerswill's (1987) quantification of variation in the T/V pronoun system in County Durham, NE England, and Crinson's (1997) study of the variable use of by children of frequent adjectives and adverbs in Tyneside English (also NE England). It is worth remarking that Kerswill's study shows the social-regional patterning characteristic of so much UK English variation, in this case between pronouns that are conservative and localised and those that are standard and have a nationwide distribution (e.g. between 'thou' and 'you'). At the same time, Kerswill's study is restricted to a closed set of grammatical words. We now discuss the Pollyanna Principle in its more general relation to linguistic expression, and lexical variation and change.

2.2. Linguistic reflexes of the Pollyanna Principle

As stated above, Leech (1983: 147–8), invokes the Pollyanna Principle to explain the cross-linguistic predominance of lexical items having pleasant associations over those with unpleasant ones. Boucher and Osgood (1969: 1) adduced quantitative evidence from several languages reflecting the "universal human tendency to use evaluatively positive words (E+) more frequently, diversely and facilely than evaluatively negative (E–) words", and supporting the Pollyanna Hypothesis that "humans tend to 'look on (and talk about) the bright side of life'". This is further reflected in the tendency to mitigate the negative, as in: 'it was a bit boring', while mitigation of the positive, as in: ?'it was a bit interesting', seems of doubtful acceptability. Similarly, the positive appears to be the default or unmarked interpretation of an utterance such as: 'I was impressed' [i.e. favourably]. Leech expresses the hypothesis underlying the principle (1983: 151n) in perhaps more subtly articulated terms: "rather than reflecting a human tendency to be optimistic, [the hypothesis] may represent the tendency to associate the normal with the good, and the abnormal with the bad." We may mention further the related psychosocial element that tends to constrain speakers to mitigate the expression of negative evaluation and to select pleasant topics of conversation.

Clark and Clark (1977: 538–9) suggest that this default status of the positive interpretation of the world finds expression in the predominance of the expression of goodness through the use of positive terms, such that no language appears to express the notion of 'good' negatively, by as it were using the term 'unbad', while many languages have a 'good' ~ 'ungood' polarity. Correspondingly, an E+ term can be negated through the addition of a prefix to produce the longer, marked term, as in 'happy' ~ 'unhappy', while the negation of the E– term 'sad' using the same prefix gives an odd result: ?'unsad'. If the Pollyanna Principle is correct, this is because the E– term is itself marked.

Further linguistic phenomena connected with the Pollyanna Principle are the seemingly universal tendency towards euphemism, as well as what Lewis (1960: 7) calls the drift from the descriptive to the evaluative use of a word. Thus the term French term *classe*, originally a descriptive noun whose coining originally reflected the desire to categorise, has become also an adjective expressing approval. More recently, Traugott (1989) has suggested that the fundamental tendency at the origin of all semantic (and therefore lexical) change is the shift from the objective to the subjective use of lexical items. Traugott suggests furthermore that this tendency is unidirectional. However, this type of semantic shift also operates in creating terms of

disapproval: thus the term 'adolescent', originally merely referring to the transition from childhood to adulthood, becomes contaminated by the negative judgments often passed on those undergoing this transition. Correspondingly, semantic weakening operates on E+ adjectives, such that 'brilliant' is now equivalent in colloquial speech to '[very] good'; but E– adjectives undergo similar weakening: 'naughty', a forceful term in Shakespeare's time, is now an epithet of remonstrance applicable to children only, and hence a weaker term if one assumes that remonstrations directed towards children are often mitigated. Other E– adjectives such as 'awful', 'frightful' and 'horrid' have undergone similar weakening, as have E– nouns such as 'rascal'. The French E– noun *coquin* ('rascal', 'scamp') has undergone a very similar process. Thus it may be that despite the operation in principle of semantic shift equally on E+ and E– terms, Pollyannaism is more salient in speakers' minds because, as Boucher and Osgood's evidence shows, positive terms are more copious, frequent and readily retrievable than negative.

2.3 Pollyanna and lexical change: historical, regional and cultural dimensions

As mentioned above, Opie and Opie (1959: 160–1) allude to the stability of terms of disapproval relative to positive lexical items. A striking example they mention (1959: 181) is that of an inscription written in a schoolbook by an 11-year-old boy in 1710: "Alexander Meason can write better nor Robert Barclay, but he is a blockhead at countins". The term 'blockhead' is still current in UK English at the time of writing, although other terms cited (ibid.), such as 'clodpoll', 'dullard', and 'dunderpate' now have a distinctly archaic ring. Against this, the Opies suggest (p. 161): "Few terms change in fashion more decisively than those expressing approval. Since about 1947 the word of the decade has been 'smashing'." This example is certainly telling, as the term is now distinctly outmoded in UK English.

When discussing different rates of lexical innovation by schoolchildren, Opie and Opie (1959: 14–15) suggest that there is a regional–national dimension to the process, distinguishing between "two distinct streams of oral lore [which] flow into the unending river of schoolchild chant and chatter, [...] as different from each other as slang and dialect". The first stream corresponds to: "The slangy superficial lore [which] spreads everywhere but, generally speaking, is transitory." By contrast, 'the dialectal lore flows more quietly, but deeper; [...]. It belongs to all time, but is limited in locality." These two 'streams' are relevant here in being composed broadly of positive and negative terms: the first comprises "comic songs, jokes, catch phrases, fashionable adjectives, slick nicknames, and crazes [...]", while the second is concerned with "children's darker doings: playing truant, giving warning, sneaking, swearing, snivelling, tormenting, and fighting". We can interpret this latter suggestion, which seems plausible, in the light of more recent research (e.g. Milroy 1987) into the influence of the structure of the social networks in which speakers are situated upon their tendency to maintain linguistic norms, whether standard or vernacular. From this perspective, the latter, 'negative' set of children's activities, being subject to adult disapproval, will take place in relatively closed social networks, and hence in principle be less amenable to innovation.

One can draw a further parallel here with traditional as well as more recent findings in both rural and urban dialectology that highlight the role of certain social groups in promoting linguistic changes, while others resist the introduction of non-localised (and often 'non-standard') innovative linguistic variants (cf. Chambers and Trudgill (1998: 29–31). The use by Opie and Opie of the terms 'slang' and 'dialect' reflects broadly this opposition; innovating linguistic items more or less definable as

'slang' can spread nationally very rapidly, perhaps especially as a result of their promotion by the broadcast media. Thus Chambers (1998: 125) has the example of the negation of a compliment or other positive proposition through the addition of a final emphatic 'not', as in 'Those are nice mauve socks you're wearing – NOT!' (Chambers' example: p. 125). This construction was brought to prominence in the UK in 1992 through its use in the film *Wayne's World*. At the same time, as Chambers (ibid.) points out, the very intensity of the construction's currency appears to have brought about, through over-use, its rather rapid fall from popularity.

