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# Les inscriptions en anglais comme marques linguistiques du flux et l'hybridité linguistique en France : le cas des graffitis et des tatouages

Jeni Peake

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Université Bordeaux Montaigne

École Doctorale Montaigne Humanités (ED 480)

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Présentée et soutenue publiquement le 22 novembre 2023 par

Jeni PEAKE

Sous la co-direction de Jean Albrespit, Professeur Émerite, Université Bordeaux  
Montaigne et Alexandra Reynolds, Maître de Conférences, Université de  
Bordeaux

Membres du jury

Catherine Chauvin, Maître de Conférences - HDR, Université de Lorraine

Anne Geslin-Beyaert, Professeur, Université Bordeaux Montaigne

Linda Pillière, Professeur, Aix-Marseille Université

Laurent Rouveyrol, Professeur, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle



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## **i. Dedication**

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I was told that we cannot do a thesis on our own. I really understood the meaning of this as the stress increased. I would never have been able to finish if it was not for my partner. Thank you, Alexis, for taking this journey with me, you have always believed in me, even when I did not. Thank you to my little Tom for being a never-ending source of smiles and hugs.

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### **iii. Abstract in English**

The aim of this thesis is to study English inscriptions in public spaces in France, using Bordeaux as an example. The study focuses on graffiti and tattoos (written in private spaces, but visible in public spaces). The aim is to study the interactions between French and English and the appropriation of English by French speakers. Recent research suggests that the phenomenon of borrowing between languages is becoming increasingly frequent. As a result, it is necessary to study the reasons why English is chosen over French and to explore hybrid words and expressions, words and phrases that are a mixture of English and French, such as "Pichouline forever". The question of the prestige of English is addressed: a language perceived as prestigious is a dominant language; borrowings are most often made from dominant to recipient languages. But other reasons, just as subjective, are identified through surveys and interviews. The fact that English is present in the public space is proof that the use of English is increasingly becoming a habit for French speakers. The question is: what process is at work in this flow between languages? Is it a question of bilingualism? These questions prompt others: is it simple contact between languages or a mixture of languages and cultures?

#### **iv. Résumé en Français**

Cette thèse se propose d'étudier les inscriptions en anglais dans l'espace public en France, en prenant l'exemple de Bordeaux. L'étude se concentre sur les graffiti et les tatouages (espace privé, mais visibles dans l'espace public). L'objectif est d'étudier les interactions entre français et anglais et l'appropriation de l'anglais par des francophones. Des travaux récents suggèrent que le phénomène d'emprunt entre langues devient de plus en plus fréquent. En conséquence, il nous apparaît nécessaire d'étudier pour quelles raisons l'anglais est choisi par rapport au français et de nous pencher sur les mots et expressions hybrides, mélange d'anglais et de français, comme « Pichouline forever ». La question du prestige de l'anglais est abordée : une langue ressentie comme prestigieuse est une langue dominante ; les emprunts sont le plus souvent faits dans ces langues. Mais d'autres raisons, aussi subjectives, sont identifiées grâce à des enquêtes et des entretiens. Le fait que l'anglais est présent dans l'espace public est la preuve que l'utilisation de la langue anglaise devient de plus en plus une habitude pour les francophones. La question est alors : quel processus est-il à l'œuvre dans ce flux entre langues ? Peut-on parler de bilinguisme ? Ces questions en suscitent d'autres : simple contact entre langues ou mélange de langues et de cultures ?

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Image 1 Graffiti C176



## Introduction

This dissertation explores the use of second language (L2) English in France through the medium of graffitiing and tattooing. It will be studied from a corpus-based analysis of script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions collected by the researcher.

The study took place between 2019 and 2023 and was inspired by the combination of the continuation of my master's project and my interactions with L2 English language users in France. During my master's, I discovered that there was limited research analysing English language graffiti in France and therefore decided to pursue this line of inquiry. The addition of English script tattoos to my research project came when I was asked to check the English for a tattoo by an acquaintance. This instance will be explained in more detail in section 3.5 Tattoo Study and 5.9.1: Sara – Tattoo Bearer. Script tattoo is the term used in this study to refer to tattoos contain text and graffiti inscription is the term used for all graffiti, tag, and street art pieces that contain text. The script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions in question contain at least one word written in English and are found on the bodies of first language (L1) French speakers or on public surfaces in Bordeaux, France.

One of the aims of the project is the issue of linguistic identity through the use of a foreign language. This study focuses on linguistic identity through graffitiing and tattooing. It builds upon previous studies about informal L2 English use in graffiti and tattoos (cf. AbuJaber et al., 2012; Alwarashdeh, 2021; Krawiec, 2007; Mangeya, 2014, Mora et al., 2014). Krashen (1976) contrasts formal or artificial environments, such as a classroom, with informal, or natural environments, such as a playground,<sup>1</sup> the informal or natural environments used for the data collection are the streets, toilets, desktops, and bodies of L1 French speakers. Yibokou (2023) defines individual informal contexts as being a person's home, leisure purposes, and as a result of online communication. These informal environments contain evidence of English language use, language hybridity, and language flux. Language hybridity refers to the words and

---

<sup>1</sup> The only example of an 'informal environment' given by (Krashen, 1981) is a playground, therefore in this study the informal environment is expanded to everywhere but the teacher-led classroom language.

phrases that contain more than one language, or words and phrases that include symbols or numbers.

The analysis of the graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos offers a new, alternative angle approach as most academic literature is focused either on the deviance or the artistic nature of graffiti and tattoos. Andron (2016) writes that both

*'...graffiti and street art have been researched as aesthetic categories, urban cultures, legal contentions, cultural commodities and place-making tactics – but that they are also, perhaps fundamentally, localized inscriptions. They take place in precise locations within the built.'* (p. 71)

Both script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions are often considered marginalised behaviours and are studied by criminologists, sociologists, and psychologists (AbuJaber et al., 2012; Alonso, 1998; Mangeya, 2014; Ruggs, 2013). There is little research on the linguistic content written, and even less on the L2 languages being used in graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos.

The primary focus is on language use and language identity, the artistic elements of the inscriptions have been acknowledged but are not the main aim of this research project. The inscriptions are observed as linguistic acts on two levels, both private and public. A study of linguistic acts of identity through the medium of script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions is an understudied area within linguistics, and the study of the use of English in these instances is also lacking in the field of English studies. Previous studies that have focused on the linguistic elements of these inscriptions were often limited to the semantic content of the inscriptions rather than the syntax and morphology of the inscriptions themselves. Tools and methods from five of the main branches of linguistics are used in the analysis of the inscriptions where appropriate. Finch (2000) describes the core areas of linguistics as phonetics, phonology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics. In this study, the terms linguistic analysis and language are used to refer to lexis and grammar.

By following theories that are data focused, such as linguistic landscape (Landry & Bourhis, 1997) and grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), the data are meant to be a window into the usage of English in France and provide information in understanding the relationship between L1 French speakers and English. The occurrences of English language studied come from two categories of participants: the tattoo bearers who volunteered their time to answer an online survey and/or take part in an interview, and the anonymous graffiti writers who left their marks around the city of Bordeaux, on its walls, doors, desktops, and in its toilet cubicles. The tattoo bearers

were all L1 French speakers and have at least one script tattoo in English. The number and identity of most of the graffiti writers will remain a mystery, however, as the inscriptions were written in France it is likely that the majority of writers spoke French as an L1. The data will enable me to understand the English language usage in Bordeaux, the linguistic identity of the tattoo bearers, and the linguistic identity of the anonymous graffiti writers.

## **Study Outline**

The study is structured in eight sections. This part has introduced the study explaining its origins and the overall aims and objectives of the study.

The first chapter, **Research Questions and Objectives**, introduces the hypotheses and the objectives of this study, which are to demonstrate English language use and its relationship to L1 French speakers' language identity.

The second chapter, **Literature Review**, presents a review of the literature that informed this study. The existing research on tattoos and graffiti are presented separately as well as the links between them as two forms of text art (Jaworski, 2014). The notions of language flux and hybridity will be explored as well as the factors that contribute to both processes such as language status and English as a global language. Linguistic identity will be explored in relation to language expression through both graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos. The final section in the literature review is dedicated to the comparison of graffiti and tattoos, in particular the areas that link the two mediums: taboos, linguistic practice, and communities.

The third chapter, **Methods**, introduces the approaches and theories that have influenced this study. An outline of the research design and data collection is given (an online survey, interviews, and fieldwork). This chapter also evaluates the strengths and limitations of the methods, including but not limited to, photographic quality and the ethical implications. It also provides general background information concerning the topic of the research site itself.

The fourth chapter, **Grffiti Inscriptions**, presents the three types of graffiti inscription data, followed by both quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data. The data are presented in tables, figures, and graphs. Some graffiti inscriptions are also presented in photographic form to accompany the analysis. There are also four interviews with graffiti writers in relation to the study.

The fifth chapter, **Script Tattoos**, is dedicated to the presentation of the script tattoo data and a detailed analysis of the data. The data includes a corpus of English tattoos taken from an online survey and interviews with tattoo bearers and artists. As with the graffiti section, the tattoo data is also presented using tables, figures, and graphs. A number of script tattoos are used to accompany the analysis in photographic form.

The sixth chapter, **Graffiti Inscriptions and Script Tattoos, Private Text in Public Places**, considers the similarities and differences between the two corpora as distinct datasets. Examples of repeating lexis and themes will be given as well as the shared characteristics of the two mediums.





*Image 2 Tattoo Bearer 134*



## **1 Research Questions and Objectives**

## 1.1 Introduction

Previously, tattooing and graffitiing have been studied from both artistic and sociological perspectives, focusing on the negative correlations and reactions to tattoos (Dukes, 2016; McCarty, 2019; Mun et al., 2012). For example, past research suggested that tattooing among young people was linked to drug abuse as well as an interest in the satanic (Braithwaite et al., 2001; Farrow, 1991), whereas more recently the way we view visible tattoos in the workplace has intrigued present day philosophers (Ruggs, 2013). McCarty's (2019) research focuses on the role that tattoo narratives can play in a counselling session rather than focusing on the content of the tattoos themselves. Graffiti, in pictorial or lexical form, has been an important resource for linguists, historians and sociologists (Menis, 2002). Mangeya (2014) writes that in the past the study of graffiti has been focused on criminality or on the artistic value of the inscriptions, therefore one of the motivations for this study is to analyse the inscriptions as an expression of identity and linguistic ability. The key question that this study aims to answer is: **what can we learn about L2 English use through graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos in France**. The inscriptions were found on alternative canvases which are innumerable: skin, desks, walls, roads, bins, toilet doors, post boxes and so on. To answer the main research question other questions will arise: What words are being written and used by these L2 English speakers?<sup>2</sup> What can this show us about the relationship French speakers have with English? How can language used in this way be an indicator of language flux and hybridity? To answer these questions, this present study is centred around a corpus analysis of the script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions collected during the fieldwork stage of this study. The study shows how English words were used in both graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos, how often, and by whom.

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<sup>2</sup> I have chosen to use the term L2 instead of LX as most of the participants write that English is their second language (section 5.4) and because most French students learn English as a second language in France (section 2.7.3).

## **1.2 Research Objectives**

The primary objective of this study is to learn about English language use through the mediums of graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos. In particular, how L2 language identity can be researched using a sociolinguistic perspective through the study of occurrences of English present within the public linguistic landscape in France, and more specifically Bordeaux.

This study has an eclectic approach using both qualitative and quantitative methods as well as tools from ethnography to answer the research questions. The data consists of personal accounts from tattoo bearers, a corpus of their respective script tattoos, and a corpus of graffiti inscriptions collected by the researcher. As well as the creation of the two corpora, eleven interviews were conducted for this study. The ethnographic tools used to create the tattoo corpus allowed for extensive questioning of certain participants as well as the opportunity to verify the data itself.

Lawson (2015) argues that the researcher position is not always a clear-cut 'insider' or 'outsider' dynamic. This is true of my case: I am British but live in France. I am neither a tattoo artist nor a graffiti writer, but I have tattoos. My own experiences of being a second language user also initially guided my research into language identity. No researcher is completely impartial as their own perceptions and world views are based on individual experiences that are unique to each person. This study, if led by someone else, would not have followed the same twists and turns, or amassed the same data and found the same conclusions.

In keeping with the methods and approaches which are presented in chapter three, the initial analysis of each medium emerges from, and is tailored to, the individual datasets in chapters four and five. Further analysis comparing and contrasting the data and the results is presented in chapter six.

## **1.3 An Interdisciplinary Study**

This study is eclectic in its field, theories, and data collection. It was made possible by a variety of theories and tools which will be presented in more detail in chapter 3: Methods. It is situated between the fields of English Studies and Sociolinguistics. English Studies is the name given to the educational process of understanding English as a subject matter (Pope, 2014). Whilst Sociolinguistics is 'the field that studies the relation between language and society, between the uses of language and the social structure in which the users of language live' (Spolsky, 1998, p. 3). Therefore, this

study analyses occurrences of English language using tools and approaches present in Sociolinguistics.

The datasets are also interdisciplinary as graffiti and tattoos are normally studied for their artistic merit rather than their linguistic content. In this study, the graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos are analysed in a similar fashion to other written texts. Firstly, there is a corpus-based analysis of the language used on bodies and in the streets, both morphosyntactically and semantically. Secondly, there is an analysis of the reasons why the tattoo bearers chose English, and this reveals how they relate to other people and themselves through use of a second or third language.

Image 3 Graffiti C168



## 2 Literature Review

## 2.1 Introduction

Chapter one introduced this study and its origins. This chapter reviews the current literature and research available on graffiti and tattoos as both art forms and communicative tools in order to highlight the gap in knowledge that this study intends to address. There has been little research, firstly, connecting the two art forms, secondly, the linguistic aspect of the inscriptions, and finally, the use of these mediums in a persons' L2.

## 2.2 Graffiti

This subsection presents graffiti. There is a brief presentation of the history of graffiti and the origins of the word *graffiti*, definitions of graffiti styles are also given, as well as an exploration of the functions of graffiti.

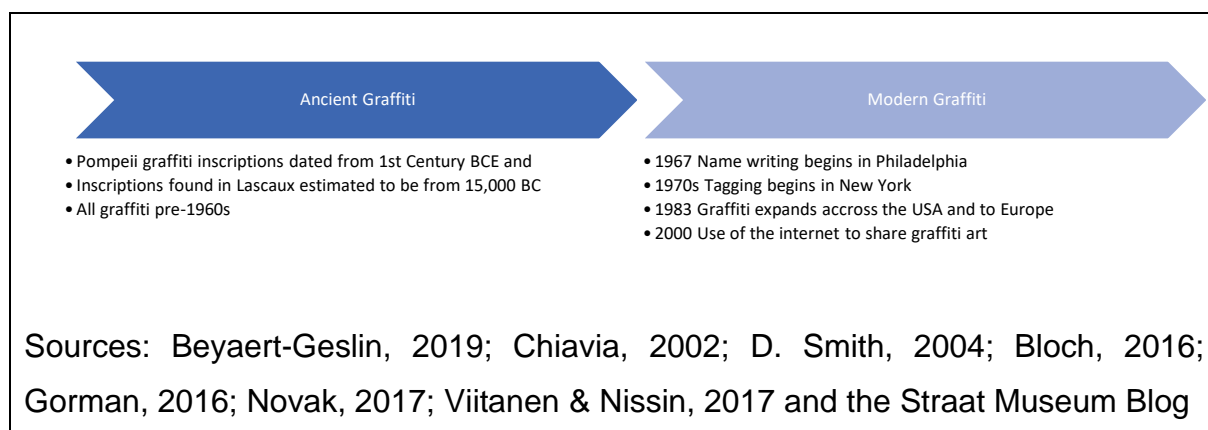
### 2.2.1 Historical Definition

According to the Online Etymology Dictionary, the word graffiti is considered plural but used with singular agreement and is used to describe 'words or images marked (illegally) in a public place especially using aerosol paint' (Harper, 2020). The word graffiti originates from the Italian word *graffiti* which is the plural of *graffito* meaning a *scribbling* (Menis, 2002). Graffiti is the noun from the Italian verb *graffiare* meaning to scratch (Plesch, 2002). *Graffiare* is originally from the Greek word *graphein* which means to scratch, draw or write (Cappelli, 2020; Casino, 2019). Elkins (1999) explains that the Greek concept *graphein* (write, draw, and scratch) groups the three writing styles together:

*'Together, gamma and graphein preserve a memory of a time when the divisions we are so used to did not exist, and they help us remember, when we need to, that picturing and writing are both kinds of 'scratching' – that is marking on and in surfaces.'* (p. 83)

This could explain why graffiti is used as an umbrella term for a range of writing inscriptions, the different forms of graffiti are presented in section 2.2.3: Defining Modern Day Graffiti. From 1977, the usage of the word *graffiti* began to be used to describe 'crude drawings and scribbling in public places' (Harper, 2020).

Figure 1 Basic Timeline of Graffiti Writing



As demonstrated in the basic timeline above, there are two distinct periods in graffiti. There is ancient graffiti that was drawn or scratched into surfaces with simple tools such as rocks, then knives and simple writing implements. Throughout history mankind has written and drawn on a variety of surfaces: trees, caves, pottery, leather, stones etc. (Fischer, 2003; Iljadica, 2016). Fischer, (2003) suggests that slashes and notches in trees to convey a message may predate the drawings found in caves.

The Rosetta Stone is arguably one of the most famous examples of writing where the same text is carved into one stone in three languages (Dalby, 2019). Graffiti, being one form of writing, dates from the beginning of societal living, cave drawings in particular are often understood as the earliest examples of graffiti (Andron, 2018; Guthrie, 2005; Hanfling, 1992; Megler et al., 2014); it has been found on Egyptian monuments and on walls in Pompeii (Cappelli, 2020; Stowers, 1997). Viitanen and Nissin (2017) found that certain graffiti inscriptions found in Pompeii resembled early forms of political campaigning as well as social networking. Records of pre-1960s graffiti are scarce due to their age and reliance on paper copies, Sage (2016) explains that a fire at a French police station in 1871 resulted in the loss of any record of graffiti inscriptions before that time. According to Abel and Buckley (1997), the first serious book published on the subject of graffiti was in 1935 by Allen Walker Read (1935), in which the graffiti inscriptions were found in 1928.

## 2.2.2 The Origins of Modern Graffiti

It is generally accepted that modern graffiti started in the United States in the 1960s (Cappelli, 2020), most notably in the cities of Philadelphia and New York, where the graffiti tags started to move away from marking gang territories (Hedegaard, 2014; Novak, 2017). The modern manifestation of graffiti writing primarily took place in the disadvantaged communities in the United States (Zieleniec, 2017). Graffiti continued



to grow during the hip-hop movement, as it was another medium for highlighting the relationship between the powerful and the powerless, showing how marginalised people interacted with said power structures (Cappelli, 2020). Alvelos (2004) suggests that while tagging started in the United States of America, situationist-inspired graffiti started in the Paris riots in May 1968.

Hip-hop can be defined as having four key elements: MC-ing (or rapping), DJ-ing, break-dancing, and graffiti writing (Pennycook, 2006, p. 86). According to the Hip Hoptionary, hip-hop is defined as:

*'the artistic response to oppression. A way of expression in dance, music, word/song. A culture that thrives on creativity and nostalgia. As a musical art form it is stories of inner-city life, often with a message, spoken over beats of music. This culture includes rap and any other venture spawned from the hip-hop style and culture.'* (Westbrook, 2002, p. 64)

In the 1980s, perceptions of graffiti began to change as did the words used to describe it; academic and art enthusiasts began using the terms 'street art' and 'post-graffiti' (Bloch, 2016, p. 440). It is at this time that modern graffiti writing also spread to Europe after the publication of two influential art books and the release of a documentary film on graffiti (Hedegaard, 2014),<sup>3</sup> and the first graffiti art gallery in France in 1984 (Obouronanga, 2022).

### **2.2.3 Defining Modern Day Graffiti**

One of the problems with modern day graffiti is that it is difficult to define: artists, authorities and academics seldom agree, and the lines between graffiti and art are often blurred. According to Cappelli (2020), graffiti scholars have decided that the term graffiti can cover a wide range of markings, for example: scribbles, drawings and messages. One idea is that graffiti is the word used to describe the way in which people change, by painting or writing on, public surfaces (Quintero, 2007).<sup>4</sup> In simple terms: 'What is graffiti but a hijacking of public space - a street, a urinal, a street lamp - in order to make that space do something different than originally intended?' (Sage, 2016, p. 859). Plesch (2002) echoes this definition: 'the surface [the graffiti] was placed on was not originally meant to receive it and thus was turned into a surface for writing' (p. 168).

