

Agency, Identity and L2 variation

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Research has shown that L2/multilingual speakers very often show similar constraint ordering to that of L1 speakers. However rates of use of variants can vary considerably. This paper explores this discrepancy using both quantitative and qualitative evidence.

The focus of the paper is on the Polish Diaspora living in France and in Ireland. It reports on studies of language acquisition and use using a mixed methods approach. Detailed quantitative analyses were carried out in relation to Polish speakers of both French and Irish English. Variables investigated both quantitatively and qualitatively were longstanding stable *ne* in French, and incoming use of discourse '*like*' and the strut vowel in Irish English.

Sociolinguistic interviews were conducted with the Polish speakers in France, (Paris and a northern town) and in Ireland (Dublin and a West of Ireland county). These data supported with survey data were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively.

Quantitative results revealed that the general variation patterns, such as constraint ordering, of the Polish L2 speakers were similar to those of native speakers of French and Irish English. As with all L2 speakers, there is considerable individual variation. This has been explained in many ways in the literature of Second Language Acquisition research. Our quantitative analysis was followed by qualitative analysis. This investigation of the life stories of Polish migrants in both countries, their stances and orientations towards the country in which they are living, implied agency. Individuals seemed to be exercising choice as to rates of use of variants in all cases. The reasons for the choices made varied according to country and individual; agency seemed to have played a role in their choice of variants.

This paper explores the implication that whereas the acquisition of constraint ordering seems to be more or less automatic, given access to input through contact with native speakers, rates of variant use may be influenced by choice on the part of the speaker according to attitudes, stances, future life plans and general identity construction.