We need of course to qualify the Opies' comments by reference to the considerable cultural changes that have come about in the 40 years since the publication of their study. It is unclear to what extent the often highly localised and highly specialised lexis connected with 'children's darker doings' continues to flourish, but in any event this lexis is by no means wholly coterminous with the negative lexical items of interest here. Perhaps the most striking example of regional variation in children's language is that of truce terms, which in the Opies' book (pp. 141–53) were shown to vary widely in their form and distribution. But on a more general level, one of the most considerable cultural factors to supervene between 1959 and the time of writing is the near-universal presence in Western countries of the electronic broadcast media, most notably television. The influence of television and other electronic media in promoting linguistic change has been the object of some controversy among sociolinguists. Fasold (1990: 236) expresses the predominant assumption as follows, in relation to the pronunciation level: "it is more important to conform to what people in your network expect than to what you are taught in school or hear on television". More recently and generally, (Chambers 1998) has suggested that while the electronic media have little influence on the promotion of sound change, which operates in the context of face-to-face interaction, more superficial change such as that operating in the lexicon can be brought about through contact with impersonal sources such as television. Clearly, this has implications for the diffusion of negative terms, as well as positive, through the 'slang stream' in the Opies' definition, cited above.

The other major factor that must be mentioned here is the promotion of the values of youth that has taken place in the decades since the 1950s, and the connected phenomena associated with the 'decline of deference' illustrated perhaps most vividly by the events of May 1968 in France. At least one researcher (Smith, 1996) has provided quantitative evidence for the reflection of social change in linguistic change in France, by tracing the decline in formal radio speech, approximately over the period in question, of the use of variable liaison across two corpora. The realisation of French variable liaison (e.g. *très* [z] *intéressant* standard variant ~ *très* [Ø] *intéressant* non-standard) is associated with more prestigious speech and more formal speech styles. Smith compared realisation rates in a corpus of radio speech recorded in the early 1960s by Ågren (1973) with his own corpus, recorded in 1995–6. He found a decline in variable liaison in five out of the six grammatical categories he studied, and an overall decline from 61.6% in Ågren's data to 46.8% in his own. Smith argues that from about the late 1960s onwards, the attitude of the French upper-middle class towards the standard language has undergone substantial changes, as a result of the way French society has evolved in this period. Smith suggests that the decline in variable liaison reflects the changes consequent principally on the social upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s, typified most spectacularly by the May 1968 events. Although no substantive change in the French economic structure took place during this period, most notably in terms of the distribution of wealth and income, important symbolic

social changes have come about. French decision-makers now feel the need to adopt a consensual rather than a directive approach, and to emphasise solidarity rather than hierarchy (cf. Ardagh 1999: 90–100). Social divisions, between the middle and working classes, men and women, young and old, have become blurred during this period, even though economic divisions are as sharp as before, or even sharper, as Smith points out (1996: 133–34). Therefore it is unsurprising that a linguistic variable such as liaison should decline during this period, given that it is so stereotypically a prestige phenomenon.

Impressionistically, linguistic changes in this period corresponding to the decline of prestige forms that are relevant to the present discussion include most obviously the increasing acceptability in everyday language, and indeed in some forms of writing, of taboo words. Such words, now preponderantly of scatological and sexual reference, have of course a large part to play in the expression of negative emotion, and have corresponding implications for the possible evolution over time of the Pollyanna Principle.

It seems pertinent to mention here finally the commonplace that the increasing informalisation of the last forty or so years has been propelled in substantial measure by the greatly enhanced socio-cultural influence of younger people, consequent on their increasing economic status as an immensely important consumer group through the thirty or so years of post-war economic reconstruction and growth from 1945–75. This informalisation has had clear effects in linguistic change at all of the levels of analysis, and it may well be presumed to have implications for our results, which we now present below.

3.1 The questionnaire study: methodology

A questionnaire was constructed as the elicitation method designed to test the validity of the Pollyanna Principle through the analysis of age-related differences in the use in English and French of E+ and E– adjectives. The elicitation of attitudes to terms of praise and blame was limited to adjectives in the interests of methodological ease. We were concerned, so far as possible, to select terms that should be as closely equivalent in reference as possible. A pair of lexical alternants such as *voiture* and *bagnole* are relatively unproblematic in having identical reference, as recognised by a recent monolingual French dictionary, the 1995 *Nouveau Petit Robert*; this simply gives *bagnole* as a *familier* (colloquial) synonym of *voiture*. The choice of E+ and E– adjectives is of course attended by the difficulty in principle of achieving close synonymy between the lexical items of interest, since adjectives of this type tend to refer to subjective judgment, and hence individual use, in a way that nouns do not, or to a lesser extent. Five E+ and E– adjectives in each language were selected by the researchers with the intention that they should convey the reference translatable respectively as ‘good’, and ‘bad’; and that they should moreover be capable of fitting into a predicate position indicated by the dash below, in an exchange of the following type:

(1) What do you think of the film?

It’s —

It is perhaps significant that the researchers found rather little difficulty in selecting five current E+ adjectives for the questionnaire in each language, while selection of the E– items required extensive canvassing of native speakers in English

and French. We shall see below further that the informants also experienced some difficulty in finding E– adjectives that fitted neatly into this frame.

Informants' responses were therefore elicited through the use of a questionnaire, shown in Appendix 1, designed to elicit:

(i) the awareness and perceived frequency of use on the part of speakers of the adjectives of interest (boxes 1 and 5 of the questionnaire);
(ii) their view of whether these adjectives were innovative, current or outmoded (boxes 2 and 6);
(iii) any recently coined items of which the researchers might be unaware (boxes 3, 4, 7 and 8).

Adjectives were drawn from dictionaries of slang and from native-speaker intuitions. The French adjective *mortel* was selected both as an E+ and E– term. This reflects the essentially arbitrary assignment of certain terms as E+ or E–, or indeed as both. For instance, despite their similar etymologies, the English adjective 'terrible' is E–, but 'terrific' is E+. Similarly, the French adjective *terrible* is E+. A more closely comparable example is English 'wicked', which during the youth of the present author was a strong non-standard E– term, and which at the time of writing is an E+ term for younger speakers.

3.2 The research sites and the speaker samples

The French evaluative data discussed below derive from sociolinguistic fieldwork conducted in 1998–9 in a medium-sized provincial city in France: Le Mans, an industrial, administrative and commercial centre (pop. 150,000 in the conurbation) situated in western central France some 130 miles (210 km) to the south-west of Paris. This location was suitable on practical grounds, as the field researcher (Hogg; cf. Armstrong and Hogg 2001) was spending some six months in Le Mans as part of an intercalary period in France. The location was suitable also in being situated fairly close to the very populous Parisian region, and in having good road and rail communications with it, as well as with other, more peripheral areas of France. The significance of this is that it seems reasonable to assume that lexical innovations spreading nationally would reach Le Mans no less quickly than other provincial centres.

The English data were recorded in Newcastle upon Tyne, again a medium-sized provincial city in NE England (pop. 200,000). This location was also suitable on practical grounds, since the researchers were located there at the time. Although Newcastle is rather more peripheral geographically and perhaps more distinctive culturally than Le Mans (the Tyneside 'Geordie' culture is certainly so perceived in the UK), one can assume that the influence in the city of the electronic broadcast media, most notably television, is as pervasive as elsewhere. Clearly, this has implications for the diffusion of the negative and positive terms that are of interest here. The speed of diffusion characteristic of such changes is certainly remarkable, and one must assume that the networked broadcast media are influential in this respect.