---

<sup>3</sup> In section 4.10.4: Pascal, the graffiti writer Pascal mentions a television series named H.I.P.H.O.P. which aired in France in 1984. This show introduced many people in France to hip-hop culture.

<sup>4</sup> Quintero used the definition used by a Dutch graffiti artist called Zedz.

As graffiti can be written on any surface, it has become omnipresent, and it can be argued that graffiti is a 'symbolic phenomenon present on a variety of surfaces in any city of any size' (Gross & Gross, 2016, p. 342), which means that everyone has seen at least one piece of graffiti in their lives (Andron, 2016; Menis, 2002). Laurence (2005) describes graffiti as the 'syntax of street activity' (p.71).

Graffiti comes in many forms, and the means to define it are as varied as the forms. In order to avoid entering into the nomenclature debate, (Merrifield, 2002) and later Sage (2016) used the term 'jaytalking' which was used to describe 'popular [...] urban speech in Paris during the fin-de-siècle, the usual form of which was graffiti written on the streets and other public spaces of the city' (p. 859). Moran (2016) describes 'traditional graffiti [as] spontaneous, anonymous, and without authorization' (p. 178).

In this study I identify three distinct types of graffiti inscriptions as: *slogans*, *street art*, and *tags*. Halsey and Young (2002) write that:

*'Slogans range from the personal ('Jane loves Ted', or 'J. Kaminski is a slut'), through the gamut of political issues (environmental concerns, feminism, state politics, international relations and so on), but all share the common feature of being in nature, expressing a view to an audience.'* (p. 169)







Tags are defined as words, letters, numbers, or figures which are used by graffiti writers (also known as graffitists or taggers cf. Macdonald, 2001, Moreau & Alderman, 2011, Moehkardi, 2022) as a signature to leave their name, alter ego, or nickname in different places or next to their work (Macdonald, 2001; Menis, 2002; Moran, 2016; Stowers, 1997). Mendonça (2020) expands this definition of a signature to include stickers, drawings, stencils, and posters as artists' marks and/or signatures. Street art is a broader term that can be used to define pictorial artwork in the streets; this can include commissioned or illegal pieces. Bloch (2016) writes that the term 'street art' is used to describe more acceptable forms of graffiti in society and also used by academics in an attempt to 'gallerize' graffiti in New York (p. 440).

There are many ways of creating graffiti: stencil, spray can, pen, marker etc. The tool used can depend on the size or location of the graffiti, for example, the use of felt tip pens is often seen on small areas and inside, whilst spray cans are used on large areas and outside (Blume 1985). Banksy explains that one can of paint can allow an artist to produce 50 A4 sized stencils and therefore cost as little as ten pounds, therefore, graffiti remains a cheap option for public expression. Sage (2016) describes graffiti as:

*'...street behaviour, a form of speech that occurs in the space between two rows of building, encompassing the sidewalk and the traffic pavement, as well as all the other public spaces and fixtures found alongside or on city streets: stoops, doorways, alleys, plazas, café terraces, bridges, quaysides, market stalls, trees, flower boxes, benches, lightposts, urinals, and signposts.'* (p. 856)

Graffiti collages, also known as throw ups, wheat pasting, fly posting, wild posting, or bill sticking (J. Becker, 2019; Salim et al., 2016), involve writing a message on A4 pages, one page per letter, and sticking the message to the wall, the technique is used and recognised in both marketing and graffitiing. The name wheat pasting comes from the adhesive made from water and wheat flour to stick the posters to the wall. Holmes (2014) notes that it is a preferred technique of activists as it does not cause damage to property permanently and 'is not illegal in every city' (Salzman, 2003, p. 253). Stickering 'involves the use of existing stickers (e.g. "Hello, my name is" conference labels or express post labels) applied to street furniture or other urban fixtures' (Carrington, 2009, p. 416).

Table 1 Styles of Graffiti

Style	Image	Source
Slogans		(Lado, 2011, p. 143) [Valencians forever speak Catalan]
Tag		(Carrington, 2009, p. 413)
Street Art		(Carrington, 2009, p. 414)
Stickering		(Carrington, 2009, p. 416)
Graffiti Collage		(Lombard, 2020, p. 11)
Stencil		(Skulte and Kozlovs, 2020, p. 82)

Menis (2002) divides written graffiti into three categories: tags, slogans and monologues, and conversations. The difference between the latter two are that slogans and monologues are written by one person whereas the conversations are sequences whereby two or more people have contributed to the written graffiti (Menis, 2002). Whether it be graffiti or street art, both are a means of creating a relationship between 'the viewer, artist, and their worlds' (Casino, 2019, p. 225).

For the purpose of this study, I will be using the following definition of graffiti from Menis (2002) as an umbrella definition:

*'Graffiti are any writing or drawing, which may be written, sprayed, painted, drawn or etched in on or any publicly accessible surface, e.g. walls, windows, desk-tops, etc, for which no official provision is made, which are largely unwanted, and which for the major part are anonymous.'* (p. 44)

In addition to Menis' (2002) definition, this study includes graffiti examples from areas where it is accepted, such as on some toilet doors, or encouraged, as is the case in the legal graffiti area. The words used to describe the people writing and drawing on the walls also vary between academics and the writers themselves. McAuliffe (2012) uses the terms graffiti writer and street artist as synonyms: 'these two graffiti writers/street artists', and also as separate terms: 'not all graffiti writers and street artists were criminals' (p. 16). McAuliffe (2012) explains that some writers prefer one term over another, he cites Beastman, who 'doesn't describe himself as a graffiti writer, but as an artist' (p. 16). As this study focuses primarily on the words written, the term graffiti writer will be used unless specified otherwise during an interview or through contact with a writer/artist.

#### **2.2.4 The Function of Graffiti**

Graffiti is a genuine form of public expression as it is written anonymously in the public domain (Sage, 2016). The content of graffiti can be as simple as the words *I was here*, to fierce political debates on society's problems, or expressing love for another person (Menis, 2002; Plesch, 2002). Graffiti can reveal the population's true feelings about a situation (Bushnell, 1990). In Blair's (2015) opinion, graffiti is often used as a communicative tool to let others know that an alternative position to the current status quo exists. Graffiti is a way of expressing 'dissatisfaction, anger, or signs of value to' its creators (Brown, 1995, p. 116). According to one of the students in Brown's (1995) research: 'real graffiti has a punch line and announces the thoughts of the twentieth century' (p. 116). As well as announcing the thoughts of the writers, graffiti has a 'powerful way of evoking thought and emotion in the viewer, holding within it joy, pain, love, hate, and life waiting to be consumed, or a person's hope to speak in ways he or she could not manage otherwise' (Boldt & Paul, 2010, p. 14).

The use of graffiti as a means of expression is not supported by all academics. For example, Mangeya (2014) argues that graffiti is for 'cowards who lack the courage to openly and publicly air out their sentiments' (p. 264). However, it can be argued that graffiti is seen as an anonymous means to express oneself in the public domain. Graffiti is an anti-institutional act of defiance, whether it is in the street against the president or the police, or on a desktop against the place of education. For example, 'jaytalking on city streets may have helped ordinary people make the city - or at least city streets - their own, a place where they had some type of voice.' (Sage, 2016, p. 858). Bushnell (1990) suggests that 'graffiti writers want to play a role on the public stage denied them by official institutions' (p. 813). This explains why graffiti is one of the means of

communication for the marginalised - as it is uncontrolled it gives them power outside of institutions. Coupland (2012, pp. 22-23) writes that 'governments and their agencies have had the institutional means to imprint their own current language-ideological visions on public spaces, but they are not the only agents in the process'; it could be argued that the graffiti writers are also agents using language in public spaces. Moran (2016) writes that graffiti can 'explore the political role of space in the "public sphere" of the city as a site for alternative conceptualizations of "the public"' in this case giving an alternative platform for the voices of the graffiti writers (p. 191).

The other means of expression available to members of the public and graffiti writers alike depends on each country, and could even depend on each city and the means of communication that are available (regular town meetings, access to a hotline, anonymous contact, the possibility to vote etc.) Ouaras (2018) found that graffiti writers in Algeria felt 'powerless and voiceless', the writers explained that they wrote in the public domain to express their anger towards the political authorities that control the public space and the means of public expression and used street art as 'a way to say NO with colour' (p. 186). This echoes the findings of Jaffe et al., (2012) who wrote that in Kingston, Jamaica:

*'For those excluded from formal structures of power and voice, graffiti can represent an alternative sphere for (cultural) political influence, in effect giving voice to the voiceless and producing new, broader publics.'* (p. 20)

Through structured interviews with graffiti writers, Iljadica (2016) also finds that graffiti writing gives a voice to those that are economically voiceless. Peteet (1996) describes the inhabitants of Palestine as 'thinking out loud in graffiti' during times of unrest (p.141). Valesi (2014) in his thesis on street art, noted that in Mexico, Brazil, the United Kingdom, Italy, France, and the United States, street-urban art 'remains a vital instrument of protest to bring about social change for communities of people who have no voice' (p. 20). Hamzah and Letmiros (2021) quote one of the protestors in the Arab Spring saying "'the walls" were a voice of democracy' (p. 635). According to Sage (2016), '... graffiti [is] inherently meant to be public, [it] is the written equivalent of speaking out loud, albeit a less risky form of publicly and audibly announcing one's opinions' (p. 856). This is supported by (Madsen, 2015), who writes that written language is a physical representation of 'public discussion' and is used to claim and appropriate public space (p. 99). In Ghana, students are often involved in politics, and yet are excluded from political activities, therefore they turn to graffiti to voice their

opinions (Obeng 2000). This suggests that graffiti, or street art, is the written voice of the voiceless.

Despite this initial critique of graffiti users, Mangeya (2014) concedes that the use of graffiti can also be linked to a lack of a platform for people to speak out on. This once again supports the idea that graffiti is an essential means of communication for those who have no other voice. Menis (2002) writes that graffiti not only illustrates ordinary events but also the significant topical events present in society, this is echoed by Gasparyan (2020), who writes that ‘the walls being a unique medium of people’s imagination and their pictorial reproduction silently bore much information concerning different problems and events happening at the times those pictures or writings appeared on them and only centuries later they were observed theoretically and were named as “graffiti”’ (p. 39).

Graffiti is an omnipresent part of the cityscape. However, it requires a viewer in order for the image or text to be meaningful (Cappelli, 2020). The graffiti inscriptions are created by the writers, but are read by passers-by who have their own political and cultural identity (Holt, 2017; Sturken and Cartwright, 2009). According to Lewisohn (2008), the viewer of graffiti plays a vital role in the interpretation of the graffiti whereby the viewer’s position and world view aids in such interpretation. Baudrillard (1993) describes graffiti as having ‘neither connotation, nor denotation, they escape the principle of signification and, as *empty signifiers*, erupt into the sphere of the *full signs* of the city, dissolving on contact’ (pp. 78-79). Barthes (1977) writes that there are two interpretations of an image: the denoted and the connotative message (pp. 17–19). The denoted message is the literal message whereas the connotative message includes the viewer’s background including their social, political, psychological associations of the viewer (Cappelli, 2020).

Toilet graffiti is particularly interesting as the closed nature of the cubicle offers the writer ‘almost complete anonymity’ (Trahan 2011, 2). Abel and Buckley (1997) note that people write graffiti in toilets because they: ‘feel the need or the compulsion to express [...] their frustrations, hatreds, fantasies, desires, wit, wisdom, their innermost secrets, [and] things they would not ordinarily reveal to their closest friends or loved ones[.]’ (p. 3). Green (2003) describes ‘toilet graffiti [as] a unique window into the relationship between gender, language, and social context’ (p.282). Moehkardi (2022), who studies toilet graffiti in female cubicles, finds that graffiti is ‘one way of letting problem[s] go and from the language the female students used, not only do we know how they expressed their feelings, but also how they interacted with other female-

graffitists' (p. 130). Bartholome and Snyder (2004) suggest that toilet graffiti can be particularly useful to researchers giving them 'an insight into the psyches of the authors and the society to which they belong' (p. 86). Whilst the aim of tagging, for example, is for graffiti writers to 'symbolically claim [...] territory and advertis[e] themselves to their peers, gaining fame and status by the omnipresence of their signature' (Alvelos 2004, p. 18). That said, the presence of graffiti and whether or not it is cleaned for example, can provide insight into the political and social rules regarding graffiti in that area.

## **2.3 Tattoos**

This section presents a brief history of tattooing and explores the definitions of the words that will be used in this thesis. The function of the tattoos found by previous researchers will also be discussed.

### **2.3.1 History of Tattoos**

Tattoos have coexisted with humans from as early as 3,300 B.C.E. (Sanna, 2016). The "Iceman" mummy was discovered in Europe in 1901, and his tattoos have been dated back to 5,300 years ago, there are also records of decorative Japanese tattoos which date back to 247 C.E. (Ghosh, 2020). More recently, tattoos have been found on the 5,000-year-old mummies in the British museum thanks to infrared technology (McCarty, 2019).

In medieval Europe, tattooing was used as a means of punishing criminals by branding (Fisher, 2002). According to Pesapane et al. (2014), tattoos were officially banned in 787 C.E. and this led to a decline in the practice. The act of tattooing was reintroduced to the western world after the expeditions in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Pesapane et al., 2014), William Dampher returned to the United Kingdom with a Polynesian who had many tattoos (Ghosh, 2020). Tattoos became a popular means of linguistic expression throughout North America and Great Britain from the mid-1880s (DeMello & Rubin, 2000), this popularity was particularly present in the upper classes (Csesznek & Stemate, 2019). The wealthy upper classes used tattoos to impress other people, whereas in the working classes the tattoos were to express the bearers themselves (Fisher, 2002; Swami & Harris, 2012). Despite the upper and lower classes both having tattoos, the wealthy tattooed classes viewed the tattooed lower classes as being deviant based upon their tattoo imagery and tattoo designs (Fisher, 2002). This is just one paradox present in tattooing. Tattoos at that time were used by two distinct groups for two opposing goals: either to impress others or to express oneself.



The popularity of tattoos in the United Kingdom and the United States continued from the mid-1880s for the next decade or so (Fisher, 2002). Müller (2012) writes that up until the late nineteenth century, tattoos were used by corporate workers and craftsmen, as a symbol of belonging to their respective guild or of their respective activity. Tattooing culture became an ‘increasingly prosaic phenomenon in contemporary American culture’ (Kosut, 2000, p. 80), whereas in France, tattooing was reserved for criminals, just as it had been for 2000 years (Fisher, 2002). As tattooing grew in popularity, the number of people who were tattooed grew. This meant that the people who earned a living in the circus by being a ‘tattooed “freak”’ had to reveal more skin to attract crowds; the attraction died out by the 1940s (Fisher, 2002, p. 96). This was followed by the military opposing tattoos, due to both the erotic content and the perceived health hazards (Fisher, 2002). However, tattooing in the military was seen as an important part of bonding for soldiers, but when returning to civilian life soldiers found that their tattoos had ‘negative social value’ (Governar, 2000, p. 229). Müller (2012) explains that sailors and soldiers often spent time in the red-light districts and as tattooing was not a lucrative business the studios were often situated in those areas.

Tattooing re-emerged as a phase during the late 1960s and 1970s<sup>5</sup> as a part of hippie and rock star subcultures (Fisher, 2002). Müller (2012) notes that tattooing became popular significantly faster in the United States of America, whilst in France the first official tattoo salon opened in 1963. Tattooing has also become popular among ‘celebrities’ including, but not limited to, Tsar Nicholas II and Sir Winston Churchill (Pesapane et al., 2014). Around the same time, researchers, particularly sociologists, started to observe tattoos being used as a form of protest within the punk and gay communities to speak out against capitalism and conservatism (Csesznek & Stemate, 2019). At the start of the twenty-first century tattoos started to become more mainstream in Western culture, eventually being viewed as an art form, or at minimum body art (M. Atkinson, 2003; DeMello, 1993; DeMello & Rubin, 2000; Irwin, 2001; Kosut, 2006; Vail, 1999).

### **2.3.2 Definitions of Tattoos**

According to the Online Etymology Dictionary, the word tattoo has two different origins: in the 1680s, tattoo was used to refer to the way of signalling soldiers or sailors

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<sup>5</sup> The same time that modern graffiti started, but it was coincidental.

to quarters at night (Harper, 2001). It originates from the word *taptoe* coming from Dutch and meaning the shutting off of a faucet, and in 1755 the idea of drumming was added to the word tattoo (Harper, 2001). In 1769, the usage of the word tattoo to refer to pigment design in skin was first attested in Captain Cook's writing from his travels around Polynesia; he brought the tattooed Tahitian Prince Omai back to the United Kingdom with him (Kosut, 2006). In Polynesian, the word *tatu* means to mark or to strike (Plesch, 2002).

The word *tattoo* is used as both a verb and a noun to discuss the procedure and result (Goldstein, 2007). According to (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.), the earliest use of the word *tattoo* as a noun to refer to skin modification was in 1769, as a verb it was first in 1777. In this study, I will be using Ghosh's (2020) definition of tattoos: 'a process of marking almost indelible designs on the human body by inserting pigments into the skin' (p. 295). Blanchard (1991) describes tattooing as a 'socially significant practice' which is 'absolutely context specific. There is no tattooing on stone, paper or sheepskin' (p. 11). Tattoos can be applied by modern and traditional methods. Kosut (2006) describes traditional tattooing as a 'quintessential *folk* art tradition' (p. 88); the word *folk* is used to describe tattooing as a craft, handed down from generation to generation. Modern tattooing started in the late 1880s with the invention of the electric tattoo machine and stencils (Fisher, 2002).

Research in the past has had a tendency to focus on the negative aspects of tattooing. For example, in the 60s, researchers such as Yamamoto et al., (1963) and Post (1968) wrote that tattoos indicated homosexual desires and an attempt to suppress them. Hamburger (1966) suggested that prisoners had tattoos due to a lack of ego and a desire to establish identity. In the 90s, the motivations for getting a tattoo were considered negative. Copes and Forsyth (1993), and Favazza (1996) all argued that tattoos were evidence that the bearers needed constant stimulation and had low levels of cortical arousal. In Hewitt's (1997) book, people with tattoos are stereotyped and inferences are made about their psychological states of mind. Tate and Shelton (2008) also found that in the past tattoos were once regarded as a marker of a personality flaw or social nonconformity. Kosut (2000) also notes academic papers and books focus on the negative aspects of tattooing, failing 'to account for the diversity and richness of contemporary tattoo cultures' (p. 80).

### **2.3.3 The Function of Tattoos**

Blanchard (1991) and C. Sanders (1989) identify four primary functions of a tattoo that overlap. The first is as a ritual practice, this could be as a rite of passage or a

physical marker of a life event (Fisher, 2002). The second function is as a means of identification, within a romantic relationship or within a larger community, this could also be described as a means to strengthen a person's social ties (Blanchard, 1991; Czesznek & Stemate, 2019; C. Sanders, 1989). The third as a protective talisman, and the fourth as a piece of body decoration (Blanchard, 1991; C. Sanders, 1989). In their study on tattoos as expressed identity, Czesznek and Stemate (2019) find a further six reasons for being tattooed: beliefs and ideologies, the strengthening of identity, as a tribute to a social model, out of curiosity, in memory of a lost loved one, and as emotional support. Krutak (2015) would add that tattoos can also function as a marker of status and position within a community or for therapeutic reasons. These functions and motivations will be discussed in relation to the data in this study in section: 5.6 Themes and Meanings and section 5.7 Reasons for Being Tattooed in English.

Tattoos can be considered, on a simple level, body-decoration and on a more complex level a 'surface [...] filled with hieroglyphs telling one of the stories of corporeality in history' (Falk, 1995, p. 95). However, tattoos can also be considered a means for the bearer 'to construct one's body and self in one's own desired image' whilst also being 'a phenomenon that reflects cultural influences' (Kosut 2000, p. 80). The *stories* that people choose to tell in their tattoos are as individual as the tattoos themselves. There can be external factors such as commemorating events, life experiences, or human relationships (Forbes, 2001; Horne et al., 2007; Woodstock, 2014). Then there are the people who choose to externalise internal thoughts or feelings such as personal growth, their collective identity and/or individual identity or personality (M. Atkinson, 2003; L. F. Dickson et al., 2015; Forbes, 2001; Woodstock, 2014). Kirkland (2009) describes tattoos as an alternative literary practice and considers them as literacy artefacts. Nevertheless, not all tattoos are linked to a story; in one study a third of the participants cited that they have a tattoo as they 'just wanted one' or as they 'like[d] the looks [sic] of it' (L. F. Dickson et al., 2015, p. 108).

