

Phonetic Norm in French L2 Textbooks and Its Effect on L2 Learners' Speech Competence - The Case of French Liaison

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1. Introduction

- This study examines the French phonetic norm found in textbooks, especially the French linking phenomena, i.e. liaison.
- Comparing liaison realizations between textbooks' norm and Japanese learners speech to **examine how learners acquire variable liaison and how they can be influenced by the norm.**

2. French liaison : linking phenomenon

- Bybee (2001) defined liaison as “**the appearance of a word-final consonant before a vowel-initial word in words that in other contexts end in a vowel**”.
- Example: *les* [le] *ami* [ami] ⇒ *les amis* [lezami]
- Three kinds of liaison contexts: ***categorical, variable and erratic*** (Durand & Lyche, 2008). Especially in the case of variable liaison, its realization is conditioned by a range of linguistic and extralinguistic constraints.

2.1. Three Liaison Categories (Durand & Lyche, 2008)

1) **Categorical liaison** : liaison always present

ex. between determiner & vowel-initial noun: *un [n] ami* (*a friend*)

proclitics (*ils, elles, on, nous, vous, en*): *vous [z] avez...* (*you have*)

2) **Variable liaison** : liaison is optional

ex. between verb & determiner: *c'est [t] un X* (*it is a X*)

3) **Erratic liaison** : liaison is totally or virtually absent

ex. between singular noun & adjective: *un bois / immense* (*a huge wood*)

2.2. Variable liaison

- **Monosyllabic or polysyllabic**

Liaison is realized more frequently after monosyllabic word than polysyllabic word.

ex. ***très** intéressant* vs ***vraiment** intéressant*

- **Frequency**

Variable liaison is highly influence by frequency of usage (Bybee, 2007: 11)

2.2. Variable liaison

- Variable liaison is **more frequent during a formal style**, and less during an informal style.
- For L2 learners, the categorical liaison poses less difficulty, but use of the variable liaison is difficult enough even for advanced learners (Howard, 2004; Tennant, 2016).
- Significantly lower usage of variable liaisons compared to native speakers (Howard, 2004)

3. Liaison in L2 French

- Howard (2015) based on Delattre's classification (prescriptive classification)

Irish Anglophone learners :

with study abroad: **95% (obligatory), 12.7% (variable)**

without study abroad : **82.2% (obligatory), 8.2% (variable)**

3. Liaison in L2 French

- Tennant (2016:77): Studies based on IPFC project of Ontario's Anglophone college students
- Specific difficulties with the reading task for variable liaison

Table 1: Realization of variable liaison in IPFC Canadian English corpus by task (Tennant, 2017: 77)

Task	Liaison realized	Liaison sites	% realized
Discussion	49	331	14.8%
Interview	36	252	14.3%
Reading	38	204	18.6%
TOTAL	123	787	15.6%

3. Liaison in L2 French

- Tennant (2016:77): Studies based on IPFC project of Ontario’s Anglophone college students
- Liaison in the context of W1 (auxiliary verb (avoir or être)) + W2 (past participle), variable liaison is more easily acquired.

Table 2: Realization of variable liaison in IPFC Canadian English corpus, in the grammatical context AUX_L_PPA (auxiliary verb followed by past participle) (Tennant, 2017: 78)

Group	Liaison realized	Liaison sites	% realized
A : 1st year with Immersion or French school	24	38	63.2%
B: 1st year with Core French	1	5	20%
C: 4th year with study abroad	2	5	40%
D: 4th year w/o study abroad	7	14	50%
TOTAL	34	62	54.8%

3. Liaison in L2 French

Kondo (2012:42):

- Liaison realization in textbooks resembles to radiophonic conversation (Kondo, 2012:42).
- In the stylistic level, French in textbooks is different from informal conversation.

⇒ If liaison is realized highly frequently in some variable contexts, learners easily acquire these variable liaisons ?

4. Research Questions

- Our study aims at ...

- **Exploring the pedagogical norm for variable liaison** in our L2 French textbooks corpus & investigating which type of variable contexts learners encounter most often during their use of textbooks.
- Based on quantitative analysis, our study considers the **frequency of liaison realization in variable contexts**.
- Comparing our textbooks corpus with another corpus of Japanese learners' French conversations to **examine the effect of phonetic norm in French L2 textbooks on the acquisition of variable liaison**.