The fieldworker was able to activate contacts in local schools in Le Mans and Newcastle to introduce her to older informants within and outside the school, as well as within the local academic and professional communities. Limiting the number of speakers for ease of analysis in each speaker group to 15, the sample gathered was of the following size and structure:

Table 1 Speakers sampled at each research site

AGE	MALE	FEMALE
11–15	15	15
16–18	15	15
40–55	15	15

For completeness we discuss the extra-linguistic variable of age taken into account in the study, although lack of space precludes a discussion of the effect of the distinction between the two age groups within the 11–18 group. Therefore the responses of two age groups are reported here: 11–18 and 40–55. The upper age limit of the former bracket coincides fairly closely with that used by other researchers, for example Coveney (1996: 20–21), who distinguished in his speaker sample a younger informant group aged 17–22. Coveney remarked that most of the informants in his intermediate (23–37) and older groups (50–60) he sampled were married and/or in permanent full-time employment, and suggested that 'marriage and employment have a significant effect on the individual's social network pattern, and consequently on their linguistic behaviour also'. A cut-off point of 18 rather than 22 was used, and a gap of some twenty years between younger and older informants was preserved.

At the sampling stage, it was surmised that within the 11–18 group a distinction between 11–15 and 16–18, corresponding with the transition from the lower forms to the higher in both countries, might reveal different responses to non-standard lexis. Specifically, a major difference between the two groups was that the 16–18 group of school pupils, who had undergone a selection processes and were now engaged in preparation for competitive, advanced-level state examinations, might be reflected in the greater normative pressures, including of course, linguistic ones, exerted upon this older group. No significant statistical differences were found between these age groups, however; more surprisingly, perhaps, in view of the results discussed in section 1, male–female differences were also found not to achieve levels of statistical significance (section 2.3 below). This is perhaps connected with the fact that the lexical items of interest here have no sharply marked taboo value.

3.3 Analysis of the results

Certain of the findings observed in the present study which showed interesting patterns of variation, and where the researchers wished to make substantive claims concerning the patterns, were tested for statistical significance using the test known as Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). This test investigates the extent to which variation between two or more sets of observations is attributable to factors other than random fluctuation; the suitability of ANOVA for the present results stems from the fact that the test also takes into account variation within a set of observations. As is conventional in the social sciences, significance in the results reported here was tested at 'the five per cent level'; that is, a result was accepted as being statistically significant if it is shown that the probability (p) of its occurring by chance is less than one in twenty, or 5%. This probability is expressed as follows: $p \leq 0.05$. A 'highly

significant' result is one where $p \leq 0.01$, that is where the probability of its occurring by chance is equal to or less than 1%; a 'very highly significant' result is one where $p \leq 0.001$. Results of significance tests will be given in the appropriate places below.

4.1 Results: E+ terms proposed by the researchers

Below we show quantified French results set out in the matrices used in the questionnaire to elicit results (Appendix 1 shows the English version), adapted for ease of presentation. We discuss here the age-based differences in responses elicited by section (i) of the questionnaire as set out above (awareness and perceived frequency of use of the adjectives proposed by the researchers), since it is this aspect of the questionnaire study that raises the issues of methodology of interest here. As can be seen from tables 2a and 2b below, the informants were asked firstly to state their acquaintance with, and estimated use of, a list of five non-standard E+ adjectives supplied by the researchers. The figures in the six columns in tables refer to the answers given by each of the 90 informants. The responses of the 60 informants aged 11–18 are shown in table 2a, in which each row totals to 60; correspondingly the responses of the 30 informants aged 40–55 are shown in table 2b, so that each row in table 2b totals to 30. Each informant was asked to tick one box only for each lexical item. For ease of comparison a 'Total x 2' row has been used in the 'b' tables below, so as to adjust the 60 – 30 disparity between the younger and older informant groups.

Table 2a Younger French speakers' reported knowledge and use of E+ adjectives (60 informants)

	Never heard of it	Know but never use it	Know but no longer use it	Use it sometimes	Use it often	Use it very often
génial	1	6	11	24	9	9
cool	0	1	2	26	20	11
mortel	1	20	3	16	8	12
classe	1	16	10	18	9	6
trop	0	21	7	10	13	9
Total	3	64	33	94	59	47

Table 2b Older French speakers' reported knowledge and use of E+ adjectives (30 informants)

	Never heard of it	Know but never use it	Know but no longer use it	Use it sometimes	Use it often	Use it very often
génial	0	3	2	20	3	2
cool	0	10	2	14	4	0
mortel	4	18	2	6	0	0
classe	0	15	1	13	1	0
trop	3	17	3	6	1	0
Total x 2	14	126	20	118	18	4

Very broadly, the columns indicate from left to right, in increasing order, the degree of awareness and positive evaluation of these E+ adjectives. The exception to this increasing scale is the 'Know it but no longer use it' column, which we discuss

separately below. A comparison of tables 2a and 2b shows age-related differences that are in line with expectations, as follows:

(i) a higher number of older informants relative to younger who had not heard of certain of the E+ adjectives used in a non-standard sense (14 – 3);
(ii) a very considerable difference between the older and younger groups (126 – 64) in the 'Know it but never use it' column;
(ii) similarly large differences between older and younger informants across the two right-hand columns, 'Use it often' (18 – 59) and 'Use it very often' (4 – 47).

These results indicate clearly, to the extent of course that self-reporting indicates actual use, the greater frequency of use of these non-standard E+ terms among the younger speakers. At the same time the higher score for the younger speakers (20 – 33) in the 'Know it but no longer use it' column seems to show that some of these informants regard certain of the E+ terms selected by the researchers as now rather outmoded, while the older informants have a somewhat less developed sense of how non-standard E+ terms are evolving.

Table 3 Aggregated responses of the two French age groups indicating frequent + very frequent use of non-standard E+ terms

11-18	Use it often + very often	40–55	Use it often + very often
génial	18		5
cool	31		4
mortel	20		0
classe	15		1
trop	22		1
Total	106	Total x 2	22

Table 3 above shows the result of aggregating the rightmost pairs of columns of tables 2a and 2b. These pairs of columns are related in showing reported linguistic behaviour that is similar in kind but different in degree: that is, responses by the two age groups indicating frequent and very frequent use of non-standard E+ terms. These responses show a very sharp difference between 106 affirmative responses from the younger group, against 11 (adjusted figure 22) from the older. A single-factor ANOVA (factor: age) of the result in table 3 shows a very highly significant p-value of 0.000169, confirming one's intuitive assessment of these two sets of observations, which are very highly differentiated across the two age groups while at the same time compared to the variance within the sets.

In summary, these results seem to show the younger French informants to be more intensive users than the older group of non-standard E+ terms, and to be more highly aware of the currency of these terms. Comparing the results in table 3 with those in table 4 below, which are the result of aggregating the rightmost pairs of columns in the English questionnaire results (we pass over the full results in the interests of brevity), we can see a less steeply differentiated pattern relating the two age groups, with at the same time lower levels of reported use.