## **2.4 Art**

This section focuses on the relationship between graffiti, tattoos, and art. There is a discussion of what constitutes art, the links between art and language, as well as a presentation of the existing literature on graffiti and tattoos as art forms.

### **2.4.1 Defining a Work of Art**

Much like the definition for graffiti, art itself is difficult to define. What is clear, is that the perceptions of art and beauty differ from culture to culture and evolve over time (Casino, 2019). The art historian Tatarkiewicz claimed that the modern concept of art

is a 'confluence of concepts' that is to say ideas and opinions inherited from the previous generations as far back as ancient times (Tatarkiewicz, 1980, quoted in Hanfling, 1992, p. 3). One definition popularised by Tolstoy (1930) is that art is:

*'a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and other people are infected by these feelings and also experience them.'*  
(p. 123)

Casino (2019) explains that there are many qualifiers for what can be described as *art*; this often depends on who is asked and when they are asked, she writes that 'art exists where and when inner meaning becomes intelligible' (p. 277). One response to the lack of a universally accepted definition is that there cannot be one single definition. There needs to be an 'open concept' of what is art and how we interpret it (Casino, 2019, p. 227).

According to Kosut (2006), 'art is produced by individuals who are influenced by ideological, historical, material, and structural forces' (p. 77). Kosut's definition encompasses the identity of the artists and their background, whereas the following definition focuses on the artwork and the effect it has on the beholder:

*'A work of art is either a reproduction of things, or a construction of forms, or an expression of experiences such that it is capable of evoking delight or emotion or shock.'* (Tatarkiewicz, 1980, p. 38)

If we apply Kosut's or Tatarkiewicz's definition to graffiti and tattoos, both can be considered as art forms. Both tattoos and graffiti are produced by individuals who have their own context and background, and both can evoke an emotion in the people that see them. Neither definition asks for the artwork to be well received by the public. This therefore removes all doubt that tattoos and graffiti can be art forms whether they are liked or not.

Banksy, a worldwide renowned graffiti artist from Bristol UK, speaks publicly but anonymously about the art world and graffiti's place within it:

*'Art is not like other culture because its success is not made by its audience. The public fill concert halls and cinemas every day, we read novels by the millions and buy records by the billions. We the people, affect the making and the quality of most of our culture, but not our art. The Art we look at is made by only a select few. A small group create, promote, purchase, exhibit and decide the success of Art. Only a few hundred people in the world have any real say. When you go to an Art gallery you are simply a tourist looking at the trophy cabinet of a few millionaires.'* (p. 170)

This view is echoed by Heidegger (2008) who believes that ‘we read, see, and judge literature and art the way *one* sees and judges’ (p. 164), suggesting that we all appreciate the same artworks as we are told to appreciate them (Thomson, 2019). Matthews (1979) suggests that ‘most of us do not know an artwork when we see one we have to be told by someone – an expert – who is going on something more than the accepted usage of the expression’ (p. 46). H. S. Becker (1982) suggests that art can be any object or action that is legitimated as art depending on the institutional context and the rules of legitimation. Kosut (2006) suggests that the definition of *art* is a contextual decision:

*‘The creation and reception of art (who gets to make it, who gets to see it, and in what context it is exhibited), along with the perceived inherent cultural value of the objects (authentic or inauthentic high or low) are processes that are embedded within the social world.’ (p. 77)*

Casino (2019) echoes this view explaining that we only understand art ‘within the context of the art world’ (p. 227), that is to say that something must be already accepted within the art world, i.e. art critics and museums, for it to be considered mainstream art. When an object or action is displayed within a museum or gallery context, its meanings and functions are officially recognised as holding value, and aesthetic value in particular for tattoos and graffiti (Kosut, 2006).

#### **2.4.2 Text Art**

This thesis defends the argument that graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos are examples of text art. The definition of text art<sup>6</sup> that will be used in this thesis is that of Jaworski (2014), who writes that text art consists of: ‘...works of art in which some form of language is the sole or key component of its visuality or performance’ (p. 138). Beyaert-Geslin (2019) writes that the study of graffiti offers the opportunity to study the semiotic systems of both texts and images, as the tattoos are often artistic and accompanied by images the same opportunity applies. The data in this study, graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos, all contain at least one example of language - be it a word or an acronym.

Drawing and painting are some of the original means of communication which were first seen in cave paintings (Hanfling, 1992). It can be argued that the cave paintings

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<sup>6</sup> The equivalent term in French could be considered *l’image du texte* coined by Souchier (1998, 2007)

are also the earliest examples of graffiti (Andron, 2018; Megler et al., 2014). Some anthropologists speculate that some of the prehistoric cave paintings are occurrences of graffiti (Guthrie, 2005; Megler et al., 2014). Furthermore, if drawing is a form of communication, and drawing is a form of art, this would mean that art is equally a form of communication.

In addition to text art containing language, Casino (2019) suggests that art is a language, describing it as ‘visual vocabulary that conveys meaning in a way separate and distinct from that of the verbal or written’ (p. 223). Casino (2019) writes graffiti can be described as a pictorial means for sharing information. It could be argued that this definition could also be applied to tattoos. Dillon (1999) wrote that images could be considered a second communicative system: he argues that images are as expressive as natural language, but exist parallel to it. Natural language, which is human created language as opposed to an artificial language or computer code, is an example of objective and quantifiable behavioural data (Ireland & Mehl, 2014). I consider the script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions to be occurrences of natural language.

It can be argued that these definitions can also be applied to graffiti and tattoos. In keeping with Jaworski (2014): text art is where ‘language is the image, or a dominant element in the visual field’ (p. 140). The ‘visual fields’ in this study are the city of Bordeaux and the skin of L1 French speakers. The visual fields could be considered a synonym for ‘linguistic landscape’ (Coupland, 2012); Jaworski (2014) explains that text art is a part of the linguistic landscape. Whenever someone leaves their home ‘they step into the linguistic world’ (Demska, 2019, p. 2), and it is in the public domain that examples of ‘public use of written language’ can be seen (Pavlenko, 2010, p. 133), in this thesis the focus is on two elements of the linguistic landscape: graffiti inscriptions and visible script tattoos. The concept of linguistic landscape will be explored in section 2.5.3 of the literature review and 3.2.1 of the chapter on methods.

### **2.4.3 Graffiti and Tattoos as Art**

Many people do not accept graffiti as art on the basis that it is an individual interjection in a public space without permission from the relevant authorities (Keough, 2010). Tattoos are also often viewed as eyesores or as curious exotic pieces; people outside of the tattoo culture community do not often see tattoos as art (Kosut, 2006). However, attitudes are changing, for example in 1999, Vail classified tattoos as ‘fine-art’ (p. 263). Greenberger (2002) noted that newspapers and magazines used the term *skin-as-canvas* in order to justify the body as a legitimate artistic medium. More

proof that attitudes towards tattooing have changed is that the professionals once called *tattooers* and *tattooists* are now referred to as *tattoo artists* (Kosut, 2006).

Tattoos and body modification exist in all countries and cultures, however, the idea of the human body as a canvas and object to be worked on is often difficult to understand from a western perspective (Falk, 1995). Nevertheless, stigmatisation of body-marking is decreasing while the positive body image movement is gathering speed (Falk, 1995). The negative stereotypes associated with tattoos may decrease as the number of people with tattoos increases and then in turn the number of people in power who have tattoos increases (Ruffle & Wilson, 2018).

One of the arguments against tattoos being art is that they are unnatural. Falk (1995) however, explores the idea that ‘the human body is never found in its ‘natural’ state – except for a short period after birth’ (p. 95). Baudelaire (as referenced in Thévoz, 1984) remarks that babies are attracted to loud colours and artificial forms, this proves that there is an innate desire for the unnatural. Mauss (1973), cited by Falk (1995), explains that each culture has its own techniques and traditions that are applied to new-born babies and that our bodies are ‘the corporeal aspect of socialization’ (p. 95). The idea of ‘the natural’ in Western culture has its origins in the Greco-Roman era and Judeo-Christian teachings, whereby make up and body decorating that enhance the natural were allowed, but that permanent body markings were disapproved of and were stigmatised (Falk, 1995). Falk (1995) writes that:

*‘Irreversible moulding or marking of the body is often conceived of as a profanation of the image of God and decorating or painting as shameless articulation of the flesh. As is well known, the glaringly painted whore is originally a biblical motif.’ (p. 100)*

Not all cultures view tattoos and body modification in such a negative light, ‘in many traditional and archaic cultures the unformed and unelaborated body is considered imperfect, unfinished, and even ugly’ (Falk, 1995, p. 98). In some cultures, for example, in Māori (Pritchard 2000), tattoos are considered an art form (Vail, 1999).

Likewise, the popularisation of graffiti started in the 20th century as it became part of the art world being labelled as contemporary art (Casino, 2019). This is evident due to the museum exhibitions and art installations being held worldwide. One of the earliest and most well-known exhibitions was held at the Museum of Contemporary Art in New York. The Museum held a three-month show in 2011 named *Art in the Streets* displaying work from the 1970s as well as the history of graffiti and its modern day presence (Casino, 2019). The French stylist Agnès B opened the first art gallery

dedicated to graffiti in 1984 (Obouronanga, 2022). Similarly, in the tattooing community a pivotal moment came when the Soho Drawing Center held an exhibition featuring Western flash tattoos in New York (Kosut, 2006). Gasparyan (2020) writes that despite its age, graffiti has come to be the focus of some scientific attention in recent years, this is mainly with the aim of examining socio-political issues of the present day. In 2005, the Graffiti Research Lab (GRL) was founded in New York. The founders explain that the online website was aimed at encouraging people to rethink preconceptions towards graffiti (Keough, 2010). GRL is an 'open source technology' database which is available for public use via their website <http://www.graffitiresearchlab.fr/>.

Tattooing and graffitiing are artistic mediums that use alternative canvases: the skin and walls (or any other available surface). According to Falk (1995), using the body as an artistic canvas is a way for humans to express themselves. Gell (1993) describes tattoos as the trace created during the process of tattooing, tattoos leave an indelible mark, not unlike the engravings on walls and other surfaces left by graffiti artists, where the pictorial layer has been scratched (Plesch, 2002).

One of the links between graffiti and tattoos is that some artists practise both art forms. They tattoo by day to earn a living and write graffiti at night as a passion. There is also a trend of academy trained artists entering the tattooing community and academics that are also graffiti artists (Kosut, 2006). Graffiti writing and tattoo bearing are both methods of continuing a person's story away from the traditional page and onto an alternative canvas (Kirkland, 2009). Graffiti writers prefer walls and doors whereas tattoo bearers (and artists) prefer skin. When tattooing, one body is the canvas and another body the creator of the tattoo: 'In the story to be told the body has a double role; as a visual gestalt, which is the raw material to be worked upon, and as the performer of the action' (Falk, 1995, p. 96). In the case of graffiti writing there is one body (the writer) and the surface. The practice of tagging in particular, can be seen as a 'projection of the body, the agents, the actors' [*les signatures-graffitis sont des projections du corps, des actants, des acteurs*] (Beyaert-Geslin, 2019, p. 120). In this example, the tags represent both the identity and the body of the writers.

The human body can be seen as a canvas or 'communicative tissue' that social power can be displayed upon (O'Neill, 1986, p. 71; Falk, 1995); the word 'display' suggests a public reading of the body. This can be considered a continuation of Foucault's (1977a) writings whereby he asserted that 'the body is the inscribed surface of events' (p. 148). However, a British performance artist described body art, including tattooing, piercing and branding, as a 'private diary' (Plesch, 2002, p. 188) which



suggests that body art is not public. Goulding et al., (2004) consider tattoos as being both 'public and private statements about the individual's identity' (p. 280). The contradictory nature of tattoos being both private and public will be explored further in the thesis in section 6.2.8: Public Spaces and Private Places.

Baudelaire, (cited by Steele, 1985), believes that fashion was the result of modern-day habits and traditions: he described fashion as a 'deformation of nature, an unceasing and repeated effort to reshape it' (p. 127). Therefore, it could be argued that body art and tattoos are also a deformation and an attempt to reshape nature. This definition could also be used when describing graffiti, depending on the placement it too could be used as a means to deform and reshape nature. Krutak (2015) writes that tattoos and graffiti go from cult to art particularly when art meets fashion.

The placement of graffiti can influence how it is perceived by the public and the authorities. In places of worship, graffiti can be seen as a testimony to the popularity of the site. The more marks left by visitors, the holier a place is considered, the more it attracts visitors, who in turn leave more marks (Plesch, 2002). According to Żurawski (2019), graffiti writing for the purpose of devotion is a widespread practice. Cruz-Urbe (2010) found Greek graffiti inscriptions in the temple in Deir el-Bahri in Egypt, and posits that they were from worshippers using the abandoned temple over a 30-year period. During medieval times a person's name was considered an extension of their personality: by writing one's name in a holy place the person's 'presence' remained as long as their inscription (Żurawski, 2019). A comparison between keeping oneself in a place through graffiti and keeping another person alive in a tattoo is explored in section 6.3.4: Grief and Homage.

When artists choose public and private property for their pieces, this can cause financial battles between the street artists and the property owners ('When "Artists" Tag Your Building', 2018). According to Lombard (2020), the 'focal point of contention internationally was balancing the rights of property owners affected by the works and the artist who created it' (p. 43). In the United States of America the Visual Artist Rights Act (VARA) protects graffiti writers and their work ('When "Artists" Tag Your Building', 2018).<sup>7</sup> If graffiti has 'recognised stature' it is protected by copyright law and this can

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<sup>7</sup> The VARA of 1990 was amended to include 'work of visual art'. The amendment allows the author to claim authorship if the work is displayed publicly and prevents destruction, mutilation, distortion or harmful modification to the work (Rep. Kastenmeier, 1990).

override it being created illegally ('When "Artists" Tag Your Building', 2018, p. 15). Obouronanga (2022) explains that when graffiti began appearing on trains in Paris this opened a platform for controversy, through the cultivation of the ambiguity between art and vandalism: the non-standard, illegal practice revealed the writer's desires to distance themselves from other traditional cultural practices. In an interview with graffiti writer M. Liberté, he explains that he often writes on bins to avoid trouble with the law because it is unlikely to offend most people, see section 4.12.1: M. Liberté for more detail of his interview.

When asked if graffiti are art or crime, Andron (2018) replies that they are neither, she writes that they are:

*'...inscription[s], communication, engagement, urban language, spatial practice, cultural production, multimodal expression, emplaced occupation, public discourse, networked semiosis, surface politics – all of these and more, just not art, nor crime.'* (p. 191)

Obeng (2000, p. 338) also holds this view, as he focuses on 'the content of the graffiti and not the act of the writing graffiti itself' in his research. Not unlike Obeng's research, this study intends to look further than the question of art or crime and focus on the inscriptions as linguistic acts. This will be discussed further in the next section.

## **2.5 Communication and Linguistic Practices**

This section focuses on the existing literature that addresses communication and linguistic practices that can be compared to graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos. As Gasparyan (2020) writes:

*'...it is necessary to study graffiti texts as a model of communication, this point is rather crucial, for in order to find out and explain the communicative aspect of a certain piece of graffiti text, firstly one has to find out the function that piece of writing performs and in order to understand that function one has to carry out a scrupulous analysis on each of the linguistic element making up a graffiti text, since the latter is mostly created by anonymous authors and under unknown circumstances. [...] The language in this case can be a "witness", some kind of a "betrayor" of the author that can tell the story of the reasons and purposes underlying the text'* (p. 42)

Therefore, this study considers both graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos as modes of communication. The following subsections explore areas of language that have influenced this study of graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos.

### **2.5.1 Communication**

This thesis builds upon the proposal that tattoos and graffiti are a form of communication and linguistic interaction that uses forms, symbols, signs, and

language to express the thoughts and feelings of the writer or bearer. The tattoos and graffiti included in this current study all contain one or more words that are identified as being part of the English language and are seen as communicative tools and modes of communication.<sup>8</sup>

Luhmann (1992) suggests that the definition of communication changes between fields of research, maintaining that ‘only communication can communicate’ (p. 251). Craig (2006) writes that the term communication is ‘used to refer to a range of activities – communication practices – that involve talking and listening, writing and reading, performing and witnessing, or, more generally, doing anything that involves “messages” in any medium or situation’ (p. 39). According to Back (2007), the human body can be seen as ‘a medium of communication’ (p. 75). C. W. Martin (2018) adds that in a metaphorical sense, ‘tattoos can be considered a medium of communication, a message, a genre, a text, and a language’ (p. 40). Textual communication and interaction exist in the form of symbols, signs, and language (Denissova et al., 2019).

The graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos used in this study all contain one or more words from the English language. The definitions of language are as varied and disputed as those relating to art. According to Casino (2019), ‘language is defined as a *system of abstract codes which represent antecedent events and concepts*’ (p. 228). For Hepburn and Potter (2004), language is active and alive. Hall understands language as a construction which is developed by the community that uses it to produce meaning through agreed definitions and grammatical rules (Hall, 1997). According to Spender (1980), ‘one of the crucial factors in our construction of this reality is language. Language is our means of classifying and ordering the world: our means of manipulating reality’ (p. 2). Otheguy et al., (2015) describe named languages, such as French, English, or Chinese, as ‘social construct[s]’ (p. 283), whereas Delbecque (2002) considers language as a *creative thinking tool (un outil d’idéation* (p.1), and as a tool it is able to shape and influence thoughts and behaviour (Sunderland, 2006). Kelly (1979) also defines language as a tool explaining that language is ‘the entity which forges human relationships, which forms human beings by giving [them] the tools to express their experiences of the real’ (p. 26).

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<sup>8</sup> In the methods section I explain how words are determined as English or not using dictionaries and context.

Tattoos and graffiti can both be defined as a type of visual language (Belkin and Sheptak, 2018) and ‘the function of a language is to convey meaning; even more than that, it should convey the inner thoughts and feelings of the individual person’ (McDougall, 2012, p. 328). The decision to have a tattoo on one’s body or write graffiti on a wall, desk, or door, is often motivated by a message that the writer wants to share within their linguistic landscape. This message can be conveyed through an image, words, numbers, or a mixture of all three. Tattoo bearers and graffiti artists often choose messages which are symbolic and/or meaningful in their social and cultural worlds (M. Atkinson, 2003; L. F. Dickson et al., 2015). Tattoos are both a means of body decoration whereby the body can be ‘filled with hieroglyphs telling one of the stories of corporeality in history’ (Falk, 1995, p. 95) and also a means for people to express themselves after ineffable experiences (Armstrong et al., 2002; Greif et al., 1999; Sanna, 2016).

Cappelli (2020) considers graffiti to be ‘visual rhetoric’ as it has the power to communicate ideas to the public. Holt (2017) argues that for something to be visual rhetoric it must be symbolic, have human interaction, and have a communicative element. It can be argued that both graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos fit this definition. Mangeya (2014), writes that ‘graffiti presents a situation whereby discourses lie both physically and symbolically side by side’; he explains that graffiti inscriptions are often found physically next to the place of dominant discourse whilst having conflicting content (pp. 193–194). Andron (2018) suggests that ‘many street art compositions are based on symbolic language, and they deliver one-liners whose meaning is limited to deciphering the symbolic convention’ (p. 39). The brevity of both script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions is explored further in section 6.2.3.

Technology has changed the relationship between spoken and written language. In the past, the spoken word was fleeting and temporary (V. J. Cook, 2014), now it can be filmed and recorded (G. Cook, 1989). In the past, society saw the written word as the more permanent means of expression (Cornbleet & Carter, 2015), writing was considered more formal as it was permanent (Hilton & Hyder, 1992). The English expression ‘it’s not carved in stone’ suggests how written language can be viewed – as a finite decision. Whereas now the written word can be physical, digital, temporary, modified and erased. It should be acknowledged that there are both permanent graffiti pieces that are etched into the surfaces and temporary ones that are covered by the next writer or removed by the local council for example. Gade (2003) argues that the longer the writing is meant to be visible, the more formal it will be, therefore the

informality of graffiti is well suited to its ephemeral characteristics. Moran (2016) notes in his thesis, that as graffiti can be overlapped in the public space this is testament to its ephemeral and unpredictable nature. This is in contrast to tattoos which are generally considered permanent and therefore by Gade's (2003) definition a higher level of formality language should be present in the script tattoos. However, technology has also impacted our relationship with tattoos: once permanent marks on the skin, the advances in lasers have rendered the removal of tattoos a possibility.