5. Corpora

1. **Textbooks corpus** (about 42,000 words) :

textbooks (conversation skits) with CD audio recently published in France (4 textbooks, Level A1-A2, 20,473 words total) and in Japan (12 textbooks, Level A1-A2, 21,451 words total)

2. **Japanese French Learners corpus** (about 25,000 words) : corpus gathered in 2017-2018 following IPFC protocol

- Guided interview with a native speaker (10~15min)
- Free conversations (about 20 min)
- Text Reading (IPFC text)

- 11 Japanese university students. 9 intermediate learners (3rd year students, CEFR A2 or B1 level) & 2 advanced learners (4th year students with study abroad experience, CEFR B2 level)

6. Data analysis

6.2. Variable Liaison in Textbooks Corpus and Learners Corpus

Table 4 : Realization of Variable Liaison in Textbooks Corpus, conversation and Text Reading

	textbooks corpus (FR + JP)	Learners' converation	Learners' text reading
1) monosyllabic adverb + adjective	93.18% (41/44)	50.00% (6/12)	54.55% (6/11)
2) polysyllabic adverb + adjective	0% (0/5)	0% (0/2)	-
3) plural noun + adjective	40% (4/10)	11.11% (1/9)	19.51% (8/41)
4) monosyllabic preposition + NP	99.09% (109/110)	79.31% (23/29)	86.36% (19/22)
5) polysyllabic preposition + NP	0% (0/16)	0% (0/3)	-
6) verb +	34.02% (263/773)	28.13% (63/224)	37.21% (16/43)

6.2. Variable Liaison in Textbooks Corpus and Learners Corpus

- In the particular grammatical contexts (1 & 4), liaison is highly frequent in textbooks, but our learners' use of the liaison is lower, much lower in the context 1 (monosyllabic adverb + adjective)
- In the grammatical contexts 2 & 4 (polysyllabic adverb + adjective, polysyllabic preposition + NP), liaison is never realized both in textbooks and learners' corpus.
- In the context : Plural noun and plural adjective, learners' realization rate is quite low.
- The highest number of tokens is found in the liaison context following verb (6). Each rate of liaison realization is modest in textbooks, learners' conversation and text reading (34.15%, 28.13%, 37.21%).

6.3. Variable Liaison after Verb

Table 4 : Realization of Variable Liaison after verb in Textbooks Corpus, conversation and Text Reading

	<i>être (be)</i>	<i>avoir (have)</i>	others	Total
Textbooks corpus	61.22% (251/410)	7.84% (4/51)	2.56% (8/312)	34.02% (263/773)
Learners' conversation	46.56% (61/131)	0% (0/4)	2.25% (2/89)	28.13% (63/224)
Learners' text reading	63.64% (14/22)	20% (2/10)	0% (0/11)	37.21% (27/43)

- Concerning liaison after verb, liaison is mainly realized after *être* verb (*be* verb) in each
- Realization of liaison following *avoir* verb (*have*) is quite rare.

6.4. Variable Liaison Usage after *être* Verb

- a. + **determiner** : *C'est [t] un dîner chic ? (Is it a chic dinner ?)*
- b. + **past participle** : *Les autres sont [t] arrivés ? (The others have arrived ?)*
- c. + **preposition** : *le lac est [t] à ma gauche. (the lake is on my left side.)*
- d. + **noun** : *Je suis [z] étudiante. (I am a student.)*
- e. + **adjective** : *Nos relations sont [t] excellentes. (Our relations are excellent.)*
- f. + **adverb** : *Le sien est [t] exactement pareil.. (His is exactly the same.)*

6.5. Variable Liaison Usage after *être* Verb

- Liaison is realized especially after “*c’est un(e)*” and 1st singular person : “*je suis allé*” (*I went*)
- Learners made liaisons in specific structures which they might use very often. Being influenced by phonetic norm, learners have some prefabricated sequences with liaison consonant (cf. Bybee, 2002)
- Orthography may help learners to realize variable liaison in specific contexts (especially after *être* verb (*est*))

Conclusion

- With regards to variable liaison after verbs, liaison is mainly realized after *être* verb (*be* verb) in each corpus.
- Even if liaison usage rate is rather high in the textbooks corpus, certain liaison contexts are difficult to acquire for learners : monosyllabic adverb + adjective, monosyllabic preposition + NP, etc.
- Learners made liaisons in specific phrases which they might use often. Learners internalized a liaison consonant in such phrases (ex. “*je suis [z] allé*”).

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Thank you for your attention.

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