Table 4 Aggregated responses of the two English age groups indicating frequent + very frequent use of non-standard E+ terms

11-18	Use it often + very often	40–55	Use it often + very often
cool	34		3
radical	0		0
brill	3		3
mega	2		1
ace	4		1
Total	43	Total x 2	16

The difference between the levels of reported use across tables 3 and 4 seems to be due to the influence of the questionnaire; clearly, the terms in table 4 proposed by the researchers hardly correspond, except in the case of 'cool', to the informants' perceptions. This result may seen surprising in view of the researchers' English native-speaker status; against this may be mentioned the age of the older researcher, Armstrong: aged 45 at the time of the design of the project. Hogg was aged 22. We may perhaps take this effect partly as a reflex of the sharp age grading that seems to characterise the use of some non-standard language, as discussed above in section 2.2. The irony or reflexivity attaching to this result is obvious: the result in table 4 seems to have been influenced by one of the phenomena under investigation, especially in relation to 'radical', where the researchers' intuitions was clearly imperfect.

We turn now to the same quantification applied to E– terms.

4.2 Results: E– terms proposed by the researchers

Table 5 Aggregated responses of the two French age groups indicating frequent + very frequent use of non-standard E– terms

11-18	Use it often + very often	40–55	Use it often + very often
mortel	15		0
lourd	16		1
craignos	3		0
naze	13		0
relou	11		0
Total	58	Total x 2	2

Table 5 shows a very sharp degree of age difference between informants' reported frequent use of the E– terms, but at a much lower level of reported use. This is reflected in the single-factor ANOVA (factor: age) of the result in table 5, which again shows a very highly significant p-value of 0.001185. This value, although again indicating the vanishingly low probability that the result could have come about by chance, reflects the lesser degree of homogeneity within the 11–18 set of observations, caused by the low level of reported use of *craignos*. It may be that *craignos* had become somewhat outmoded since the older researcher, Armstrong, became aware of the term, in 1990 or so. The fact that this is the only French E– term to have become outmoded, out of the five selected by the researchers, seems to reflect the lower turnover in E– terms predicted by Pollyanna.

The strikingly low response rate from the older group can be interpreted as showing the classic age-grading pattern frequently reported in the sociolinguistic literature and summarised by Chambers and Trudgill (1998: 78–81), who suggest (p. 79): "as speakers get older and begin working, they move into wider and less cohesive social networks, and are more influenced by mainstream societal values". These values are associated with standard linguistic variants, whether phonological, grammatical or lexical.

Table 6 Aggregated responses of the two English age groups indicating frequent + very frequent use of non-standard E– terms

11-18	Use it often + very often	40–55	Use it often + very often
pathetic	17		5
crap	47		14
dire	4		1
abysmal	6		1
lousy	2		4
Total	76	Total x 2	50

Like table 5, table 6 shows lower reported levels of use of E– terms, but at the time a much smaller degree of age differentiation in the English sample in the use of non-standard terms compared to the French. This seems to be due in part to the influence of the questionnaire; the researchers were perhaps over-cautious in their choice of terms, and to anticipate the following section, scatological terms were frequently proposed by the informants – 'shit' and its reflex 'shite', and 'bollocks' were frequently offered, as well as the curious term 'pants'.

The further feature that distinguishes the patterns shown in tables 5 and 6 is the very low degree of agreement shared by the younger and older French informants, in contrast to the measure of consensus apparent in table 6. This can perhaps be explained by the powerful prescriptive tradition prevalent in France that may accentuate the age-grading effect referred to earlier.

The results shown in tables 2a – 6 can be expressed in the rather highly schematised representation set out below in table 7a and 7b.

Table 7a Younger and older French speakers' reported knowledge and use of E+ and E– adjectives (90 informants; responses weighted as in previous tables)

Age group / response to E+ / E– terms	Never heard of it + know but never use it	Know but no longer use it	Use it sometimes + often + very often
11–18: E+	67	33	200
40–55: E+	140	20	140
Total	**207**	**53**	**340**
11–18: E–	139	33	128
40–55: E–	184	16	100
Total	**323**	**49**	**228**

Table 7b Younger and older English speakers' reported knowledge and use of E+ and E– adjectives (90 informants; responses weighted)

Age group / response to E+ / E– terms	Never heard of it + know but never use it	Know but no longer use it	Use it sometimes + often + very often
11–18: E+	188	33	79
40–55: E+	200	36	64
Total	**388**	**69**	**143**
11–18: E–	136	30	134
40–55: E–	88	18	194
Total	**224**	**48**	**328**

Tables 7a and 7b show the result of aggregating the younger and older groups' responses that are set out in tables 2a –6. Suppressing detail at the level of individual words, as well as aggregating the left-hand or 'negative' questionnaire responses ('Never heard of it' plus 'Know it but never use it') and the right-hand, 'positive' responses ('Use it sometimes' plus 'often' plus 'very often') causes pattern to emerge that are strikingly symmetrical on the more abstract level of the totalled scores for younger and older informants. For the French results, a cross-over pattern is observable that differentiates the left- and right-hand sides, as well as the top and bottom halves of the table; thus relatively few negative responses (207) are associated with the E+ terms, while at the same time a small number of positive responses (228) are found in the bottom-right, E– part of the table. The converse is also true: a high number of negative responses is associated with E– terms, and equally a high number of positive responses is located in the top-right, E+ quarter.

The French E+ pattern is in line with expectations raised by a straightforward interpretation of the Pollyanna Hypothesis, showing as it does a relatively small number of negative responses, a large number of positive responses, and high proportional differences between younger and older informants. At first sight, it is possible to interpret the E– results also in the light of Pollyannaism; the large number of negative responses associated with the E– terms proposed can be taken simply as indicating a lower level of use, as can the small number of positive responses. Correspondingly, the rather low proportional differences between the generational groups might be taken to indicate a low turnover in E– terms, following the Opies' suggestion. This latter hypothesis seems endorsed by the fact that the negative responses to the E– terms are largely concentrated in the 'Know it but never use it' column.

An alternative explanation of the reverse pattern observable in the E– responses is that non-standard lexical innovation of the type in question here proceeds at a comparable rate in French in E+ and E– adjectives, and that the researchers' imperfect intuition failed to elicit the more current E– terms in favour among the younger informants. This hypothesis is endorsed to some extent by the higher number of responses by the younger informants in the left-hand, 'negative' column that relate to E– terms (139) than to E+ (67). As noted above, this explanation would suppose that the terms proposed by the researchers, especially *craignos* and to a lesser extent *naze*, which attract a rather high number of negative responses and low number of positive responses among the younger informants, had become outmoded since the researchers became aware of their currency.

Regarding the English results, we have pointed out already that the informants accepted only one E+ term, 'cool', as having considerable currency. Again, we compare below French and English terms volunteered by informants in the light of the more direct evidence they give of the Pollyanna Principle, but we can mention here the very small generational difference in the number of negative responses to the English E+ terms proposed: 188 for the younger group against 200 for the older. This can be taken as arguing for less lexical innovation in English as compared to French as much as bias on the researchers' part.