### **2.5.2 Multimodality**

Both graffiti and tattoos can be examples of multimodal writing. Multimodal writing is when a visual medium incorporates several design features from a variety of semiotic systems, including, but not limited to: choices about font, script, typeface, colour, and execution (Kress, 2010; Jaworski, 2014; Paudel & Neupane, 2019). In their study of stencil graffiti in Latvia, Skulte and Kozlovs (2020) describe their data as having 'multimodal complexity and [...] laconic multilayered expressivity' (p. 75). Tattoos can also be created with or without a stencil and, like graffiti inscriptions, are often laconic. Lemke (2009) and Nørgaard (2009) write that the multimodal signifiers present in graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos, include language, typography, pictorial display, letterforms, and colours. Lemke (2009) argues that very few texts are unimodal, apart from when they are extracted from the original text. Not unlike graffiti inscriptions, script tattoos are also an aesthetic vehicle of language, they are perfect examples of multimodality as they combine letters, numbers, colours, font choices, and drawings. Goldstein (2007) argues that tattoos are also multimodal as they turn bodies into canvases. The same logic can be applied to graffiti which renders any surface a canvas: toilet walls, desks, bins, post boxes, and so on.

Graffiti can be considered a multimodal tool for displaying, spreading, and communicating ideas (Birdsell and Groarke, 2007; J. Blair, 2012; Cappelli, 2020; Fleming, 1996; Pennycook, 2006; Roque, 2015), Alonso (1998) adds that graffiti is a 'tool of communication' (p. 2). C. W. Martin (2018) writes that tattoos 'maintain a distinctive sense of multimodality (read multiple meaning-transmitting forms or modes) in the way that the visual, linguistic, spatial, and cultural components of one tattoo all speak to the meaning of that sign' (p. 138). Rowsell et al. (2013) describe tattoos as a core example of social semiotic multimodal process, and therefore tattoos are considered complex inscriptions displayed and inscribed on the body, for example, as 'multimodal artefacts' that are marks of the bearer's identity (Koller & Bullo, 2019, p. 3).

According to Kress (2003, 2010), social behaviours and language(s) cannot be isolated from each other as well as from other social semiotic systems, as the combination allows for a wider approach to multimodality. Mora et al., (2016) use multimodality to ‘study literacy practices that, despite favoring the print word, also prompted an analysis of spatial modes (e.g. the location of tattoos in the body or the geographical areas where graffiti became more evident)’ (p. 6). The spaces within multimodal studies can be defined as ‘constitutive in organizing patterns of agency, voice, identity and multilingual and multimodal practices’ rather than an objective neutral sociolinguistic variable’ (Witbooi, 2020, p. 79). Mejía-Vélez and Patiño (2014) posit that multimodality in the creation of texts can facilitate the internalisation of concepts and integration of skills, ultimately building a person’s knowledge of themselves and allowing them to look at the world more deeply. Koller and Bullo, (2019), referring to (C. W. Martin, 2013), describe tattoos as a means to connect with other people but also with oneself. When graffiti writing and choosing a script tattoo, there are many choices to be made and each one reveals more about the writer or bearer.

### **2.5.3 Linguistic Landscape**

Linguistic landscape serves as a tool for providing information about ‘the sociolinguistic composition of the language groups inhabiting the territory in question’ (Landry & Bourhis, 1997, p. 26), in this case the graffiti writers of Bordeaux and a sample of the tattoo bearers in France. Ouaras (2018) writes that ‘graffiti tagging in a public space [is] not simply a marking of territories, but a linguistic and aesthetic act connected to systems of knowledge and power in society’ (p. 173). Gorter (2013) argues that the linguistic landscape reflects the ‘relative power and status of the different language groups in a specific context’ (p. 202), for example, as a ‘manifestation of power in space’ (Jaffe et al., 2012, p. 3).

According to Gorter (2013), ‘the study of the linguistic landscapes has added an innovative and captivating approach to the mapping of language diversity and multilingualism in urban settings’ (p. 201). The term ‘linguistic landscape’ was initially proposed by Landry and Bourhis to cover textual inscriptions found in urban areas (1997). Other terms also been suggested to refer to text in public spaces including ‘semiotic landscape’ (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010), ‘displayed language’ (Eastman & Stein, 1993), ‘discourses in place’ (Scollon & Scollon, 2003) and finally, ‘staged

linguistic performances' (Bell & Gibson, 2011).<sup>9</sup> In this study I will use Landry and Bourhis' term: linguistic landscape. One of the advantages of using linguistic landscape as a research tool is that it focuses on multilingualism in written forms rather than in speech (Ben-Said 2011). Demska (2019) writes that the globalised linguistic landscape can actually be considered a hybrid linguistic landscape. The notion of hybridity will be explored in sections 2.5.4, 3.2.4, and 4.7.

According to Landry and Bourhis' (1997) definition, it can be argued that visible graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos are part of the linguistic landscape as they are textual inscriptions and can be seen in public areas. Demska (2019) explains that 'humans do not only know and speak a language, but they also live in a verbalized space, especially in the contemporary city' (p. 1). Graffiti inscriptions are often found in the city on walls, doors, and bus stops; therefore, they are a part of our linguistic landscape. Landry and Bourhis (1997, 29) write that 'graffiti campaigns can provide a dynamic portrait of both current and past conflicts over the language of public signs within a given region or administrative territory'. It is important to point out that Landry and Bourhis study graffiti which defends minority languages, this study focuses on English which, despite not being an official language in France, cannot be described as a minority language.

Alongside the omnipresence of graffiti inscriptions, tattooing is becoming increasingly mainstream, and visible tattoos can be seen more frequently in public (Fisher, 2002). Therefore, it can be argued that script tattoos are an ephemeral and nomadic element of the linguistic landscape in a similar way that t-shirts were included in Coupland's (2012) study of the linguistic landscape in Wales. Peck and Stroud (2015) agree, writing that 'just as a linguistic landscape may be carried on placards and t-shirts, so can landscapes be carried on the surface of the skin' (p. 3). This is supported by Roux et al. (2018), who write that the human body is 'authored' by tattoos and can be 'read' like a 'classic' linguistic landscape (p. 5). Pritchard (2000) argues that tattoos are 'neither purely one's own nor another's, but rather a kind of split between the individual and the general' (p. 332). Tattoos are on the skin of one person,

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<sup>9</sup> These terms can also be applied to the use of text in public places, this will be analysed in section 4.7 Hybridity.

but are often seen by others more often than the bearer themselves depending on the placement of the tattoo.

Graffiti inscriptions can at the same time belong to everyone and no one, the public space is the communal interface between graffiti writers, the public, and the institutions of the city (Moran, 2016). The surfaces in the city are not just a canvas for writing on, Moran (2016) believes that the surfaces of the city can inspire the graffiti themselves; in the same way positive or negative events in the city can also be the motivation for graffiti inscriptions. Lynn and Lea (2005) write that the “local context” is all-important for two reasons. Not only can it be seen as prompting or inspiring the graffiti in the first place, but it also emerges as the key to subsequent interpretation of meaning’ (p. 59). This was the case in the Arab Spring protests where the street art functioned as a commentary of the Egyptians’ lives during the protests (Tripp, 2013). The same graffiti messages would not have the same power or relevance in a different time or place.

During times of political conflict, graffiti and tagging can bring a touch of humanity to the situation. Akram Safadi and Amer Shomali Safadi are both Palestinian visual artists; they were positive about the graffiti and tags that could be seen on the wall separating Palestine and Israel, Safadi says: ‘It’s adding something human, warm, to the inhuman background the wall constitutes’ (Fieni, 2016, p. 356). Moreau and Alderman (2011) believe that graffiti wholly changes the visual aspect and connected representation of the area whereby it is found, in Safadi’s case it was from inhuman to human. Shomali, however, felt that the artists using the wall as a canvas should use it for a political agenda: ‘...when one does something on the wall, it should be like a protest against it, not a piece of art’ (Fieni, 2016, p. 356).

Another means in which graffiti is linked to politics and humanity is through the murals, which could be considered *lieu de mémoire* (Nora, 1984), the term refers to places that were made in order to preserve a memory. Plesch (2002) argues that the term *lieu de mémoire* was intended for sites of religious worship or to remember the people lost in wars. It could be argued though, that in public spaces, street art and graffiti murals for the deceased are also *lieux de mémoire* as they serve the same purpose to mark a significant event and/or person. One of the most recent and famous examples of street murals are those created in the memory of George Floyd, his death followed several cases of alleged police brutality towards black Northern Americans, and he became a symbol for the Black Lives Matter movement (Cappelli, 2020).



Image 4 George Floyd Mural



(BBC, 2021)

Other notions linked to the linguistic landscape such as the sound landscape, the skinscape and the corporeal linguistic landscape are also found in this study. The 'sound landscape' refers to everything that can be heard in the linguistic landscape including but not limited to movies, music, games, television series, and videos on social media (Yibokou, 2023). In this study, the data does not come from the sound landscape, however, the participants mention the sound landscapes in their answers, see section 5.7.1: English Aesthetics. Peck and Stroud (2015) consider the body 'as a corporeal linguistic landscape, or skinscape' and apply the tools in linguistic landscape to analyse tattoos (p. 3).

#### 2.5.4 Hybridity and Language Flux

As this thesis focuses on language flux and hybridity the terms must be considered and discussed. Stewart (1999) suggests that the term 'bricolage' has been employed to replace words such as 'hybridity' and 'creolisation' which have had negative connotations in the past. In this study, I choose to use the terms language flux and to describe the flow of lexical items and hybridity to refer to the creation of new words and phrases through language contact. I find the term 'bricolage' does not do justice to the linguistic ability of some of the tattoo bearers and graffiti writers.

#### 2.5.4.1 Language Hybridity

Language hybridity itself can be defined as a 'historical fact and theoretical tool' (Demska, 2019, p. 2) and Kraidy (2006) argues that it has now become 'one of the emblematic notions of our era' (p. 1). Demska (2019) supports this idea, explaining that 'contemporary *hybridity/cultural hybridity* has shifted from the periphery into the centre of human life' (p. 8). Demska (2019) explains that 'language makes cultural hybridity visible while also being an element of it' and therefore 'linguistic hybridity should be treated as a part of cultural hybridity, rather than as a separate phenomenon' (p. 2). Hybridity is present in the streets, it can be seen on signs, in business names, and in graffiti.

*'The linguistic picture painted by all of these signs depends on the time and place; on the history of the region, state and city; on cultural and language policies; on the type (official, commercial, private); and on the values, education, native language and bi-/multilingualism (or lack of) of the author.'*  
(Demska, 2019, p. 2)

It is argued that language is not a part of culture that can be removed: language and culture are interdependent and interconnected (Tinker, 2011). Bakhtin (1981) defines linguistic hybridity as:

*'a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance between two different linguistic consciousness, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor.'* (p. 358)

Simply put: for language to be hybrid, there must be two distinct languages which are being consciously used together (Bakhtin, 1981). Fjeld et al., (2019) give the example of *fuck op [up]*, to mean *mess up*, as a hybrid phrase containing English [*fuck*] and Danish *up*. Bakhtin (1975) categorises hybridity as either implicit or explicit. Explicit hybridity can be either conscious or unconscious and is normally viewed as the beginning of hybridisation as it can affect the language users, whereas implicit hybridity tends to be unconscious and is organically present in language (Demska, 2019). Hybrid phrases can also be considered microtexts where there is a mixture of two or more languages (Demska, 2019).

Due to the effects of globalisation, language hybridity and flux are increasing as the frontiers between countries, and therefore communities of practice,<sup>10</sup> are continually being diminished by the internet (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2007). Given the nature of public spaces, which are affected by both immigration and globalisation, they are often linguistic landscapes shaped by hybridisation (Demska, 2019). In fact, this globalised world has meant that all linguistic landscapes are hybrid landscapes (Demska, 2019).

Therefore, language hybridity can be considered a display of cultures mixing. Stewart (1999) describes cultures as 'porous; they are open to intermixture with other, different cultures and they are subject to historical change precisely on account of these influences' (p. 41). Cumont (1906) piloted the idea of syncretism at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century suggesting that cultures are not pure they are mixed. Das (2006) argues that syncretism 'has always been a part of the negotiation of identities and hegemonies in situations such as conquest, trade, migration, religious dissemination and intermarriage' (p. 34). Stewart (1999) suggests that syncretism is 'the process by which cultures constitute themselves at any given point in time' (p. 41). It could be argued that the datasets in this study, the graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos, are perfect examples of syncretism as they combine English-speaking culture with French writers and tattoo bearers. As early as 1987, Hannerz (1987) identified that western culture had begun spreading around the world. Görlach (2002) suggests that 'the high degree of exposure to English in popular culture and the media would seem, if anything, to speed up the pace of borrowing' (p. 79). Chesley (2010) writes that borrowing is both a linguistic as well as cultural phenomenon. This is supported by the work of Lazarev (2017) who identifies eight key ways that anglicisms enter into French language.

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<sup>10</sup> Wenger (1991) introduced the concept of community of practice to refer to educational and professional contexts. This thesis focuses on informal language environments and therefore the community of practice framework is not used as a key tool.

Table 2 Means that Anglicisms enter French

<i>Means of entering French</i>	<i>Example</i>
<i>Words that are related to modern technology and social networking</i>	<i>Poster; spam; captcha; troll; netflixisation</i>
<i>Concepts related to the entertainment industry</i>	<i>fake news; magazine people; fashionista; look; made for sharing</i>
<i>Words that are associated with popular culture</i>	<i>street art; buzz; tag; fashion week; star; casting</i>
<i>The names of cultural events</i>	<i>Le Festival OFF d'Avignon; ONLYLIGHT; Against The Wind; PARIS DRONE FESTIVAL 2017</i>
<i>Concepts that describe social aspects</i>	<i>Manspreading; squatter; street pooling</i>
<i>Words that describe elements of food service</i>	<i>fast-food; snacking; cake</i>
<i>Phrases and words that come from business</i>	<i>made in France; burnout</i>
<i>Hybrid phrases used in everyday communication</i>	<i>t'es off; il n'est pas clean</i>

(Table adapted from Lazarez 2017, p. 189)

This is supported by both the literature review and the data in this study. For example, the literature review revealed that modern graffiti started in Philadelphia and spread to the rest of the world, and this was reflected in the data. For example, the graffiti writers interviewed mentioned a connection to the United States of America, as well as North American culture, such as music, television and films, being the most referenced popular culture in both the graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos. Music and television are examples of stimuli heard in the 'sound landscape', which is a term that refers to everything that can be heard, for example, music, television series, movies, games, and videos on social media (Yibokou, 2023).

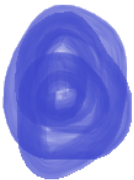
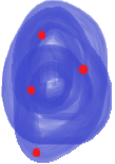
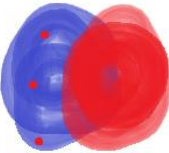
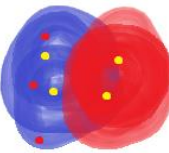

As languages and cultures are not mutually exclusive, languages cannot be said to be pure either. In the past, the mixing of cultures was due to invasions, trade, migration, and is now accelerated by the use of the internet and globalisation. Demska (2019) argues that 'the lexicon of any language is always hybrid, created by native and alien elements; furthermore, natural language is the product of this hybridization, the end point of this process' (p. 3).

As 'language is social' it behaves like humans: it lives alongside other languages, evolves, and travels across borders (Denissova et al., 2019, p. 23). The artistic practices of graffitiing and tattooing have also travelled across borders. Modern graffiti migrated from the streets of Northern America to the capitals of Europe (Pereira, 2005) and tattooing has also travelled around the world changing and adapting to the local cultures and languages, as well as exchanging practices and designs (Galliot, 2017). Sometimes the tattoo or the graffiti is the link to hybridity and globalisation: when it is written in one language in a country with a different official language.

In this thesis, the term hybridity is used to refer to words and phrases that were created using more than one language, for example, two or more languages, or a combination of language, numbers, and/or symbols. Multilingual speakers can speak two or more languages, whereas hybrid speakers can be monolingual but have adopted certain loan words that they have incorporated into their own personal vocabulary. In this thesis, examples of language hybridity are not restricted to a mixture of languages. Examples of hybridity in graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos will be presented in section 4.7: Hybridity and in section 5.7.5: Hybridity and Word Play.

In order to give a visual representation of this complex linguistic situation, I have devised a metaphor for hybridity. Imagine a pot of blue paint, poured over part of a canvas, this represents a person’s L1 language. As the person learns another language another colour is added to the canvas alongside the blue paint. This could be a second L1 or a foreign language to the speaker. The area where the paint touches and mixes would be referred to as the outdated terms of *Franglais* and *Spanglish* for example, with the two languages mixing, or explicit hybridity. The red dots within the blue dots represent words and phrases from a second language that the speaker has learnt without actively studying the language and therefore the speaker considers the words as synonyms. A third language, represented by the colour yellow, is added in the form of droplets over one or both colours. This paint does not mix in as easily and is not connected to the other points. This third colour represents implicit hybridity. The speaker has not necessarily tried to learn these words, they have ‘appeared’ in their language as they do on the canvas. If the speaker has tried to learn the language or has a good level of ability in the third language this would be represented by the yellow at the bottom. The liquid nature of the paint represents the ‘fluid use of multilinguals’ entire linguistic repertoire’ (García & Kleifgen, 2019, p. 2) as the colours and languages run into one another.

Figure 2 Abstract figures created by J. Peake

				
Monolingual L1 speaker	Implicit hybridity of an L2	Multilingual speaker L1 and L2	Implicit hybridity of an L3	Multilingual speaker of L1, L2, and L3

In the metaphor for language hybridity, as seen in Figure 2, the difference between a hybrid speaker and a multilingual speaker is determined by two factors: quantity, intensity, and position. For example, in the second image there are only four red dots to show that the speaker regularly uses four words or phrases from the L2 language. The intensity of the red dots shows that the words and phrases are not mixing with the L1 language in the way that bilingual and multilingual speakers code switch. The position of the dots shows that for the L2 speaker, the words are not connected to each other and this would suggest that the speaker does not consider themselves to be bilingual.

In the third image, there is a clear section where the L1 and L2 mix. The quantity of red has increased suggesting that the speaker knows more of the L2 than in the first image. The intensity of the red section suggests that there are parts of the language that the speaker knows better than others. The section in the middle represents code-switching between the 'named languages' as well as the parts of the L2 that are affected by the L1 and vice versa (García & Kleifgen, 2019, p. 5).

Image four represents a multilingual speaker who is acquiring a third language. As in the other images, there are few dots to suggest that the language has not been fully acquired. The intensity of the colours is strong as the words are not confused with the other two languages, as they could be examples of loan words or implicit hybridity. The position of the dots suggests that the L3 could be used when the speaker is speaking either their L1 or L2.<sup>11</sup> Image four represents a multilingual speaker who speaks three languages and has some language interference in their L1 and L2 languages.

#### **2.5.4.2 Language Flux**

Language flux can be defined as the increase and decrease in use of certain words in one language and their replacement with an equivalent translation from another language (Mahwasane, 2020). The individual words and linguistic items that fluctuate between languages are often referred to as loan words and the process is sometimes referred to as language borrowing (Haugen, 1950; Hoffer, 2002). This study focuses on the presence of English in French, whereby there is an increase in the English words and terms being used in French, whilst the use of the French equivalents are

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<sup>11</sup> For more studies using colours to represent language see Busch (2012) and Reynolds (2016).

decreasing. The reasons for this direction of flux will be presented in the following sections.

I use the term language flux to cover the process of borrowing from one language to another, from initial use as a loan word to full integration and acceptance in the language. Borrowing can be defined as ‘the process of importing linguistic items from one linguistic system into another, a process that occurs any time two cultures are in contact over a period of time’ (Hoffer, 2002, p. 1). Görlach (2002) explains that ‘modern borrowing is most often straight from English- whether from BrE or AmE, and from written, spoken, or electronic sources’ (p. 5). Davletbaeva et al. (2019) suggest that ‘the most common processes for the formation of new words are: borrowings from other languages’ (p. 2). Doi (2014) writes that ‘all languages we can think of have more or less borrowed words, or loan words, in their vocabulary’ (p. 674). When a loan word comes from English, it can be referred to as an ‘anglicism’ (Hoffer, 2002; Onysko, 2007). Görlach (2002) writes that:

*‘All commentators agree that the recent influx of English words is unprecedented in European history - although it can still not compare with the massive impact of French, especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is very likely that Anglicisms will continue to increase, not only in countries that have been retarded by political and ideological restrictions, mainly in Eastern Europe’. (pp.11-12)*

This study, which takes place 20 years after Görlach’s publication, is evidence that the use of anglicisms in French graffiti and script tattoos is present. Lazarev (2017) writes that the increasing use of anglicisms in French can be observed from the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Lanvers and Hultgren (2018) predict that ‘the dominance of English is likely to be continually strengthened, in that the more people speak a language, the more people will want to learn it’ and therefore there will be more anglicisms present in recipient languages (p. 2).