Like the French pattern, the E– English pattern also shows a reverse effect in relation to the E+ polarity, and the English flip-over pattern is moreover reversed with respect to the French. As mentioned above, the two most plausible explanations seem to be the researchers' imperfect intuitions, especially in regard to the English situation; and the more copious use of variable lexis in French, which seems to have had the consequence that French non-standard E+ and E– adjectives represented a larger 'target' at the design stage of the study.

As indicated previously, sections 3, 4, 7 and 8 of the questionnaire were designed to elicit E+ and E– terms other than those proposed by the researchers. Given that the results in the previous section are susceptible to several interpretations, we now examine the more direct results issuing from the second section of the questionnaire to supplement the findings discussed above. Clearly, the results discussed in the following section are more direct in the sense of being relatively free from the bias introduced by the researchers in their selection of the five E+ and E– terms. At the same time, some respondents may have felt inhibited from volunteering scatological E– terms, despite the injunction 'don't be afraid to write in rude words' (section 7).

5.1 E+ terms proposed by the informants

The E+ and E– terms volunteered by the French and English informant groups are listed fully in Appendices 2 and 3. We limit in the interests of brevity our discussion to the terms proposed by each group that were mentioned ten times or more by the relevant informant group; this figure was arrived at by totalling across all matrices. It can be seen that most words were in addition mentioned positively ten times or more, in the sense of their reported use being qualified by 'sometimes', 'often' and 'very often'. Examining the results in the same order as in section 3, we show in Tables 8a and 8b below the E+ adjectives most frequently proposed by the French informants.

Table 8a E+ adjectives most frequently proposed by younger French speakers

	Know but never use it	Know but no longer use it	Use it sometimes	Use it often	Use it very often	**Total**
excellent	1	1	10	10	11	**33**
super	1	3	7	14	5	**30**
top	6	4	7	3	3	**23**
trop + adj	1	2	4	2	5	**14**

Table 8b E+ adjectives most frequently proposed by older French speakers

	Know but never use it	Know but no longer use it	Use it sometimes	Use it often	Use it very often	**Total**
super	3	4	11	2	2	**22**
top	10	2	3	2	0	**17**

The admittedly rather rough-and-ready measure used shows the younger speakers to be more copious innovators of non-standard E+ terms. Overall, there was very little difference in the number of terms proposed by each age group: 32 for the younger group against 31 for the older. This small difference should not be given undue prominence, in view of the rather small size of the informant sample. Similarly, the results shown here involve too few token numbers to allow statistical testing.

The figures in tables 8a and 8b suggest that the adjective *super* has remained a popular E+ term for some considerable time in view of its ready availability across the two generational groups; this is a finding that endorses impressionistic observation. Secondly, *excellent* appears to be an E+ term that is in process of adoption by younger speakers; it was not mentioned at all by the older group, for whom it may be presumed to be retaining its strong, earlier sense for the present. This is endorsed by that fact that 16 younger informants judged *excellent* to be trendy, using box 7 of the questionnaire. Thirdly, *top* and *trop* + adjective appear to have some innovative value in view of their being mentioned by the younger speakers; *top* in particular has higher figures for the younger speakers than the older in the three positive, right-hand matrices. At the same time the example of *super* shows that certain E+ terms are capable of retaining their currency for a considerable time.

The relatively high number of terms volunteered by the younger group (Appendix 2) seems to endorse the Opies' hypothesis of rapid innovation in E+ terms, when compared with the rather lower figure for E– terms: 26.

Taken together with the results shown in tables 2a, 2b and 3, the French results in 8a and 8b suggest a situation where a rather copious array of non-standard E+ terms is available to young French speakers, reflected in the quite high degree of success on the researchers' part in gauging the currency of E+ terms, as suggested in tables 2a – 3 above. As argued above, this appears to endorse what was suggested in the introductory section regarding the higher sociolinguistic profile in French of variable lexis. This hypothesis does not necessarily entail that English E+ terms have a higher turnover than French: we can propose a situation where French E+ terms remain copious relative to English, while at the same time a fairly rapid rate of non-standard lexical innovation obtains in French.

We turn now to the E+ adjectives most frequently proposed by the English informants.

Table 9a E+ adjectives most frequently proposed by younger English speakers

	Know it but never use it	Know but no longer use it	Use it sometimes	Use it often	Use it very often	**Total**
class	1	2	5	9	13	**30**
lush	1	2	4	3	3	**13**
mint	0	2	15	13	10	**40**

Table 9b E+ adjectives most frequently proposed by older English speakers

	Know it but never use it	Know but no longer use it	Use it sometimes	Use it often	Use it very often	**Total**
great	2	0	6	5	3	**16**

These tables again show the younger speakers to be more prolific innovators of non-standard E+ terms, and shows equally that 'class' and 'mint' have a similar level of currency to 'cool', the E+ term proposed by the researchers and having the highest response rate from the younger age group. Again bearing in mind the relatively small size of the informant sample, the fact that the younger speakers proposed 41 terms in addition to those suggested by the researchers, against 26 proposed by the older informants (Appendix 3), provides some evidence in support of the view of the younger age group as innovators of non-standard terms; as does the fact that the term 'great', the term most frequently suggested by the older group, is not innovatory.

We turn now to the same quantification applied to E– terms.

5.2 E– terms proposed by the informants

Table 10a E– adjectives most frequently proposed by younger French speakers

	Know it but never use it	Know but no longer use it	Use it sometimes	Use it often	Use it very often	**Total**
chiant	0	0	0	9	6	**15**
de la merde	0	3	4	6	4	**17**
nul	0	4	10	11	8	**33**
nul à chier	2	0	1	2	5	**10**
pourri	1	1	8	6	4	**20**

Table 10b E– adjectives most frequently proposed by older French speakers

	Know but never use it	Know but no longer use it	Use it sometimes	Use it often	Use it very often	**Total**
nul	0	0	12	5	2	**19**

Tables 10a and 10b show the E– terms proposed by each French informant group using the method used for E+ terms. The remarks that were applied to *super* in relation to the E+ terms appear to be valid for *nul* also; it is rather stable across the

two groups, although the younger informants report more frequent use. The 1997 *Oxford Hachette* labels the term colloquial when used as a noun, as in: *c'est un nul* 'he's an idiot'. The 1987 *Petit Robert*, one of the standard French medium-sized monolingual dictionaries, attributes no style label, while the more recent 1995 *Nouveau Petit Robert* labels *familier* the extended application of the adjective from inanimate to animate objects. The term corresponds more or less to English 'hopeless' or 'useless'. It was observed in the Dieuze corpus discussed in section 2.1 that speakers' reactions to certain lexical items other than those labelled *vulgaire* are often less amenable to relatively straightforward explanation in attitudinal terms, as shown by self-reporting and self-repair. If one accepts that children and adolescents are the principal innovators of terms of blame and (especially) praise, as Opie and Opie (1959: 161) suggest, then such terms may then come to be perceived as non-standard by virtue of their being associated with a social group which is often the object of disapproval by older people.

The further complexity attending the evaluation of *nul* is its polysemic value and, until recently, totally respectable linguistic history; among its other functions the term is used as a negative indefinite pronoun, as in the current phrase *nul n'est censé ignorer la loi* 'ignorance of the law is no excuse'. Merle (1986: 110–11) suggests that at the time of writing *nul* was being 'hyperutilisé', literally 'hyperused', by young speakers. Its use appears now to be working through to an older generation.

The example of *nul* stands in striking contrast to the other rather straightforward E– terms shown in table 9a; with the exception of *pourri*, literally 'rotten', all are scatological, and reflect the recent increasing acceptability of such terms, as discussed in section 2.3 above.

5.3 Other E– terms indicated by the French informants

The present study appears to endorse Boucher and Osgood's findings concerning the lesser retrievability of E–terms: the number of E– terms proposed by each age group was 26 for the younger group against 21 for the older. Clearly, these figures are somewhat lower than those observed for the E+ terms (32 and 31 respectively), although the difference is by no means spectacular. In this connexion it may be mentioned however that certain E– terms volunteered by the informants seemed to provide a less close match as synonyms of 'bad'; examples are *pitoyable* 'pitiful', *rasoir* 'boring' and *con* 'stupid'. This difficulty was less noticeable in regard to E+ terms.

Against the foregoing, several informants, especially in the 11–18 group, volunteered as alternative E+ and (especially) E– terms those show below in tables 11a – 11c. These are characterised by the construction: *ça* + 3rd-person verb, where the indefinite pronoun *ça* 'it' has a referent, often quite vague, in the preceding discourse. The best known sequence of this type is *ça craint*, a locution that has attracted a good deal of comment from linguists as well as laypersons, perhaps principally because *craindre* 'to fear' is standardly transitive, so that *ça craint* without an object is very aberrant with respect to the standard syntax. The phrase is perhaps most closely translated in US English by the non-standard 'it sucks'. Clearly, the *ça* + 3rd-person verb construction did not conform to the adjectival frame proposed by the researchers, but it appears to be widely used, particularly by young speakers and particularly to indicate disapproval. On the basis of a rather small sample, it is unclear whether the elicitation method used in the present study has skewed results through introducing a bias based on English syntax; certainly some non-standard French expressions have a syntactic organisation that differs from the English equivalent. For

example, French will have a non-standard verb where English would typically have an adverbial, as in: *qu'est-ce que tu fous là?*, perhaps most idiomatically translated in English as 'what the hell are you doing there / what are you bloody doing there?'. However this may be, table 11b below endorses one's intuition that the *ça* + 3rd-person verb construction is a common alternative to that proposed by the researchers, perhaps more common than its English equivalent.

Table 11a E+ terms proposed by younger French informants using *ça* + 3rd-person verb

Phrase	Number of informants who mentioned it
ça déchire	2
ça tue	3
ça le fait	1
ça cartonne	2
ça boom	1
ça marche	1

Table 11b E– terms proposed by younger French informants using *ça* + 3rd-person verb

Phrase	Number of informants who mentioned it
ça fait chier	5
ça fait ièch	1
ça pue	4
ça tue	1
ça craint	10
ça me prend la tête	2
ça m'use la tête	1
ça fait pitié	4
ça fait tièpe	1
ça vaut que de chie	1

Table 11c E– terms proposed by older French informants using *ça* + 3rd-person verb

Phrase	Number of informants who mentioned it
ça craint	3
ça me prend la tête	1

What is of most interest from our present point of view is of course the larger number of E– terms than E+ using *ça* + 3rd-person verb proposed by the informants. This finding goes clearly against Pollyannaism, and endorses our suggestions, proposed in 1.3 above, concerning the influence of the lexical structure of French and of the socio-cultural evolutions that have taken place since the Opies formulated their proposals that foreshadowed Pollyanna.

5.4 E– terms indicated by the English informants

Tables 12a and 12b below show the E– terms most frequently volunteered by the English informants. As mentioned previously, the low degree of match between the researchers' and informants' view of the currency of these seems to be due to a

certain demureness on the researchers' part, since three out of the five terms frequently cited by the younger informants relate to scatology, as do a few others listed in Appendix 3. This is of course equally true of the French results. The disparity between the number of E– terms proposed by the younger and older groups is greater than for the E+ terms: 33 – 20 against 41 – 26. Table 12b shows the only E– term that was mentioned at all frequently by the older informants. It is worth pointing out the relative lack of innovation in the English and French E– words; apart from 'pants', the only other novel English terms were 'shan' (a Scots term) 'ladgeful' (Romany) and 'minging'. This contrasts with the English E+ situation, where a greater number of terms were unfamiliar to the present author. Cleary, full native-speaker intuition would be required for comparable comments on the French E+ and E–terms volunteered.

Table 12a E– adjectives most frequently proposed by younger English speakers

	Know6 but never use it	Know but no longer use it	Use it sometimes	Use it often	Use it very often	**Total**
bollocks	0	0	6	9	7	**22**
pants	1	1	8	3	4	**17**
rubbish	0	1	11	4	3	**19**
shit	2	0	9	10	11	**32**
shite	0	1	1	6	3	**11**

Table 12b E– adjectives most frequently proposed by older English speakers

	Know but never use it	Know but no longer use it	Use it sometimes	Use it often	Use it very often	**Total**
shit	1	0	2	4	1	**8**

A final table summarises the number of terms proposed by each informant group:

Table 13 Numbers of E+ and E– adjectives volunteered by younger and older French and English speakers

	French	N	English	N
Age group / number of E+ and E– terms volunteered	11–18: E+	32	11–18: E+	41
	40–55: E+	31	40–55: E+	26
	Total	**63**	**Total**	**67**
	11–18: E–	26	11–18: E–	33
	40–55: E–	21	40–55: E–	20
	Total	**47**	**Total**	**53**

The most striking result here endorses Pollyanna: fewer E– terms than E+ are proposed across the two languages by all age groups. Other consistent patterns are greater number of terms, both E+ and E–, proposed by the younger speakers across both languages; and fewer terms proposed in French than in English for every

category except E– by the French 40–55 age group. Here however the difference is slight. The age-grading effect discussed previously is more marked in English, and leads one to wonder whether the greater socio-stylistic value in French of variable lexis is reflected in higher rates of use by all age groups of non-standard terms. Against this stands the sharp age-grading effect that appeared when the French informant's judgements were sought of the E– terms proposed by the researchers. As we suggested above where these terms were discussed, it may be that a situation prevails in France where lexical innovation by the young is found alongside quite high rates of use by all speaker groups of stable non-standard lexical items.

6. Summary and conclusion

Since we have already discussed the implications of our findings in some detail above, we confine ourselves here to summarising them briefly. All of the results discussed above appear to endorse Pollyannaism in showing greater use and knowledge of innovative E+ terms among younger speakers than older. The less sharply differentiated results for the E– terms suggest slower rates of innovation; similarly, the lower figures for reported use of E– terms by both age groups also endorse Pollyanna. The results are confirmed by statistical tests where sufficiently large token numbers make these possible. The only exceptions occur where bias introduced into the questionnaire by the researchers has skewed results. Concerning the further influence of methodology, we may reiterate here that the English fieldworker's native-speaker status may have led to the higher response rates from the English than the French informants. On the whole, however, the later sections of the questionnaire designed to elicit volunteered items from the respondents seem to have proved quite robust.