Diez-Arroyo (2016) writes that given ‘the leading role of English, specialists tend to favour anglicisms over possible native alternatives because these borrowings are regarded as a guarantee to accuracy and precision’ (p. 611), as can be seen the case in the fields of Science, Business, and Technology (Gryshkova 2023). Lazarev (2017) identifies four groups of anglicisms present in French:

Table 3 Anglicisms in French

Group	Examples
Words that describe objects and concepts that do not exist in France	Cowboy; bump-stock
Loan words that are necessary for everyday or professional communication	Parking; gif; agenda
Anglicisms that have French equivalents, but there is a semantic or stylistic difference	Vintage; patchwork du paysage; melting-pot
Loan words that Lazarev considers 'unreasonable'	Feedback; voiture low-cost; box wi-fi

(Table adapted from Lazarev 2017, p. 189)

One of the words Lazarev uses as an example is the word *parking*. Maniez (2020) summarises past research on loan words concluding that the *-ing* morpheme is one of the most productive sources of borrowing from English into French. Another reason for the high level of borrowing from English to French is the language use of French youths. Davletbaeva et al. (2019) describe French youth vocabulary as being 'open, its vocabulary is constantly increasing owing to various borrowings and the expansion of the meanings of words, as well as very active processes of word-formation' (p. 3), they write that most of the loan words in French youth slang come from English.

According to Chesley (2010), there are more loan words in French from English than from any other language, as well as all other loan words combined.<sup>12</sup> Table 4 gives examples of loan words used in French today.

Table 4 Loan Words in French

Donor Language	Loan words in French	English Translation
English	Tee-shirt, week-end	T-shirt, weekend
Hindi	Shampooing, bungalow, bandana	Shampoo, bungalow, bandana
Chinese	Ketchup	Ketchup
Gaulish	Ruche, chemin, tonneau, mouton	Beehive, path, barrel, sheep
German	Guerre, gant, salle, écharpe	War, glove, room, scarf
Arabic	Algèbre, toubib, bled, méchoui	Algebra, doctor, small town/homeland
Hebrew	Chérubin, séraphins	Cherub, seraph
Turkish	Caviar	Caviar
Spanish <sup>13</sup>	Vanille, caracol, moustique	Vanilla, prance, mosquito
Portuguese	Marmalade, paillote, piranha, créole	Marmalade, straw hut, piranha, creole
Bantou	Banane, macaque	Banana, macaque

(Examples taken from Pruvost, 2012; Sorbet, 2015; Stewart, 1999; Walter, 1999, 2007, 2008)

<sup>12</sup> I have chosen to write loan word as two words rather than one as seen in A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics (Crystal, 2008).

<sup>13</sup> Sorbet (2015) explains that there is some debate as to whether some loan words come from Spanish or Portuguese as they resemble one another (*mangosta* and *mangusto* -mongoose) or are even spelt identically (*albino* and *albino*)



According to Bogaards (2008), English lexical borrowings account for approximately 1.7% of vocabulary types in French. Chesley (2010) explains that the term vocabulary type refers to lexical items, types do not take frequency of use into account. Blanche-Benveniste et al. (2002) found that the percentage of anglicisms in spoken French was up to 2.6% of vocabulary types in French.

Hoffer (2002) writes that languages have varied levels of resistance towards loan words. Nuhiu (2008) suggests that languages with fewer speakers succumb more easily to the flux of 'foreign language elements' (p. 116). According to Statista.com, (2023) there are 1,500 million L1 and L2 speakers of English versus 274,1 million French L1 and L2 speakers.

According to Onysko (2007), the closer the pronunciation of a potential loan word is through its grapheme and/or phoneme to the recipient language, the more likely it is to be used and adopted. This can be calculated through the foreignness index, which is also referred to as the Levenshtein distance (1966). The foreignness index, in simple terms, is the minimum number of changes (insertions, deletions, or substitutions) of a single character to transform one word into another (Gören, 2013). For example, in the word *love*, the foreignness index counts each letter phonetically, for example: //l/-u/-v/ = 3, from English to French only the vowel changes, e.g. /l/ to /ø/ = 1. One divided by three gives a foreignness index of 0.3 for the word *love*. The overall closeness in pronunciation between English and French is a factor that encourages language flux between the two languages.

As shown above, currently, the direction of flux and borrowings is often from English to other languages. This is in part due to English being seen as a global language. This phenomenon will be presented and explored in the following section.

## **2.6 English-Speaking Context**

This thesis is in the category of English Studies and explores the use of English in graffiti and tattoos. The results will later show that the words in the script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions often come from an English-speaking context. The references to popular culture and the internet in this study are in English and are often not country specific, therefore a global term of 'English-speaking' is applied to these examples.

In general, the term English-speaking is used to refer to countries where English is an official language. In this study, I intend to use the term English-speaking to refer to content that is in English. For example, a North American television show in English would be classed as English-speaking and in the same way the band *Burning Heads*

which is from Orléans, France is also considered English-speaking as their music is in English. Therefore, the fact that the band is from France is irrelevant, what counts is the language of the content of the stimulus i.e., music, poetry, film, literature, online media content and so on.

The examples of English-speaking contexts will be assessed in more detail in the chapters on the script tattoos and the graffiti inscriptions. The English-speaking contexts are often examples of manifest intertextuality or constitutive intertextuality. Manifest intertextuality is 'the explicit or obvious presence of other text(s) in another through discourse representation (direct or indirect speech) (Ellah, 2022, p. 13; Fairclough, 1993) whereas constitutive intertextuality denotes 'the configuration of discourse conventions that implicitly contribute to the production of text' (Fairclough, 1993, p. 105).

### **2.6.1 English as a Global Language**

Garley and Hockenmaier (2012) describe English as a 'global lingua franca' and add that 'many languages are currently undergoing a process of introducing new loan words borrowed from English' (p. 135). Lingua franca is used to refer to speech, whereas this study is concerned with occurrences of written language and therefore I will use the term global language, which is often used in studies of written language (cf. Gorter, 2006a, 2013; Huebner, 2006).

Rao (2019) describes English as a global language, as 'a tool of communication' and that it is particularly useful in the world of business (p. 74). Alrawashdeh (2012) finds that English is associated with modernity and internationalism and is therefore perceived as being a means to communicate with everyone. This is supported by Pennycook (2017) who suggests that English is 'the neutral language of internationalism' (p. 246). Toenjes (2015) finds that 'the substantial use of English as the language of expression is one of the most telling indicators that the intended audience of the graffiti is transnational' (pp. 58-59). Diez-Arroyo (2016) writes that 'English has become key to international communication, a fact largely motivated by the US political, economic and technological hegemony' (p. 609). For example, France and Germany adopted many English terms in the domains of sports and technology (Görlach, 2002). Gryshkova (2023) writes that English is 'the most useful language from the stand-point of business, politics and science' (p. 141), and that it can be referred to as a global language due to its widespread use, explaining that there are more examples of academic research, television programmes, and newspapers in English than in any other language.

Fjeld et al. (2019) attribute the worldwide use of some English words, such as swear words, to the 'global cultural hegemony won by the Anglo-Americans after World War II' (p 108). This global rise in the usage of English is one of the reasons for the level of borrowing seen in Western Europe (Furiassi, 2012; Görlach, 2002). Görlach, (2002) explains that 'the periods of massive impact of English on lexis (and in culture in general) are, first, after the Second World War (for all countries outside the Communist sphere of influence) and then from 1990 onwards when the eastern regimes crumbled, western influences came to flood various domains' (p. 3). The North American military presence in France after WWII led to several Americanisms being adopted in France such as: *tank, jeep, flash, top model* etc (Pruvost, 2012, p. 19). Kuisel (1993) argues that 'the French could no longer ignore America because the United States began to exercise a certain hegemony over France. This hegemony has had social, economic, and cultural, as well as political-strategic, features' (p. 2).

In the past, France resisted the arrival of North American culture. The vocabulary used to describe this period is testimony of the negativity and apprehension felt. One example being the 'coca-cola affair' which illustrated and dramatised the French's resistance to North American popular culture; it became known as 'coca-colonisation' (McKay, 2008, p. 58). Kuisel (1993) uses the term 'American domination' to describe the cultural colonisation in the 'political, economic, and cultural sense' (p. 68).

According to McKay (2007), the features of North American that culturally colonised France included 'hot jazz, gangster films and gun culture, streamlining, soft drinks, comic books, juvenile delinquency, rock 'n' roll, pop art, LSD, fast food, video nasties, gangsta rap [...], both jogging and obesity' (p. 58). Kuisel (2013) writes that in the 1980s American culture was considered chic, for example, Ralph Lauren fashions, Hollywood movies, and wine from California, this continued into the early 1990s. Not all North American popular culture appealed to the French public: there was a preference for films, food, sports, clothes, advertising styles, art, literature, and sports, but music was perceived as being more 'divisive', and television programmes were considered 'invasive' (Kuisel, 2013, p. 9).

At the same time, graffiti culture was also making its way across the Atlantic, and in the early 80s, the tagger Blando started writing his name on trains in Paris (Obouronanga 2022). Contrary to the birth of graffiti in disadvantaged areas of New York and Philadelphia, the early practice of graffitiing in France was attributed to people from richer areas in the capital (Obouronanga 2022). Kuisel (2013) writes that in France, 'there was a craze for American popular culture, especially among young

people' (p. 2), modern graffiti was flourishing in North American cities at that time and therefore could have been considered part of the mainstream culture by French youths, despite its being viewed as a part of subculture and as a marginalised act in North America. North American, and in particular African-American, culture was broadcast throughout France on shows such as H.I.P. H.O.P. by Sidney, which started in January 1984 and aired every Sunday afternoon until June (Obouronanga, 2022; Piolet, 2017).

The present study concentrates on the city of Bordeaux as a microscopic example of a French city almost 30 years after the beginning of the cultural colonisation. By focusing on the graffiti inscriptions in English, Bordeaux serves as an example of the 'Anglicisation' of France and its cities. 'Anglicisation' is a term used to refer to the increasing use of English in countries where English is not an official language, it refers to the cultural and linguistic assimilation process (Veltman, 1983), it entails the 'diffusion of English words (or names) through borrowing and adaptation into other languages' (Mensah, 2022, p. 158). It can be argued that the increasing use of English is in part due to globalisation and in part due to English's status as a global language dominating international communication (Jenkins, 2007). Kuisel (1993) writes that Americanisation went from being a 'foreign invasion' to a 'global process', this would suggest that Americanisation and globalisation are intertwined (p. 6).

There is some debate as to whether the use of English in countries like France should be referred to as 'Englishisation' following the research of (Kachru, 1994) or 'Anglicisation' which was used by (Veltman, 1983). In Tan's (2001) research, he opts to use Kachru's term as he found that the term Englishise had a stronger affiliation with linguistic references, whereas the term Anglicise was linked more often to the people of England and their culture in general. Mensah (2022) also uses Englishise as an umbrella term to encompass the impact of English on other cultures, for Mensah anglicisation is one technique for Englishising indigenous names. According to McArthur (1992), Englishisation originally referred to the adaptation of language towards an English through 'phonology, grammar, lexis, discourse, registers, styles, and genres' (p. 360). More recently, Englishicise is being used to refer to the 'ever-growing use of English' (Lanvers & Hultgren, 2018, p. 1).

One of the reasons that English has become a global language, is due to its perceived language status in many countries. The following section explores current literature on the concept of language status.

## 2.6.2 Language Status

Ahearn (2001) writes that language and power are intertwined. The power dynamic between language and language users is also at play in the linguistic landscape, as Huebner (2006, 32) writes, linguistic tokens are 'markers of status and power'. Bourdieu writes that the power of using language to name is part of the language use of institutions and authorities (Bourdieu, 1982). Holt (2017), building upon Bourdieu's work, writes that 'language itself has no authority; at best, it *represents* authority' (p. 43). In the linguistic landscape, 'government signs' is the term often used to represent the signs and texts used by municipal, regional, or national authorities including road signs, street names, and inscriptions on government buildings, whilst private signs include storefronts, commercial advertisements, graffiti, and tattoos (Lado, 2011). Graffiti represents a feeling of power for those that feel powerless. Jaffe et al., (2012) write that:

*'In a city where downtown voices are seldom heard, graffiti can provide a medium through which the voiceless can make their opinions known, an alternative public sphere. It offers the possibility of disrupting the urban order established by class and political interest, of being a non-violent, street-orientated form of protest.'* (p. 20)

Despite being a means of protest for people who feel they have no power - graffiti can be a powerful tool for change. Abaza (2013) writes that the military junta in Egypt was morally defeated by the public ridicule of its practices in graffiti inscriptions and Khabtib (2013) notes that the use of street art was a key political tool during the 2011 Egyptian revolution.

Spolsky (1998) writes that 'the social prestige or stigma associated with [linguistic] variations makes language a source of social and political power' (p. 5). Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) explore the relationship between power and identity through linguistic choices, and write that:

*'...there is an increasing awareness that language use is a form of self-representation, which implicates social identities, the values attached to particular written and spoken texts, and, therefore, the links between discourse and power in any social context.'* (p. 291)

For example, speakers in bilingual environments may choose to speak one language over another due to its cultural connotations. In Malta, families are either English speaking or Maltese speaking. The families that use English are often seen as belonging to middle or upper classes due to the higher prestige associated with English language (Gatt, 2017). For Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004), linguistic relations are

also social relations and power relations. In the case of multilingual families, the linguistic choices could be based on the preference of the speaker or the listener.

France is not recognised as a bilingual country;<sup>14</sup> there is no need to use English in order to be understood. The use of English in this case could be considered an example of ceremonialism or exoticism. According to Coupland (2012), ceremonialising a language is when it is used respectfully and there is qualified recognition of the meaning and weight of the words, whereas exoticising implies short-term consumerism of the language (p. 21). Whether each instance of English usage is classed as exoticising or ceremonialising would depend on how the writer/bearer feels they are using the word, but this could differ from how the L1 speakers feel that the writer/bearer is using the word. In the same way that cultural appropriation is disapproved of by the original culture whilst the appropriating culture does not appreciate or understand that it is appropriating under the guise of 'cultural appreciation' (Chun, 2001, p. 57). Görlach (2002) writes that 'the very fact a loanword is "foreign" determines its special status, thus contrasting with the normal, everyday usage in the source language' - here the use of English words can be considered 'exotic' (p. 11).

In addition to exoticism, some researchers have found that young people, in particular, rebel against the cultural and linguistic rules in their country by adopting another language or culture. Some adolescents use foreign languages as a way of expressing themselves and escaping from 'the confines of their own grammar and culture' (Kramsch, 2006, p. 101). Krawiec (2007) also finds that English was favoured by Polish youths as a means of self-expression; he suggests that the vocabulary used by Polish youths 'comes from English speaking graffiti writers and hip hop musicians whose language has become a lending source for the jargon of Polish writers and a helpful tool for finding new ways of linguistic expression' (p. 62). The use of L2 language can be considered a 'linguistic escape' for the teenagers whose parents do not understand the L2 language as it gives them a complete sense of freedom and independence from their family.

North American culture is much appreciated amongst the youth in many nations: the fashion, music, slang, and swearing are all creeping into youth culture in other

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<sup>14</sup> (Ben Lakhdhar, 2022) writes that France is officially a monolingual country.

countries (Englis et al., 1993; Greenhouse, 1989; Kuisel, 2013). Garley and Hockenmaier (2012) suggest that the use of English by LX speakers is often influenced by trends in North America.<sup>15</sup> In 1950s France, wage-earners were keen to adopt elements of a North American lifestyle (McDonald, 2004), evidence of this can be seen today, for example, the quantity of North American fast-food restaurants, or studies like this one showing the use of English language and North American references in graffiti and tattoos.

In addition to a donor language/culture being appreciated in the recipient language(s)/culture there is also the element of prestige. Rizzi (2006) argues that the successful integration of a loan word is based on the importance and prestige of the country that is loaning the word. Prestige can be expressed in many forms. Krawiec (2007), translating from (Mańczak-Wohlfeld, 1995), suggests that lexical borrowing is guided by a person's need to be 'trendy', in particular borrowing from 'English-speaking countries which are nowadays a source of many social, cultural and technological changes and innovations' (p. 57). Hock and Joseph (1996) found that people sometimes choose to communicate in one language over another language as there is a higher level of social prestige in the other language, writing that 'if something is prestigious, we may feel a need to imitate or borrow it' (p. 272). Hoffer (2002) writes that some loan words may make the speaker appear fashionable and up-to-date and others may render the speaker out-of-date. For example, loan words, such as *teenager*, have gone out of fashion (Lazarev, 2017). Alrawashdeh, in her thesis on graffiti inscriptions, posits that the size of the inscriptions and quantity of inscriptions in a certain language are factors for determining its importance in comparison to the other languages used (2021).

The English language has enjoyed a certain level of prestige and hegemony in recent years. English has become the main language for several upcoming fields, and this has facilitated its spread around the world. For example, it is believed that 'English is the language of science' and therefore the use of English has 'become part of the generally accepted attitudes of that entire community' (Dijk, 2006, p. 117). The association of English with science began in the 17-18<sup>th</sup> centuries (Lazarev, 2017). As the beginning of modern graffiti and technological advances are associated with North

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<sup>15</sup> LX refers to speakers of English when it is not their first language but we do not know if it is their second, third, fourth etc. language.

America, it could be argued that this English, as in the case of science and technology, has become the language of these art forms.

### **2.6.3 Multilingualism**

As this study explores English use by L1 speakers of French, the graffiti writers and tattoo bearers can be considered speakers of one or more languages. Terminology defining speakers of more than one language is plentiful and debated. Auer (2007) writes that 'bilingual talk blurs the line between language A and language B' (p. 320). Bilingualism was also seen as 'a conflation of two monolingualisms' (Jaworski, 2014, p. 138), which was also called a 'double monolingualism' (Heller, 2007), 'parallel bilingualism' (Jacobson & Faltis, 1990), 'language crossing' (Rampton, 1995, p. 489) or 'translanguaging' (Busch, 2012, p. 504).

I will be using the term multilingual to mean 'people who use more than one language in everyday life', within this definition Kramersch (2006) includes students of foreign and second languages, people who write or publish in a second or third language, as well as those that can understand a language without being able to fully speak it, and others that now refuse to speak a language 'because of past painful experiences' such as political conflict (p. 100). The term multilingual does not presume a level of language ability on the part of the tattoo bearers or writers, only that they use more than one language. Multilingualism can open doors to different scenarios because the speaker, or writer, can use 'cross-linguistic connotations' and use the sounds and words of several languages to express themselves in ways that monolingual speakers cannot (Kramersch, 2006, p. 98). It has been suggested that multilingualism is closely linked to the languages that can be found in the speaker's geographical location (Varga, 2014).

Varga (2014) writes that multilingualism is closely linked to the area in which it is used and the social relationships that use it to communicate. Due to increasing globalisation and the use of the internet, the 'area' in question is no longer limited by physical space as the internet allows the formation of new communities by interests rather than geography (Kramersch, 2006). When these groups communicate, they often choose English as a lingua franca though the groups can contain many (and sometimes mainly) speakers of other languages (W. Baker and Sangiamchit, 2019). Crystal (2023) writes that less than one in three users of English are L1 speakers. This



is particularly present in the online communities created for gaming, or on Facebook groups.<sup>16</sup>

In this study, the graffiti writers and tattoo bearers use their linguistic resources in their artwork (Jaworski, 2014). The writers' and bearers' linguistic resources, i.e., the languages that they speak and write, become another artistic medium for them to use in their pieces. According to Witbooi (2020), recent sociolinguistic studies have progressed from traditional concepts of multilingualism which focus on the locations of linguistic systems, towards approaches that explore the ways in which languages and speech repertoires interact and flow. Landry and Bourhis (1997) suggest that:

*'...sociolinguistically, language diversity in private signs may most realistically reflect the multilingual nature of a particular territory, region, or urban agglomeration. As such, the diversity of languages present in the linguistic landscape can be seen as a concrete manifestation of the linguistic and cultural diversity of the ethnolinguistic groups inhabiting a particular administrative territory or region.'*<sup>17</sup>(p. 27)

Therefore, the study of graffiti inscriptions in Bordeaux as private signs would also reflect elements of the multilingual nature of the city.