As stated in the previous section, perhaps the most interesting result concerns the quite large number of E– terms proposed by the younger informants having the *ça* + 3rd-person verb construction. This suggests that young French speakers may possess a lexical resource that enables them to express negative evaluation more readily than speakers of other languages, a conclusion evoking the form of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis that postulates the influence of the lexical structure of a language on the possibilities for expression of its speakers.

However, in the present state of knowledge it appears that the major factors that lead us to modify the impressionistic findings of the Opies, formulated forty years ago, are, as noted previously, the very considerable socio-cultural changes that have intervened since. These changes have made possible the readier expression of negative evaluation, perhaps principally by leading to a greatly increased acceptability of words formerly regarded as taboo. It is doubtful whether this undermines the universal validity of the Pollyanna Principle; it seems that like many concepts in pragmatics, Pollyanna needs in any event to be hedged by reference to several speaker variables as well as the surrounding socio-cultural context. At the same time, its cross-linguistic application seems to have been confirmed by the results discussed here.

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire on young people's language (English version)

I am interested in how quickly the language used by young people changes, and I am studying this by asking people to fill in the questionnaire below. I'd be very grateful if you could answer the questions below, which aim to find out whether you know certain words that young people are supposed to use, whether you think you use the words, whether you think they're new or not, and whether there are any words I've missed.

1. **Words showing approval: how often you use them**: Please tick a box opposite each word in the list below to show whether you'd heard of the word as a term of approval, and if so whether you use the word, and how often.

	Never heard it used to show approval	Know it but don't use it	Know it but no longer use it	Use it sometimes	Use it often	Use it very often
cool						
radical						
brill						
mega						
ace						

2. **Words showing approval: old-fashioned, trendy or neither**: Please tick a box opposite each word in the list below to show whether you think the word is old-fashioned, trendy or neither.

	Old fashioned	Trendy	Neither
cool			
radical			
brill			
mega			
ace			

3. **Words showing approval: not in the lists above**: Please write below any words of approval that use or know, that aren't in the list above, and that mean more or less the same as the words above. Please say also how often you use the word (if ever).

Fill in word below	Never use	No longer use it	Use sometimes	Use often	Use very often

4. Fill in the same words below as you filled in above, and say whether you think they're old-fashioned, trendy or neither

Fill in word below	Old fashioned	Trendy	Neither

5. **Words showing disapproval: how often you use them**: Please tick a box opposite each word in the list below whether you'd heard of the word as a term of disapproval, and if so whether you use the word, and how often.

	Never heard it used to show disapproval	Know it but don't use it	Know it but no longer use it	Use it sometimes	Use it often	Use it very often
pathetic						
crap						
dire						
abysmal						
lousy						

6. **Words showing disapproval: old-fashioned, trendy or neither**: Please tick a box opposite each word in the list below to show whether you think the word is old-fashioned, trendy or neither.

	Old fashioned	Trendy	Neither
pathetic			
crap			
dire			
abysmal			
lousy			

7. **Words showing disapproval: not in the lists above**: Please write below any words of disapproval that you use or know, that aren't in the lists above. Please say also often you use the word (if ever). Don't be afraid to write in rude words.

Fill in word below	Never use	No longer use it	Use sometimes	Use often	Use very often

8. Fill in the same words below as you filled in above, and say whether you think they're old-fashioned, trendy or neither.

Fill in word below	Old fashioned	Trendy	Neither

Thank you!

Appendix 2: E+ terms mentioned by the younger French informants

Word	Never use it	No longer use it	Use it sometimes	Use it often	Use it very often	Total
chanmé*	1	1	1	1	4	8
chouette	2	1	0	1	0	4
de la balle	2	0	2	2	2	8
de la bombe	0	0	0	0	1	1
délirant	0	0	0	0	1	1
excellent	1	1	10	10	11	33
extra	0	0	3	0	0	3
formidable	0	0	1	0	0	1
géant	1	1	1	0	0	3
giga	0	0	2	0	0	2
hyper	0	1	3	0	0	4
hyper + adj	1	0	0	1	1	3
impecc[able]	0	0	1	0	0	1
la patate	1	0	0	0	0	1
le délire	0	1	0	0	2	3
méga	1	0	2	0	0	3
méga + adj	1	2	2	1	0	6
monstrueux	0	0	1	0	0	1
nickel	0	1	1	0	0	2
nickel crome	0	0	0	1	0	1
puissant	1	0	2	1	4	8
sensas	0	1	0	0	0	1
splendide	1	0	0	0	0	1
style	1	1	2	3	2	9
super	1	3	7	14	5	30
sympa	0	0	2	0	0	2
terrible	0	0	1	0	0	1
top	6	4	7	3	3	23
tranquille	0	0	2	1	4	7
trop + adj	1	2	4	2	5	14
vachement + adj	0	0	1	0	0	1
zen	0	0	1	0	0	1

* In all tables, terms in bold were mentioned exclusively by the informant group to which the table refers

Appendix 2, continued: E+ terms mentioned by the older French informants

Word	Never use it	No longer use it	Use it sometimes	Use it often	Use it very often	Total
bath	0	1	0	0	0	1
chouette	0	0	3	1	0	4
de la balle	1	0	0	0	0	1
dément	1	1	0	0	0	2
démoniaque	0	1	0	0	0	1
d'enfer	1	0	0	0	0	1
extra	2	1	1	0	0	4
extraordinaire	0	0	1	0	0	1
fabuleux	0	0	0	1	0	1
fantastique	0	0	1	0	0	1
formidable	0	0	1	0	0	1
géant	3	0	1	0	0	4
giga	0	1	0	0	0	1
archi cool	1	0	0	0	0	1
hyper	1	0	0	0	0	1
le pied	1	0	1	0	0	2
magnifique	0	0	2	1	0	3
méga	1	0	0	0	0	1
merveilleux	1	0	1	0	0	2
sensas	1	0	0	0	0	1
sioux	0	1	0	0	0	1
stone	1	0	0	0	0	1
super	3	4	11	2	2	22
super + adj	1	0	0	0	0	1
superbe	0	0	0	1	0	1
sympa	0	0	2	1	0	3
terrible	0	1	1	1	0	3
tip top	0	0	0	1	0	1
top	10	2	3	2	0	17
trop + adj	1	0	1	1	0	3
vachement + adj	0	0	1	0	0	1