I believe that some of the multilingual behaviours seen in this study could be defined as code-switching as the tattoo bearers and graffiti writers select the linguistic elements that are relevant to their message and alter the language to suit their needs, most examples of language alteration are defined as instances of hybridity. Woolard (2006) argues that code-switching is 'systematic, skilled, and socially meaningful' (p. 74). Lantto (2014) also refers to code-switching in relation to spoken language: 'code-switching [...] between two languages or varieties, swearing and slang are mainly phenomena of spoken language' (p. 1). Nilep (2006) defines code-switching as 'the practice of selecting and altering linguistic elements so as to contextualize talk in interaction' (p. 1). Other researchers extend the use of code-switching to written texts such as Torres' (2007) work on 'poetry, drama, and performance art' (p. 76) and Gardner-Chloros (2020) explores code-switching in literature. This study differs from previous research where code-switching is considered a feature of informal writing and is generally associated with young people who are of mixed heritage (Hinrichs, 2006).

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<sup>16</sup> Tattooing and video gaming are considered one of the 'new literacies' by researchers (Gilhooly et al., 2019, p. 146), I would argue that graffiti could equally be considered a new literacy.

<sup>17</sup> Occurrences of graffiti inscriptions in Portuguese, Spanish, and Arabic have all been observed during this study. The inscriptions have been photographed and kept for future research.

Toenjes (2015) finds occurrences of graffiti writing from the same writer in both English and Arabic: *US Stop supporting separation* and *One day we will become what we want* (p. 63),<sup>18</sup> she posits that the use of English was tactical to target one international audience, whilst Arabic was used to show hope and solidarity during the occupation. This suggests that the writer had different aims for the two messages and used language as a tool to convey them to the intended audience. Woolard (2006) suggests that code-switching can be used to signal a new topic, the writer may also be using two languages to differentiate the two messages and separate them.

Code-switching in certain situations can be referred to as code-crossing. The act of code-crossing or code-switching is a way of creating and furthering the writer's and bearer's identity by testing the social boundaries and exploring different positions (Coupland, 2007). Code-crossing as a term was coined by Rampton (1995) to refer to:

*'...code-alteration by people who are not accepted members of the group associated with the second language that they employ. It is concerned with switching into languages that are not generally thought to belong to you.'*  
(p. 280)

Pooley and Mostefai-Hampshire (2012) further explain that the code-crossing is when the speakers are not considered part of the L2 language's 'ethno-linguistic heritage' (p. 372). I believe that the term code-crossing could be used in this context, as the tattoo bearers and graffiti writers are all L1 French speakers (or presumed as such) and therefore generally not considered part of the ethno-linguistic heritage of English-speaking countries by L1 English speakers. However, if English is considered a global language, then it could be argued that its ethno-linguistic heritage extends beyond the L1 speakers. As seen in the survey and interviews in chapter 5, some L1 French speakers in this study believe that they have a connection to English and they would potentially argue that they are accepted member whilst others suggest that as English is global language it belongs to everyone.

In addition to code-switching and code-crossing, I will argue that some language use by tattoo bearers and graffiti writers resembles translanguaging. Translanguaging can be described as the act of combining:

*'[...] different elements of [...] personal history, experience and environment, [...] attitude, belief and ideology, [...] cognitive and physical capacity into one*

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<sup>18</sup> Arabic text not provided by the author.

*coordinated and meaningful performance, and making it into a lived experience.'* (Wei, 2011, p. 1224)

García and Kleifgen (2019) write that 'translanguaging clarifies the notion that multilinguals act with a unitary semiotic repertoire' (p. 2), they include speaking, reading, signing and writing as linguistic acts that can be analysed through translanguaging, whilst Wei's (2011) translanguaging framework focuses on the self and considers both present and past language identities. According to Otheguy et al., (2015), the aim of the term translanguaging was:

*'to overturn the conceptualization of the two languages of bilinguals (which for [them] includes multilinguals) as clearly distinct systems normally deployed separately, but occasionally deployed in close, alternating succession under a practice known as code switching.'* (p. 82)

Gorter (2013) writes that 'due to globalization, a pure monolingual linguistic landscape is a rarity', he cites 'the spread of English in non-English-speaking countries' as is seen in France (p. 191). Heller (2002) suggests that:

*'...while bilingualism is valued, it is only valued as long as it takes the shape of "double monolingualism". One is expected to speak each "language" as though it were a homogenous monolingual variety... Mixed varieties, which of course are common in bilingual settings, are frowned upon.'* (p. 48)

This view would suggest that the general consensus is that learning two or more languages is positive, but that hybridity and language flux are less desirable as they blur the lines between the two languages and replace words and structures in the receiving language.

Kramsch (2006) develops this by saying that there is a third place which is located in language, it is an embodiment of social, cultural, and linguistic influences (p. 98). Gumperz (1964) explains that linguistic choices are often tied to social constraints and categories, for example, gentrification and revitalisation of neighbourhoods impacts multilingualism and the semiotic landscape (Vandenbroucke, 2018). Migration and nationalism have also contributed to the evolving linguistic landscape and to the learning of languages (Varga, 2014).

Graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos can be examples of written multilingualism in the contemporary city: graffiti on the walls of the city and tattoos on the body of the inhabitants. Ben-Said (2011) writes that 'the multilingual practices of a particular society, written/visual forms are of equal importance to their oral/spoken counterparts, and provide useful context information pertaining to the sociolinguistic environment investigated' (p. 62), in this study the environment is Bordeaux.

As this study focuses on graffiti inscriptions that are considered a part of language in a multilingual public context, it is important to explore the term metrolingualism. Metrolingualism is the study of urban language and linguistic code mixing, Otsuji and Pennycook (2010) defined metrolingualism as:

*'The ways in which people of different and mixed backgrounds use, play with and negotiate identities through language; it does not assume connections between language, culture, ethnicity, nationality geography, but rather seeks to explore how such relations are produced, resisted, defied or rearranged; its focus is not on language systems but on languages as emergent from contexts of interaction.'* (p. 85)

Metrolingualism can also be seen as a 'manifestation of linguistic performances' (Jaworski, 2014, p. 139), whereby the performers consciously use linguistic forms and devices in recurring social situations and categories such as nationality, gender, region, and ethnicity etc. (Bell & Gibson 2011). It is often associated with public spaces and creativity (Jaworski, 2014), as well as 'forms of chic, privileged playfulness in elite bilingualism' (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010, p. 246). In their study of tattoos and graffiti in Mexico, Mora et al. (2016) used metrolingualism to understand the two practices as transient and study them in spite of this. Whilst tattoos are (semi)permanently attached to humans, these humans move, and graffiti is subject to being changed by the authorities and other writers.

Artwork can be considered metrolingual when the artist mixes their linguistic resources in order to challenge the sociolinguistic status quo (Jaworski, 2014). Metrolingual artists create artwork through the use of communicative resources to create meaning. This is one of the reasons why the choice of one language over another is significant – the artist chooses words and languages just as they choose colours and forms. Graffiti and tattoos are therefore both examples of metrolingualism due to their location, form, and linguistic elements.

## **2.7 Linguistic Identity**

This thesis addresses the way in which identity is expressed through script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions. Their use can be considered vehicles of expression of the person's identity. Bucholtz and Hall (2010) write that 'identity does not emerge at a single analytic level – whether vowel quality, turn shape, code choice or ideological structure – but operates at multiple levels simultaneously' (p. 19). For example, being a graffiti writer can be considered a part of a person's identity (Watzlawik, 2014), such as a job or a hobby, as well as considering the act of writing to be a 'tool to construct the "self" (Macdonald, 2001, p. 6). P. Atkinson (2014) writes that the "self" is always

social, in that it is a property of social encounters' (p. 18). Bartolomeo (2001) sees graffiti itself as an expression of both group and individual identity:

*'In its vibrant colour and vivid imagery, graffiti makes a statement about the strength of diversity and a uniform system of symboling. It universally speaks for both the individual artist and the crew for which it appears as a symbol and manifestation of shared identity'.<sup>19</sup>*

It can be argued that the choice of whether to reveal a part of one's identity to certain people is part of the construction of a person's identity (Holt, 2017). For example, Ruffle and Wilson (2018) write that there are three types of people, non-tattooed, people with hidden tattoos, and people with visible tattoos. This suggests that being tattooed implies several choices: firstly, to have one or not, secondly, where, and thirdly whether it is seen in public or not. A similar phenomenon occurs in the world of graffiti, artists and writers can choose whether to tag their artwork, post it on social media, and ultimately claim it as their own. Tagging, for example, is used by youths and young adults for 'the construction of youth identity and group affiliation' (MacGillivray & Curwen, 2007, p. 355). Gee (1999) writes that people access and use several identities and practices, which are linked to aspects of a person's personality: social practices and goods, and status. In these examples, the linguistic acts are a means to create and represent a person's identity.

Tattooing started to gain popularity in the 1990s when the concept of 'reinventing the self' became a part of modern society (Csesznek & Stemate, 2019, p. 61). Roberts (2012) echoes this view, writing that tattoos are no longer stigmatised and can even be regarded as a positive form of expression. Peck and Stroud (2015) describe corporeal features, such as tattoos, as 'frame performances of self' (p. 3). S. Benson (2000) describes them as an 'instantiation of the will in defiance of process and time: "you can never get it off"' (p. 251). Fisher (2002) describes tattoos as 'an indelible identity marker inscribing the boundaries of possibility for the body' (p. 103).

Graffiti writers also experience a reinvention of the self through the use of street names and tags. Due to the illegal nature of graffiti, writers choose a new name to separate their writing life from their 'real-life' (Macdonald, 2001, p. 70). Some researchers regard graffiti writing as a creative practice which is used to reinvent the writers' identity on the surfaces upon which the graffiti is located (Barbour, 2013;

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<sup>19</sup> No page number given as it was a web page.

Mangeya, 2014; Taylor & Marais, 2009). A tag can also evolve with the writer, Beyaert-Geslin (2019) finds that 'certains usages des graffeurs consistent à modifier leur signature ou à supprimer des lettres de leur pseudonyme pour dissimuler ou renouveler leur identité' [*Some graffiti writers change their tag or delete letters from their pseudonym to conceal or renew their identity*] (pp. 118–119).

Due to the rise of globalisation, the internet, and immigration, the subject of identity has changed: it is no longer about the fixed place people come from but more so the communities that they belong to (Kramsch, 2006). In their study of the linguistic landscape in Israel, Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) focus on the multilingual communities in certain neighbourhoods and suggest that the growing importance of English is linked to the 'intense globalisation' that the country is experiencing (p. 12). In this study, the communities in question are those of graffiti writers and tattoo bearers.

### **2.7.1 Linguistic Choice**

The linguistic choices people made have been researched in sociolinguistics since the mid-twentieth century (Woolard 2006). This thesis argues that graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos are acts of linguistic identity (Jaworski 2014): the writers and bearers make linguistic choices as to which words and phrases will be present in the tattoo or their graffiti writing. There is an additional level of choice when the graffiti writers or tattoo bearers choose an LX language to write onto their skin or on the walls, or a language that they do not speak or understand.

Scholars have long debated and discussed what constitutes discourse (Foss, 2004; Holt, 2017). Gee (2014) offers the following definition of discourse as 'ways of combining and integrating language, actions, interactions, and ways of thinking, believing and valuing, and using various symbols, tools, and objects to enact a particular sort of socially recognizable identity' (p. 29). Discourse can be defined as acts of identity through the medium of language (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985); through this reasoning, language, or rather language choice, is an act of identity (Yakushkina & Olson, 2017).

Polyglots make linguistic choices every time they communicate. Certain factors influence the linguistic choices, such as the audience and the context. However, when creating art, such as graffiti and tattoos, it could be argued that sometimes the linguistic choice is based on the communicator and their individual language identity rather than the target audience. Denissova et al. (2019) coined the concept 'secondary culture identity' to describe the psychological state of the language student and the skills

necessary to communicate in multilingual settings (p. 22). Mora et al. (2016) suggest that language choice and identity are very closely linked. Denissova et al. (2019) describe language and identity as being intertwined and interdependent. There is great debate as to the relationship between language and identity. Does one affect the other? If so, how much? Which one takes precedence? Structuralist linguists, including Chomsky, believe there is a weak connection between language and identity: this is because they believe that languages, at a 'deep' level, are all the same (Mowbray, 2012). However, sociolinguists, such as Spolsky (1998), would argue that 'the most important verity is that a language – any language – is full of systematic variation, variation that can only be accounted for by appealing, outside language, to socially relevant forces and facts' (p. 4).

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is in line with Spolsky's argument: that there is a fundamental link between language and identity, the hypothesis was first formulated by Sapir, and it was later reformulated by Whorf in 1940 (Hussein, 2012). It should be noted that the notion of linguistic relativity predates both Whorf and Sapir, Hussein (2012) explains that Humboldt's work on the philosophy of language influenced the field of linguistics: 'language forms ideas, it also plays a role in shaping the attitudes of individuals. Hence, individuals speaking different languages must have different world views.' The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis suggests that language shapes how we see the world, and the way in which we see ourselves (Mowbray, 2012), the way in which the tattoo bearers see and describe themselves will be explored in section 5.6.2: Life Story and Self-Representation. Sapir (1929) writes:

*'Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection. The fact of the matter is that the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group.'* (p. 209)

The 'language habits of the group' Sapir refers to could be used to describe the L1 French speakers writing English graffiti inscriptions or choosing to have script tattoos in English. Whorf believed that there was a deterministic relationship between language and culture. Whorf (1956) writes:

*'The background linguistic system (in other words, the grammar) of each language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas but rather is itself the shaper of ideas, the program and guide for the individual's mental*

*activity, for his analysis of impressions, for his synthesis of his mental stock in trade.’ (p. 212)*

If we consider language a tool of communication, then the more languages a person speaks, the more tools they have to express themselves. Mora et al. (2016) describe the use of another language as a ‘communicative resource’ (p. 11). Some of the survey answers and interviews with tattoo bearers suggest that people were more able to succinctly express themselves in English than in French, despite French being their L1. See Louisa’s interview in chapter 5.9.2.

Ahearn (2001) suggests that language can be seen as a vehicle that is co-constructed by social interactions. It could be argued that the social interactions vary between cultures and therefore certain elements of language would only have arisen from specific social interactions. For example, the words *saudade* in Portuguese, *amae* in Japanese, and *Schadenfreude* in German do not have English counterparts (Cortiz & Boggio, 2022). Cortiz and Boggio (2022) suggest that we do not feel different sensations, but that each language has its own tools to help us express those emotions. This is reflected in Frank et al.’s (2008) work on the Pirahã tribe, an Amazonian tribe that has no language relating to numbers, which suggests that this is evidence of the Whorfian claim: ‘that without number words, human beings represent only approximate quantities, and that only by learning number words can humans create the concept of *exact* quantity’ (p. 821). In this study, tattoo bearer 4 explains the reasoning for his choice of English due to a lack of an equivalent in French. This could suggest that French and English do not share an identical set of words and concepts and ‘tools’ to help the speakers express themselves.

The linguistic choices people make often reflect other elements of the person’s identity, for example, social class, gender, and ethnicity. Crenshaw (1991, 2015) coins the term *intersectionality* to refer to the layers of identity present in each act. Intersectionality identifies the relationship between power and identity regarding race, gender, and social class (Block & Corona, 2016), and therefore studies of identity should consider several or all of a person’s identity. For example, it is argued that gender influences all forms of communication (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2007), as tattoos and graffiti are types of communication, the gender of the writers could influence the style, form, or content of the inscriptions, in the same way that other layers of their identity could also influence their writing and style of communication. Bakhtin (1981) argues that no words are neutral: all words have the ‘taste’ of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a



generation, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life...' (p. 293).

Language can be seen as a means of transmitting culture and values, as well as having an influence on the identity of the speaker, writer, or tattoo bearer (Yakushkina & Olson, 2017). For Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2007), language, discourse, and society are entwined. Following this logic, script tattoos and graffiti containing words or letters, can be classified as visual representations of discourse as well as acts of identity. Therefore, both graffiti and tattoos are a visual representation of the linguistic identity of the writers and bearers. Furthermore, the choices they make about language are individual and are linked to their identity and position in the linguistic world.

But language is not just defined by cultural identity. Cultural identity is communicated within a territorial space which means that the semiotic properties of texts are often linked to their spatial location, interaction with other texts, and the social actors themselves (Gade, 2003; Scollon & Scollon, 2003). Gade (2003) writes that 'language is often considered the most important factor in defining' a cultural group, this is because 'language is not only seen, it is felt; and that is why its role in nationalism is so emotional' (p. 429). Using English instead of a local language 'says something different...it says that the speaker is connected to a wider world and its sources of power and value' (McDougall, 2012, p. 333). The writer Abdelfattah Kilito starts one of his plays with a story about how language and identity are linked: 'the act of speaking a different language can both threaten the speaker's self and relocate it in the third place of art and the imagination' (Kramersch, 2006, p. 98).

As stated earlier, linguistic choices can be considered a part of 'acts of identity' (Jaworski, 2014, p. 138). García-Arenal Rodríguez (2018) suggests that graffiti inscriptions should be considered as performative utterances of a person's identity. Identity, according to Bucholtz and Hall (2005), is 'the social positioning of the self and other' (p. 586). Kramersch (2006) sees language as code but also a 'meaning-making system' as it is used to form our past memories and our interpretation of self (p. 99). Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2007) write that 'style or discourse is not a façade behind which the *real* self stands but the means by which we present ourselves or ourselves-in-making to the world' (p. 248). According to Plesch (2002), 'the skin becomes a border zone between the inner self and the outer world' this allows an exchange between 'interiority and exteriority' (p. 188). Vail (1999) explains that the process of modifying one's body through being tattooed changes a person's identity. Armstrong et al. (2002) describes tattoos as a visual representation of an individual's own self-

perception of their identity and/or how they wish to be seen by others. This is supported by Kim and Sherman (2007) who explain that ‘the significance of self-expression depends on the concept of the self because the act of self-expression involves projecting one’s own thoughts and ideas into the word’ (p. 1). According to Kim and Sherman (2007), self-expressive acts can be defined as: ‘written and spoken words, choices actions, and artistic endeavors’ (p. 1); it could therefore be argued that script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions are also self-expressive acts.

### **2.7.2 Second Language Learning**

In order to express oneself in a second language, some knowledge of the language is required, or at the very least how to translate into that language. This study explores the use of English by L1 French speakers and why they write graffiti and have a script tattoo(s) in English. The answers were sometimes ‘because I speak the language’. This leads to a follow up question, as to why people learn a second language, and why people choose English. Görlach (2002) writes that:

*‘...language teaching is the major (but certainly not the only) source of language contact and most convincingly accounts for the number of Anglicisms, the form of their integration, and their prestige. It is therefore very important to establish the status of English as a school language.’ (p. 5)*

However, language learning is no longer restricted to the classroom, the rise of technology (including but not limited to the internet, social media, online gaming etc.) and globalisation has made it possible for language learning to occur any time, any place, anywhere, and in various forms. Online Informal Language Learning of English (OILE) can be defined as ‘incidental rather than targeted’ (Toffoli & Sockett, 2015, p. 7). Sundqvist (2019) writes that ‘formal learning’ takes place in institutions of education such as schools and universities: there is a clear objective and set of learning goals (p. 11). Livingstone (2006) defines ‘informal learning’ as activities that involve ‘the pursuit of understanding, knowledge, or skill that occurs without the presence of externally imposed curricular criteria’ (p. 206). P. Benson (2011) reiterates this definition explaining that informal language is ‘language learning beyond the classroom’, citing popular culture and the internet as sources of informal language learning (p. 9). This is reflected in the linguistic choices made by the graffiti writers and tattoo bearers who choose to write and ink themselves with phrases from popular culture or internet culture.

As for why people learn a second language, Kramersch (2006) gives the following reasons: to connect with the locals where they live, to facilitate international business,

to reconnect with their history, or read a book in its original language. Almost 40% of Europeans speak English as a second language (Nardelli, 2014). According to Eurostat (2019) in 2013 96.4% of pupils in upper secondary education in the EU learnt English and this rose to 98.3% in 2020 (98.4% and 99.4% in France). Graffiti writers may think that using English is a way to communicate to a wider population given that most people would have received some formal English education in school. In bilingual countries such as Canada, it is 'commercially advantageous for a Québec firm to assume an Anglophone face' for trading purposes with the English-speaking part of their country which borders the United States of America (Gade, 2003, p. 939).

Learning a second language changes an individual's identity, as language learning involves learning not only words and grammatical rules, but also learning about another culture (Denissova et al., 2019). Kramsch (2006) theorises that learning a language during puberty is one of the reasons why language and identity are linked. Krawiec (2006) finds that young Polish graffiti writers favour English for communicating amongst themselves so that outsiders do not understand. According to Kramsch (2006), young people discover the world and themselves through at least two or more languages during these formative years:

*'At an age when they are seeking to define their linguistic identity and position in the world, the language class is often the first time they are consciously and explicitly confronted with the relationship between their language, their thoughts and their bodies. While they are subjected to the tests and sanctions of the school, they experience language in new and deeply emotional ways.'* (p. 98)

The anonymous nature of graffiti means it is almost impossible to know the writers, their level of English, their motivation, and their reasons for choosing the phrases or words that they use. Therefore, it is difficult to classify the writers as language learners. A similar difficulty can be applied to tattoo bearers. I therefore use the term 'language user' to refer to people who use language with or without the intent to learn.

When choosing a language in speech and writing, people take charge of their own lifestyle, this can be referred to as an expression of agency, agency being 'a degree of control over one's behaviour' (Duranti, 2004, p. 454). Ahearn (2001) writes that agency is important to explore when studying language and linguistic forms. Ahearn (2001) proposes the definition for agency: 'agency refers to the socioculturally mediated capacity to act' (p. 112). Duranti (2004) suggests that all acts of speaking involve some agency. This thesis extends this understanding to include all acts of writing. Duranti (2004) explains that by speaking, and in this case writing, an interlocutor 'establish[es]

a reality that has at least the potential for affecting whoever happens to be listening to us [or reading the text], regardless of the originally intended audience' (p. 451). Duranti, (2004) divides agency into two levels: 'ego-affirming' and 'act-constituting' (p. 455). A basic description of ego-affirming is any time language is used, the speaker or writer is affirming their existence, whilst act-constituting refers to doing things through language (Duranti, 2004). It could be argued that the graffiti inscriptions are generally an example of ego-affirming, whereby the writer leaves their mark, whilst the tattoo bearer undergoes a (somewhat painful) procedure in order to carry an inscription with them on their skin, often as a message or a reminder to themselves. Both the act of graffitiing and being tattooed can be considered affirmations of agency (Plesch, 2002).

Tattooing allows the tattoo bearer agency over their body, or as seen in the history of tattooing, tattooing can also allow the tattooer/the authorities agency over the body such as the use of tattoos as a punishment. Peck and Stroud (2015) call the tattoo artist and the tattooed client 'co-architects of the corporeal landscape' to describe the joint agency involved in the tattooing process (p. 4). There could also be a further element of agency when the tattoo bearer does not feel capable of translating the phrase alone and asks for the help of a third or fourth person. Therefore, several people could be involved in the creation of a tattoo and the researcher may not have access to them all.

### **2.7.3 Learning English in France**

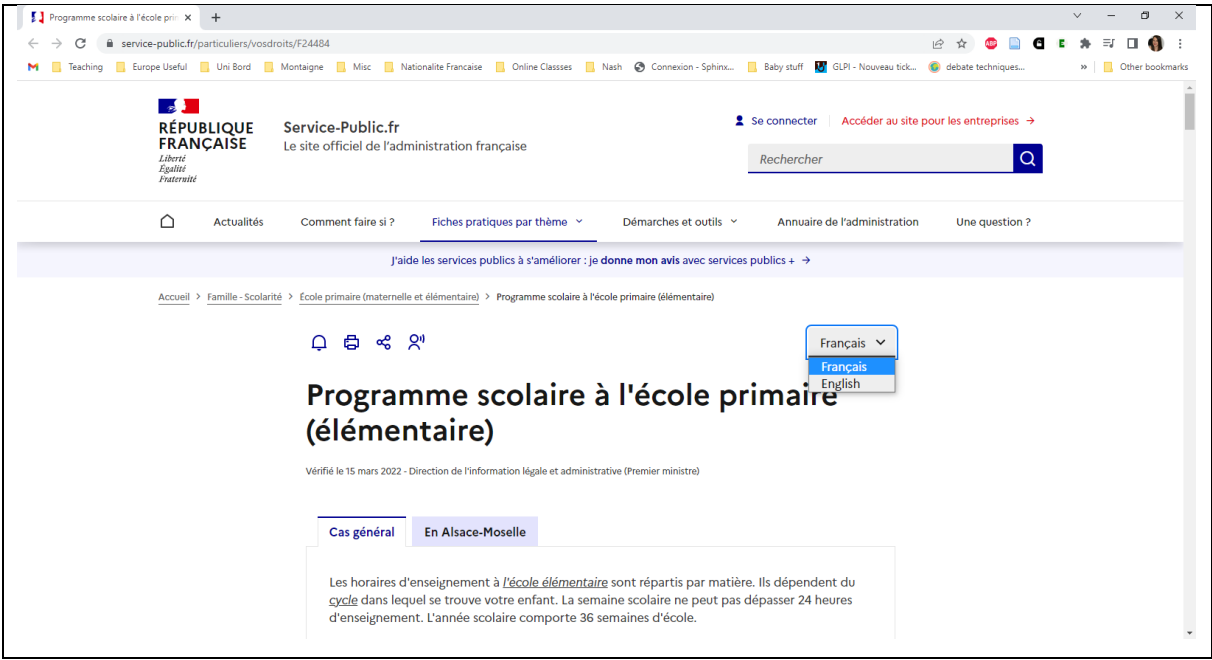
In French schools, languages, and in particular English, are becoming increasingly important (Deprez, 2003). In 2002, foreign language learning was introduced in French primary schools. Then, in 2007, this was supported by further reforms and schools were encouraged to provide 54 hours of language classes a year. In 2017, the addition of a second foreign language was brought forward by a year in French secondary schools (Manoïlov, 2019).

One of the reasons for the continuing upward trend of increased English classes is that English is classified as a 'dominant' European language (Hélot, 2003, p. 257), or according to Rao (2019) English is the 'prevalent dominant language in non-English speaking countries like France, Spain and Germany' (p. 72). Education reforms in 2015 allowed French schools to set 20% of the students' curriculum as well as introducing a stronger focus on language learning (Bird et al., 2019). This section focuses on language learning in France, based on information taken from both the French government's website as well as research on language learning in France.

Bird et al. (2019) find that in France, English is the ‘language of choice for most schoolchildren selecting their first new language to learn at school’ (p. 13). This enthusiasm to learn English is also shared by parents, Hélot (2003) states that ‘a great majority of [French] parents would choose bilingual education in English’ (p. 259). There are also more opportunities for learning English than other languages, one being that there are free summer schools proposed to practise language skills in some schools (French Government, 2019).

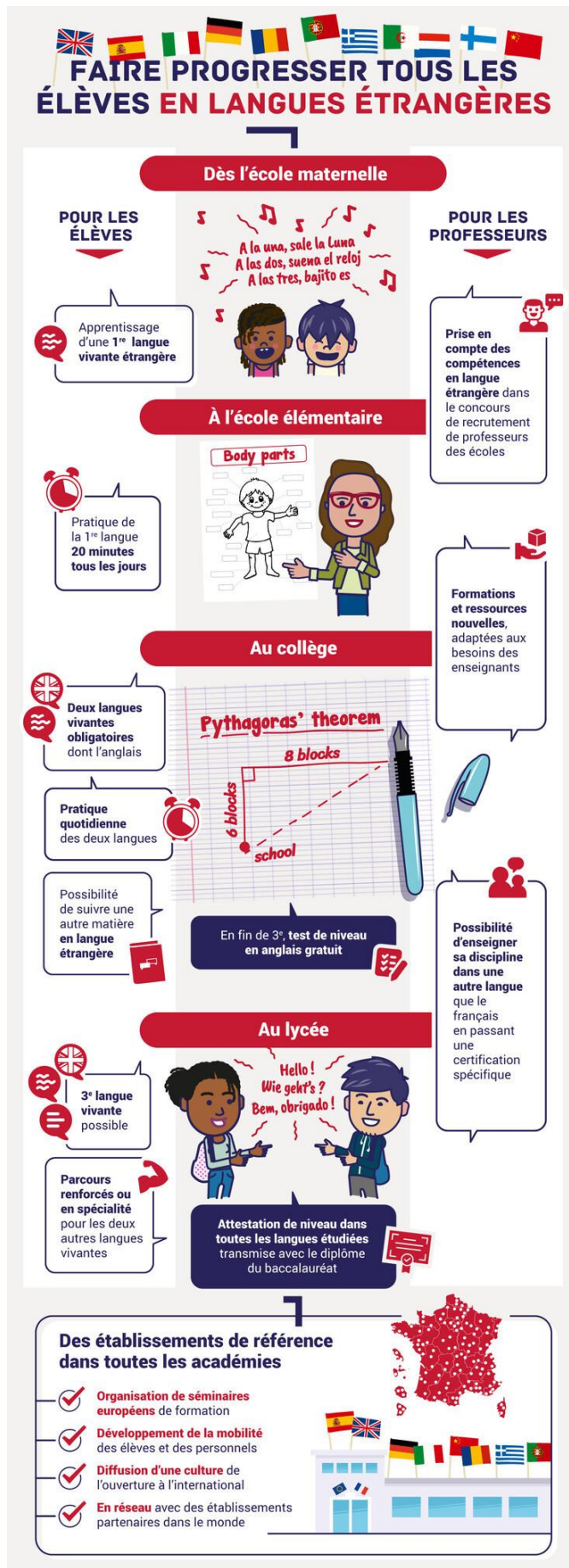
The fact that students in French schools have English throughout their schooling means that it becomes an integral part of their learning and their learning identity. This starts in nursery school and is reflected throughout their entire education. The importance of English is clear in other areas of French culture, for example, the French government’s website is only offered in French and English. It could be argued that the French government values English more than other languages and deems it more important to offer an English translation than other translations. See Figure 3.

Figure 3 Screenshot of French Government Website



Children in French schools are encouraged to learn a language when they start nursery school, *école maternelle*. Nursery school in France is from three to six years of age. It is not necessarily English, but as most people learn English as a second language in France, it is likely that most nursery school teachers have learnt English and therefore feel more comfortable teaching English than other languages.

Figure 4 Infographic on Language Learning in France



As presented in Figure 4, learning languages, and in particular English, is a key part of the French education system. As mentioned earlier, language learning, and especially English, is present throughout a child's educational journey. The importance of the English language can be interpreted through the following observations: the British flag is first in the line of flags at the top, and English is used as an example more than the other languages. English is featured 3 times, Spanish, German and Portuguese are featured once each.

In primary school, *école élémentaire*, foreign language teaching is increased to twenty minutes a day. Primary school is for students from 6 to 10 years of age. There is further evidence to suggest that English is a priority as the government created a vocal assistant in English to help the teachers (Eduscol, 2022a) - currently there are no vocal assistants for other languages. English is compulsory for 96% of students in primary school (French Government, 2022). Manoïlov (2019) reports that 90% of French primary school students follow English classes for approximately 1 hour 30 minutes a week.

Figure 5 Timetable for Secondary School Students<sup>20</sup>

	6 <sup>e</sup>	5 <sup>e</sup>	4 <sup>e</sup>	3 <sup>e</sup>
Français	4 h 30	4 h 30	4 h 30	4 h
Mathématiques	4 h 30	3 h 30	3 h 30	3 h 30
Histoire - géographie Enseignement moral et civique	3 h	3 h	3 h	3 h 30
Langue vivante 1	4 h	3 h	3 h	3 h
Langue vivante 2	-	2 h 30	2 h 30	2 h 30
Sciences de la vie et de la Terre		1 h 30	1 h 30	1 h 30
Sciences physiques	4 h	1 h 30	1 h 30	1 h 30
Technologie		1 h 30	1 h 30	1 h 30
Éducation physique et sportive	4 h	3 h	3 h	3 h
Arts plastiques	1 h	1 h	1 h	1 h
Éducation musicale	1 h	1 h	1 h	1 h

In secondary school, *collège*, English becomes obligatory for all students as well as a second foreign language or a regional language (Manoïlov, 2019).<sup>21</sup> Secondary school students are 11 to 14 years of age. Both English and a second foreign language are taught daily from *cinquième* (12-13 years of age), this is following the European Council's linguistic policy (Kucharczyk & Szymankiewicz, 2020). Figure 4 shows the number of hours taught by subject in French secondary schools. There is also the possibility for students to follow an additional school subject in a foreign language. English is obligatory for 99% of secondary school students in France (French Government, 2022). Throughout secondary school, English is taught as much as Physical Education. It is taught for more time than the Sciences individually, Music, and Art. English is taught less than the Sciences combined, Mathematics and French. The number of hours taught could be argued to represent the importance accorded to the subjects by the French educational system.

<sup>20</sup> Langue Vivante 1 refers to English

<sup>21</sup> In French this can be referred to as Langue Vivante Etrangère (Manoïlov, 2019).

Table 5 Timetable for 6th Form Students in France

	<i>Lycée Général et Technologique</i>	<i>Lycée Professionnel</i>
<i>Seconde (1st year of college)</i>	<i>5h30 divided between two foreign languages</i>	<i>Between 45-60 hours of classes for one or two foreign languages</i>
<i>Première (2nd year of college)</i>	<i>4h30 divided between two foreign languages Optional 2-5 hours in a third foreign language possible, this is called Littérature étrangère en langue étrangère (LELE)</i>	<i>Between 42-56 hours of classes for one or two foreign languages</i>
<i>Terminale (Final year of college)</i>	<i>4h divided between two foreign languages Optional extra 4h-6h in a foreign language possible 1h30 of LELE</i>	<i>Between 39-52 hours of classes for one or two foreign languages</i>

(Information from Eduscol, 2021, 2022b; French Government, 2015; Manoïlov, 2019)

In sixth form college, *lycée*, students, who are 15 to 17 years old, can take on a third foreign language and/or follow specific courses in the two initial foreign languages. There is the possibility for the subject to be taught in a foreign language in two of the three types of sixth form college. There appear to be fewer clear guidelines for the hours of obligatory language classes at French sixth form colleges, Table 5 presents the hours indicated on the French government's website (French Government, 2015). At the end of sixth form, the students are awarded a certificate based on their language level for all the foreign languages they have studied. Intensive programmes in English are also available for free for sixth form students during holidays. There are also virtual exchange programmes with British schools.

## 2.8 Similarities between Graffiti and Tattoos

In this section, similarities between graffitiing and tattooing will be presented. This section focuses on previous research that links the two means of self-expression: being characterised as a taboo, their use as a linguistic practice, and previous research of script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions in other languages. In chapter 6, the similarities specific to my data will be presented.

Tattoo artists and graffiti writers not only share ties to the social periphery but often belong to both groups: they can both be considered artists, and artists have been labelled as 'intrinsically different from those within the general population dating back to the perceived connection between creativity and pathology in ancient Greece' (Kosut, 2006, p. 75). C. W. Martin (2018) identifies both street art and tattooing as 'socially challenging art forms' (p. 13).

There is an oxymoronic quality to both graffiti and tattooing. A permanent tattoo in punishment brings more shame on the wearer, whereas a tattoo in homage to a person



or a religious belief is considered more significant and meaningful as it is permanent (Plesch, 2002). Christians used to be tattooed with religious symbols and the dates of their pilgrimage (A. T. Sinclair, 1908). Graffiti, depending on its placement, can be a permanent feature of a surface long after its writer has passed and on other surfaces it is cleaned or replaced the next day. Ben-Said (2011) cites the ephemeral nature of graffiti as one of the challenges of studying the linguistic landscape. The simple act of writing 'x was here' is both fleeting as the person passes through, and long lasting if the engraving is not removed (Plesch, 2002). Moran (2016) writes that graffiti and street art are both visible and invisible at the same time. The same applies to tattoos, they are visible once they have been created, but can be rendered invisible by clothing and other coverings. Hedegaard (2014) and Beyaert-Geslin (2019) also note the contradiction in graffiti writing whereby the writer wishes to be seen, albeit anonymously, but is aware that their work will probably not last for very long.

### **2.8.1 Taboos, Deviance and Marginalisation**

Both graffiti and tattoos are often associated with subculture, taboos, and marginalisation. Definitions of deviance, taboos and marginalisation reflect the social, historical, and cultural context in which they are found (Kosut, 2006). Both tattoos and graffiti have remained on the outskirts of society, unlike other art forms that turned mainstream, due to a long history of aversion by the public (Kosut, 2006; C. R. Sanders & Vail, 2008). Despite an increasing number of people getting tattooed, the practice is still considered marginalised by some (Fisher, 2002).

Most societies and cultures from Greco-Roman times to modern day have faced discussions about tattooing and its place in the community (Larsson, 2011). DeMello (1993) explored the opinion that in Western society, tattoos, and the people bearing them, continue to be associated with rebels and criminals. Studies have shown that despite tattooing being more recently considered as an art form, there is still an 'aura of marginality and deviance' surrounding the tattooed world (Adams, 2009, p. 288). One reason for the persistent negative connotations is that in the past, the human body was used as a canvas for displaying information, mostly negative, about the person. For example: the Romans used tattooing to permanently mark the skin of the criminals and slaves to control their movements (Fisher, 2002). In France, thieves were branded with a 'V' for 'voleur', English soldiers were branded with 'B.C.' for bad character and 'D' for deserter, as well as serial numbers being tattooed on the prisoners in the concentration camps during the Third Reich as a means to dehumanise them (Falk, 1995, p. 97; Oettermann, 1984). For over one hundred years tattoos have been 'a mark

of differentiation and affiliation for prisoners, gang members, carnies, and other socially and self-proclaimed deviants' (Kosut, 2006, p. 74).

Similarly to graffiti, tattoos have long been associated with marginalised groups who are involved with criminal activity (Armstrong et al., 2004; Kosut, 2006). A strong link between graffiti and criminal activity is often perceived in the mainstream world (Snyder, 2011). Tattoos can be used to mark and identify the members of gangs whilst graffiti is used to mark the gang's territory (Bazan et al., 2002; Riley, 2006). According to the Tattoo and Graffiti team within the Cryptanalysis and Racketeering Records Unit of the FBI, 'tattoos, symbols, and other images can reveal significant details about a crime, victim, or perpetrator' (Foundos & Hirschfield, 2019, p. 6).

Another reason for the negative reputation of tattoos is that they have been, and are still actively discouraged in some major religions. In the book of Leviticus 19 the following quote is used by some followers to argue that tattoos are not compatible with a Jewish or Christian lifestyle: 'You must not make any cuts in your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves' (Sanna, 2016). The Christian Church, led by Pope Hadrian I, officially banned tattoos in 787 C.E. (Brain, 1979; Ghosh, 2020). However, around that time in Christian Rome, new converts were being tattooed following the tradition of martyrs who wore religious symbols on their bodies as a sign of recognition and union (Müller, 2012). Similarly, in the Islamic faith there are passages in the Hadith-literature that theologians claim condemn tattooing (Larsson, 2011). Despite banning tattoos, Christians were also known to tattoo slaves and criminals (Plesch, 2002), which reinforces the negative associations which persist today.