Appendix 2, continued: E– terms mentioned by the younger French informants

Word	Never use it	No longer use it	Use it sometimes	Use it often	Use it very often	Total
à chier	1	0	1	3	1	6
chanmé	0	0	2	2	1	5
chiant	0	0	0	9	6	15
con	0	0	3	2	2	7
crade	0	1	0	0	0	1
débile	0	0	1	0	3	4
de la daube	4	1	2	0	2	9
de la merde	0	3	4	6	4	17
embêtant	0	0	1	0	0	1
emmerdant	0	1	0	2	0	3
gonflant	0	0	0	0	1	1
horrible	0	0	1	0	0	1
lamentable	0	0	1	0	0	1
la pitié	0	0	1	4	0	5
méchant	0	0	0	1	0	1
merdique	1	0	1	1	0	3
minable	0	0	1	0	0	1
nul	0	4	10	11	8	33
nul à chier	2	0	1	2	5	10
nullard	1	0	0	0	0	1
pas terrible	0	0	0	1	0	1
pitoyable	0	0	1	0	0	1
pourri	1	1	8	6	4	20
ripoux	1	0	0	0	1	2
trop + adj	0	1	1	1	0	3
zéro	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total						153

Appendix 2, continued: E– terms mentioned by the older French informants

Word	Never use it	No longer use it	Use it sometimes	Use it often	Use it very often	Total
à chier	1	0	0	0	0	1
chiant	0	0	1	2	0	3
con	1	0	2	0	1	4
con de chez con	0	0	1	0	0	1
crade	0	1	0	0	0	1
de la daube	1	0	0	0	0	1
de la merde	0	0	1	2	0	3
glauque	1	1	2	0	0	4
grave	1	0	1	0	0	2
la cata	0	0	2	0	0	2
merdique	1	0	1	1	0	3
minable	0	0	1	0	0	1
nul	0	0	12	5	2	19
nul à chier	1	0	1	1	0	3
nul de chez nul	0	0	1	0	0	1
pas terrible	0	0	0	1	0	1
pitoyable	0	0	1	0	0	1
pourri	1	0	0	0	0	1
rasoir	0	0	1	0	0	1
trop + adj	0	0	1	0	0	1
zéro	1	0	1	0	0	2
Total						56

Appendix 3: E+ terms mentioned by the younger English informants

Word	Never use it	No longer use it	Use it sometimes	Use it often	Use it very often	Total
amazing	0	0	1	0	0	1
bang on	0	0	0	0	1	1
beasty	0	0	1	2	3	6
belta	1	1	2	1	1	6
bogus	1	0	0	0	0	1
boss	0	0	0	0	1	1
brilliant	0	0	0	0	1	1
buzzin(g)	1	0	1	0	0	2
champion	0	0	1	0	3	4
class	1	2	5	9	13	30
crackin(g)	0	0	0	1	0	1
cush	1	0	0	1	0	2
cushty	3	2	3	0	1	9
dead + adj	0	0	0	1	1	2
dog's bollocks	0	0	2	0	0	2
excellent	0	1	1	3	3	8
exceptional	0	0	0	1	0	1
fab	0	2	2	0	0	4
fabulous	0	0	1	0	0	1
fantastic	0	0	1	0	2	3
great	0	0	3	2	0	5
groovy	2	1	1	1	1	6
king	0	0	1	0	1	2
legend	0	0	0	1	0	1
lush	1	2	4	3	3	13
mint	0	2	15	13	10	40
quality	1	0	2	0	0	3
rad	0	0	0	0	1	1
shagadelic	0	0	0	0	1	1
smart	0	0	1	0	0	1
smashin(g)	0	0	1	0	0	1
sorted	0	0	1	0	0	1
sound	0	0	0	0	1	1
superb	0	0	0	2	0	2
supreme	0	0	1	0	0	1
sweet	2	2	4	1	1	10
top banana	0	0	1	1	0	2
tremendous	0	0	0	1	0	1
waksa / waxa	0	0	1	0	1	2
wicked	1	1	1	1	2	6
wizard	1	0	0	0	0	1

Appendix 3, continued: E+ terms mentioned by the older English informants

Word	Never use it	No longer use it	Use it sometimes	Use it often	Use it very often	Total
awesome	2	0	0	0	0	2
boss	0	1	0	0	0	1
brilliant	0	0	3	2	0	5
champion	0	1	1	1	0	3
class	4	0	0	0	0	4
cushty	0	1	2	0	0	3
excellent	1	0	2	4	1	8
fab	2	3	2	0	0	7
fabulous	0	0	1	0	0	1
fantastic	1	0	3	0	1	5
great	2	0	6	5	3	16
groovy	2	0	0	0	0	2
magic	0	1	1	0	0	2
mint	5	0	0	0	0	5
minty	1	0	0	0	0	1
prime	1	0	0	0	0	1
smashin(g)	0	0	0	2	0	2
spot on	0	0	1	0	0	1
super	1	0	2	0	0	3
terrific	0	0	1	0	0	1
top	1	0	0	0	0	1
top hole	1	0	0	0	0	1
topping	0	0	1	0	0	1
tremendous	0	0	1	0	0	1
wicked	1	1	0	0	0	2
wonderful	0	0	1	1	0	2

Appendix 3, continued: E– terms mentioned by the younger English informants

Word	Never use it	No longer use it	Use it sometimes	Use it often	Use it very often	Total
appalling	0	1	0	0	0	1
awful	0	0	0	3	0	3
balls	0	0	0	1	0	1
bollocks	0	0	6	9	7	22
bull	0	0	1	0	0	1
bullshit	0	0	1	1	1	3
cac	0	0	1	0	0	1
crud	0	0	1	0	0	1
down	0	1	0	0	0	1
grim	0	1	0	0	0	1
ladgeful	0	0	0	2	0	2
merde	0	0	0	1	0	1
minging	0	0	4	0	1	5
naff	0	1	0	1	0	2
pants	1	1	8	3	4	17
pap	1	0	0	1	0	2
poo	2	0	3	1	0	6
poop	0	1	1	0	0	2
poor	0	0	0	2	2	4
rank	1	1	2	0	2	6
rubbish	0	1	11	4	3	19
sad	0	1	1	1	4	7
shan	0	0	0	1	0	1
shit	2	0	9	10	11	32
shite	0	1	1	6	3	11
terrible	0	1	1	3	0	5
totally + adj	0	1	0	0	0	1
trash	0	1	0	0	0	1
turd	0	1	1	2	1	5
useless	0	0	1	0	0	1
utter+adj	0	0	0	0	1	1
wank	0	0	1	1	0	2
wick	0	0	1	0	0	1

Appendix 3, continued: E– terms mentioned by the older English informants

Word	Never use it	No longer use it	Use it sometimes	Use it often	Use it very often	Total
appalling	0	0	2	0	0	2
awful	0	0	2	4	1	7
bollocks	1	0	3	1	0	5
cobblers	0	0	2	0	0	2
diabolical	0	0	1	0	0	1
down	0	0	0	1	0	1
dreadful	0	0	0	1	0	1
duff	0	1	0	0	0	1
feeble	0	0	1	0	0	1
hopeless	0	0	2	0	0	2
load of shite	0	0	1	0	0	1
naff	0	0	3	0	0	3
pants	2	0	0	0	0	2
poor	0	0	1	0	0	1
rubbish	0	0	2	2	1	5
sad	1	0	1	0	0	2
shit	1	0	2	4	1	8
shite	0	0	1	1	0	2
terrible	0	0	4	2	0	6
useless	0	0	2	0	0	2