Graffiti also continues to be viewed negatively, and is often seen as a nuisance: 'graffiti is a ubiquitous feature of the urban landscape commonly perceived to be a symptom of disorder, deprivation, and violence' (Walker & Schuurman, 2015, p. 608) and people with tattoos continue to be associated with dishonesty (Ruffle & Wilson, 2018). Local politicians in Harlem have compared graffiti to litter with repetitive rhetoric about 'cleaning up' the city (Frazier, 2011). It is often argued that graffiti is a type of vandalism:

*'Graffiti vandalism is a criminal act done without the building owner's permission, but urban forms of graffiti art, also known as street art or as seen in murals on sides of city buildings are legal. The property owner has granted those artists permission.'* ('When "Artists" Tag Your Building', 2018)

Ball (2019) explains that graffiti has been studied for a long time because it allows the researcher an insight into 'unabashed self-expression' (p. 1). Due to the anonymous

nature of graffiti, it gives the writer freedom to comment on topics that are normally considered taboo (Gonos et al., 1976). Research in the past suggested that ‘the nature of graffiti is unrestricted. It does not follow any set rule of expression. It is unrehearsed and honest, it is both candid and sincere’ (Tracy, 2005, p. 23). In a study on prison graffiti, García-Arenal Rodríguez (2018) writes that the messages ‘constituted a form of resistance and self-affirmation, of consolation, of expression, and above all a means to fight the depersonalization that these long periods of confinement entailed’ (p. 44). Foss (2004) explains that graffiti gives the public ‘access to a range of human experience not always available through the study of discourse’ (p. 143). The graffiti artist Banksy (2006) writes that:

*‘Despite what they say graffiti is not the lowest form of art... it’s actually one of the more honest art forms available. There is no elitism or hype, it exhibits on the best walls a town has to offer and nobody is put off by the price of admission.’ (p. 8)*

In addition to being a free and constantly changing art exhibition for passers-by, Christen (2003) explains that ‘graffiti writing satisfies a complex set of needs, functioning for most participants as a furious but relatively benign antidote to adolescent isolation, boredom, powerless, and anonymity-the same experiences that draw many urban kids to gangs’ (p. 61). Banksy (2006) sees graffiti as a way of improving society: ‘Some people become cops because they want to make the world a better place. Some people become vandals because they want to make the world a better *looking* place’ (p. 8). The same question could be posed to tattoo bearers: why modify the body through a painful procedure such as tattooing? One answer could be that the aesthetic appeal of the tattoo outweighs the pain, while other research has revealed that the physical pain can be pleasurable for some tattoo bearers (Goulding et al., 2004).

Other artists, such as Reskew, are more interested in becoming famous and explain that ‘the thrill of the illicit supercharges [their] quest for artistic glory’ (Flora, 2008, p. 13). Ferrell and Weide (2010) write that ‘each act of writing involves a deliberate decision weighing visibility, location and risk’ (p. 51). Andron (2018) describes illegal graffiti writing as ‘an adrenaline-fueled exploration energised by uncertainty and risk’ (p. 185). This risk varies between countries, a Ramallah poet explains that the severity of being caught writing in Palestine, for example, can be punishable by death (Parsberg, 2006). Peteet (1996) confirms that soldiers would often beat and occasionally shoot graffiti writers caught in the act during the period of conflict

in Palestine in the 80s and 90s. Whereas in Canada, Hampton et al. (2013) write that graffiti writers risk serious health complaints when creating graffiti, including death.

In some countries, freedom of expression is not tolerated and if someone publishes a text which goes against the government, they can face dire consequences. As graffiti is an uncensored method of communication with much more immediacy and depth than traceable art or publications (Madsen 2015), it is often used to criticise socio-economic or political events. After the fall of Saddam Hussein, Iraqi street artists began to create graffiti to celebrate their newfound freedom (Lukitz, 2004). During General Francisco Franco's regime in Spain, graffiti was used as a means to anonymously criticise the dictatorship and at the same time a tool of repression whereby Franco's supporters modified the anti-Franco inscriptions (Sempere, 1977, p. 52). Through the anonymity of graffiti, the marginalised can criticise the government or authorities without a direct link to them. However, graffiti is not always about pushing back against authorities, Snyder (2011) found that most graffiti in New York was apolitical.

Despite the associated risks, the willingness to leave one's mark is too strong for graffiti writers to resist. Plesch (2002) writes that 'the activity of the graffitist consists of a mark made on a material object in a durable way, it maintains the memory of those feelings' (p. 169) - this could be any number of emotions: boredom, love, humour or simply wishing to leave one's mark. The reasons given by Plesch for graffiti writing greatly resemble the reasons given by tattoo bearers (M. Atkinson, 2003; Csesznek & Stemate, 2019; L. F. Dickson et al., 2015; Forbes, 2001; Horne et al., 2007; Kirkland, 2009). The physical effects of a tattoo and graffiti writing are also similar. An adrenaline rush is associated with the pain of being tattooed and this can encourage some people to return for more tattoos (Johnson, 2007). McCarty (2019) explains that during the process of being tattooed the tattoo bearer is relieved of anhedonia. In Bunting's (2012) study, the graffiti writers interviewed explained that the adrenaline rush is the reason why some writers prefer illegal painting to using a legal area. Ferrel's (1995) study highlights the addictive nature of graffitiing, and the interviews with writers demonstrate this addiction to the rush that can be had from writing in an illegal area. This is supported by Hampton et al. (2013) who find that young writers often become addicted to graffitiing. Addiction can also be seen in the world of tattooing: the sensation of being

tattooed can be considered addictive and some people are unable to stop at one (Csesznek & Stemate, 2019; Stirn et al., 2011; Wohlrab et al., 2007).<sup>22</sup>

Graffitiing, and particular tagging, is also hard to stop after one. The more an area is tagged, the more people will tag it (Craw et al., 2006). MacGillivray and Curwen, (2007) describe a tag as a 'youth's signature' (p. 358). The tagger Acrid explains that 'graffiti attracts graffiti' (Macdonald, 2001, p. 204). Tagging is primarily seen as a means of communication for the graffiti writing community, it is a method of earning and 'maintaining respect' within the tagging community (Lannert, 2015, p. 58). This is echoed by the tagger Ego 'you're communicating with others. You'll find that you do a tag and someone else will tag next to it' (Macdonald, 2001, p. 204). The graffiti writers leave their tag as a way of letting others know they are in the area and part of the tagging community. For new authors, tagging 'lets everyone know that you've arrived' as explained by one of the taggers interviewed by Macdonald (2001, p. 76), whereas Lannert (2015) found that older or more experienced writers used tagging as a means to say 'I'm still here'. In this thesis, I use the term 'swarming' to describe the multiple tag and graffiti inscriptions found in the same area.

The term swarming is proposed as a neutral alternative to the 'Broken Window Theory', in which Wilson and Kelling (1982) argue that the more run down a building is, the more people will vandalise it. Vandalism occurs anywhere 'once communal barriers – the sense of mutual regard and the obligations of civility – are lowered by actions that seem to signal that 'no one cares' (Wilson & Kelling, 1982, p. 31). Mark Levine, Democratic district leader of Harlem in 2011, felt that the presence of graffiti creates a negative and unhealthy view of the area, and suggests that local residents do not care about their neighbourhood (Frazier, 2011). The words used to describe the quantity of graffiti found in different places are negative, for example: 'graffiti-riddled areas' (Frazier, 2011, p. 31). The broken window theory was corroborated by a more recent study led by Megler et al. (2014), they conclude that graffiti is both a form of communication but also a sign of social disorder. In some academic research the language used to describe graffiti can have negative connotations. Kallen (2010) describes the acts of graffitiing and stickering as 'parasitic' (p. 42), whilst Fischer (2003) describes graffiti as being a 'mundane' example of human activity (p. 164). Therefore,

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<sup>22</sup> This is supported by my own data in section 5.3: Demographic Information of the Participants where 16 out of the 602 participants have only one tattoo at the time of the survey.

the negative perceptions are not limited to the authorities tasked with removing the inscriptions.

Despite the connotations of both tattooing and graffitiing being linked to the criminal world, there are instances in which the opposite is true. Firstly, legal tattoo artists pay their bills and taxes, tattooing is a job, and the artists contribute financially to society. In the United States of America, researchers found that graffiti writing and crew membership provide a street-level alternative to gang membership and gang activity, including reports that suggest that the appeal of being part of a graffiti crew led some participants away from other gang activity (Ferrell, 1993).

### **2.8.2 Communities**

Another paradox common in both graffitiing and tattooing is that they are at the same time esoteric acts and also communal. Community can be considered as humans being together and belonging to a group. Each community consists of individual members who are all social individuals which are either 'actively participative, non-participative or indirectly participative' (Wenger, 1999, p. 152). Despite its anonymous nature, the underground culture of graffiti does have a community. The writers and street artists sometimes know each other forming groups of writers which are commonly called crews (Avramidis and Drakopoulou, 2012; Hedegaard, 2014), some crews have been known to travel to meet other crews and collaborate on bigger pieces (Ferrell, 1993; Macdonald, 2001). Christen (2003) writes that graffiti crews can also be 'educational organizations that promote valuable learning among their members' (p. 58). Tattooing is often performed by one person upon another, and once a person has a tattoo, they are part of the wider community of tattoo bearers.

One of the interesting elements of subculture is that the participants are considered as marginalised or 'others', and yet this distancing from 'regular' society leads them to form their own groups (Kosut, 2006). A group of graffiti writers or tattoo bearers can be considered an in-group in which the members share interests and a sense of solidarity. In a similar manner, people can choose to have a particular theme or style of tattoo belonging to a specific culture, or groups of friends can be tattooed with the same

image or word creating a 'bro tat'<sup>23</sup> community. Fisher (2002) describes this use of tattooing as a means of group identification, the groups could be as small as two people in a romantic relationship or as much as identifying with a whole country.

Witbooi (2020) writes that 'language choice and language mixing practices by a group of people [create what sociolinguists call] a "speech community"' (p. 21). The people in these groups communicate with one another and this shapes their language and linguistic choices. Gumperz (1964) developed the notion of 'verbal repertoire'. Verbal repertoire is the idea that language is linked to a 'particular speech community' (Busch, 2012, p. 504) in that it contains all of the accepted means of communication between the speakers within that given community (Gumperz, 1964). This can be seen in Krawiec's (2007) study, where she finds that the use of English in particular, is important for young Polish graffiti writers in order to create a 'special and discreet code which will be understandable only for the writers' (p. 61).

Tattoos can also be a way of distancing oneself from non-tattooed people by demonstrating uniqueness but can also be a way of creating links and sense of community with other tattoo bearers, such as in a gang context, or friendship, or family groups (Yakushkina & Olson, 2017), whereas historically, tattoos have been used negatively to distinguish between two groups of people, for example: prisoners and prison guards. In Newman's (1982) research, tattoos are compared to the marks that are used to identify livestock, comparing tattoos to animal markings is a way of dehumanising the bearers; Kosut (2006) points out this use of tattoos echoes the treatment of people in concentration camps, and explains some lingering negative association with tattoos for some people.

### **2.8.3 Linguistic Practices**

Another way in which graffiti and tattoos are linked is that they can both be an alternative canvas for literacy and writing (Kirkland, 2009). According to Baynham (1995), literacy can be understood as a form of social practice or agency. Gilhooly et al. (2019) consider tattooing as a 'legitimate form of literacy' and a literacy practice that needs further academic exploration (p. 146). Tattoos can be considered as a link between identity, the human body, and society, transforming the wearer's skin into a

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<sup>23</sup> Bro tat = brother tattoo, which is a term used by tattoo artists to refer to a tattoo that several friends or family members share and often get at the same time.

communicative body like pages in a book (Belkin and Sheptak, 2018). According to Fieni (2012), 'graffiti functions as a kind of alternative literacy that operates within a plane that connects with literacy in the narrow sense of the term, but remains independent from it' (p. 74). MacGillivray and Curwen (2007) also describe the practice of tagging as an act of literacy. Tattoos can also be described as a type of alternative literacy whereby the message is in written and/or pictorial form.

Bartholome and Snyder (2004) describe graffiti as a form of 'communication exempt from the social restrictions that prevent the unlimited display of sentiment' (p. 86). Foucault (1977b) wrote that the surface of 'the body is inscribed surface events' (p. 148), meaning that the body is "imprinted" by history' (Plesch 2002, p. 187). Ghosh (2020) describes tattoos as a "visual language" (p. 295), in which culture is inscribed on the skin of the owner', whereas Jones (2013) describes tattoos as a form of embodied literacy. In addition to both script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions being defined as alternative literacy and alternative linguistic practices, the spaces in which they are written can also be considered as 'alternative' spaces (Islam, 2011, p. 247), in this study: toilet cubicles, desktops, bins, human skin, chairs, walls, and so on. Graffiti and tattoos can both be free of grammatical signifiers as well as containing: vernacular, slang, obscenities, and rhetorical fragmentation which can be used to emphasise specific emotions, thoughts or ideas (Bleiker, 2000).

#### **2.8.4 Expression in L2 Languages**

C. W. Martin (2018) writes that humans 'try to control meaning, own it, and convey it by using our bodies, language, and clothing' (p. 31). Script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions are two of the means used by humans to convey said meaning. In the cases of some artistic fields, such as rap and hip hop, use of a 'foreign language can reveal unexpected meanings, alternative truths that broaden the scope of the sayable and the imaginable' (Kramersch, 2006, p. 102). Language can be used in order to align the speakers (or in this case writers) with some groups and separate themselves from others (Yakushkina & Olson, 2017). Humans define themselves and others through their social categories and groups, this includes their choice of language and expression. The inscriptions written and worn by the graffiti writers and tattoo bearers can be considered to have metacultural significance, this suggests that a cultural practice can potentially define the culture to which it belongs (Coupland, 2012).

In this case, the graffiti writers and tattoo bearers in this study identify with the English-speaking world through some of their linguistic acts, namely the script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions, rather than in their L1 which is French. Within the groups of



tattoo bearers and graffiti writers, language is not the first nor a defining factor of membership, it is just one of the 'layering events of participation' (Wenger, 1999, p. 151). Blommaert (2005) refers to this as 'layered simultaneity' of multiple identities (p. 125). Mora et al. (2016) write that using a second language, in literacy practices such as tattooing, is a way of expanding 'social narratives as membership in a global community' (p. 3).

There is a significant gap in the literature; there are very few studies analysing tattoos and graffiti in the writer's or bearer's second or third language. There have been some instances of English graffiti in countries where English is not an official language, Brown (1995) found popular culture references and unusual English phrases in Szeged, Hungary. Brown (1995) found graffiti containing 'dirty words, names of western pop groups and obscure English phrases' (p. 115). According to Bushnell (1990), in the 1980s, English language graffiti in Moscow became popular for expressing praise whilst Russian was the language of choice for blame.

One reason for this lack of research is that there is a level of prejudice against tattoo and graffiti culture and therefore the majority of information and research focuses on the link to criminality (Kosut, 2006). There is a need to study graffiti inscriptions as they can be considered:

*'a form of communication [that] is drawn from the fact that those writings are normally "free of the everyday social strains", i.e. there is no need for the writer to accommodate the speech according to the existing social and ethical rules, instead the graffiti writers have freedom both in the word of the text they create and in "telling the truth" without being afraid of its consequences' (Gasparyan, 2020, p. 41)*

It could be added that the graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos are also free of linguistic rules, as the inscriptions can be for the writer's or bearer's pleasure, they are not obliged to use a specific language for a target audience. It could also be noted that there are many studies that focus on the tattoos themselves and/or the relationship the tattoo bearers have with their tattoos rather than the linguistic elements being used.

Graffiti is often in the language of the country of its origin as it is designed to reach the maximum number of passers-by. However, there are writers that choose to write in a language that is not an official language of the country where the graffiti is created. Varga (2014) posits that this is a case of writers overestimating 'the linguistic abilities of their contemporaries, transmitting their own experience to the entire society' (p. 965), or the artists could be aiming their message at a select community and therefore they choose English for this reason. Peteet (1996) notes that the graffiti written in

English in Palestine was used to give a 'voice [to] those who felt voiceless in the international area' (p. 145). Toenjes (2015) also explains that graffiti was used tactically 'in the first intifada to create national linkages in the absence of national institutions such as state media or state education' (p. 56). As shown earlier, the use of graffiti helps people to have a voice, the use of graffiti in English can help that voice be heard (or read) all around the world.

As the origins of modern-day graffiti are associated with 1960s and 1970s New York and Philadelphia (Beyaert-Geslin, 2019; Bloch, 2016), many researchers have found that the English language has equally been associated with the art form (Krawiec, 2007), and hip-hop culture in particular which became more prominent in the 1980s (Alonso, 1998; Banes et al., 1985). Pennycook (2006) writes that English is spreading 'as part of the global culture of hip-hop' of which graffiti is considered one of the four key elements (p. 2). Krawiec's (2007) study listed around 45 words and phrases that were directly taken from the English language and used by Polish graffiti writers, for example: *top to bottom*, *master* and *king* (p. 58;61). Garley and Hockenmaier, (2012) list examples of anglicisms observed in an online community of German hip-hop fans including: *battle*, *rappers* and *flow* (p. 135).

In addition to English graffiti vocabulary being used in by Polish graffiti writers, Krawiec (2007) cited 20 phrases in English that are found in graffiti writings in Poland which are not graffiti focused; he calls them 'underground sayings' such as '*fuck the police*' and song quotations such as '*this life is like a vicious cycle called fightin to live*', these are examples of manifest intertextuality whereby a text is copied and used in a new context (p. 61). In Morva's (2017) study of the Gezi Park protests, 4 out of the 44 graffiti slogans were written in English by the Turkish protesters. Three of the English phrases were examples of constitutive intertextuality as they were adaptations of pre-existing phrases: '*Welcome to Fight Club Tayyip!*' '*Rebel so hard, Tayyip wanna gas me!*', '*I am chapulling*' and '*In Taksim we trust !*' (Morva 2016, p. 32). These phrases demonstrate the language ability of the graffiti writers who are able to modify existing phrases to suit their needs.

Similarly in tattoo culture, the majority of studies focus on the tattoos and the relationship the bearers have with their tattoos or tattooing as an art form from a historical point of view rather than the linguistic elements at play (Mun et al., 2012). C. W. Martin (2018) argues that all 'systems of symbols (language, gestures, material artifacts, clothing, music, etc.) are relevant for understanding insiders' wisdom' (p. 27), script tattoos are both examples of language and also a symbolic image on the skin.

In their study of tattoos on women with endometriosis and cancer, Koller and Bullo (2019) identify 60 tattoos, 32 of the tattoos contain a word, 29 were in English and three were in another language. The three non-English script tattoos were *always towards better things* in Latin [*semper ad Meliora*], *love* in Chinese, and *strength* in Japanese. Their study relied on Google searches so the identity and language ability of the tattoo bearers is unknown and they were not able to ask the tattoo bearers why they chose the languages they did, however, the searches were conducted in English therefore the presumption is that the tattoos belong to English speakers.

García-Arenal Rodríguez's (2018) essay on inscriptions found in prison cells in Spain following the Sicilian Inquisition explored graffiti in English, Hebrew, and Latin, she posits that the use of English, instead of Latin, was an example of the writer taking a stance about his religious beliefs. Mora et al. (2016) study graffiti inscriptions seen in Mexico, they expand their linguistic landscape to include cultural spaces '(spaces that were more mobile and more closely linked to personal trends and social narratives)' (p. 3).

Tattoos and graffiti are considered art forms in this thesis, but they can also be linked to and include other art forms and therefore can be considered an example of manifest intertextuality. One such phenomena is that of literary tattoos, also known as book tattoos, bookish tattoos, lit tat, or lit ink (Chassagnol, 2018). Literary tattoos can be either script and/or pictorial tattoos. In this case, literary script tattoos would be quotes from books, whereas pictorial tattoos are drawings of characters or symbols from books. An online blog began to observe this trend in 2007 and amassed a collection of photographs from literary tattoo bearers (Chassagnol, 2018). In 2010, the book 'The Word Made Flesh: Literary Tattoos from Bookworms Worldwide' united writers and tattoo bearers, as well as examples of their literary tattoos (Talmadge & Taylor, 2010). See section 5.6.1.2 for examples of literary tattoos that were inspired by English-speaking books.

In the context of this study, the community of tattoo bearers and graffiti artists could be defined as the multilingual speech community where English and French are chosen and used by the members for specific reasons (see sections 4.7 and 5.7.5 on hybridity for examples in the data). The use of and attitudes towards L1 and L2 languages – as one of the defining features of acts of identity (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985) – will be explored throughout the study.

## **2.9 Summary of the Literature Review**

This concludes the presentation of the existing literature pertinent to this current study. This chapter has shown that the research into graffiti and tattoos has evolved alongside the general public's view of graffiti: both art forms are no longer instantly associated with deviance, however, there is still work to be done, namely on the linguistic elements used in both graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos. The research that focuses on the linguistic properties of graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos has identified themes and phrases (Koller & Bullo 2019; Mora et al., 2016) and the grammatical modifications and alternative spellings used by L2 English speakers (AbuJaber et al., 2012; Gasparyan, 2020; Mora et al., 2016).

The review of the current literature has also uncovered some articles whereby the researcher has identified the English loan words present in graffiti inscriptions (Demska, 2019; Mora et al., 2016) and script tattoos in their country (Mora et al., 2016). This led to an exploration of how English loan words are adapted into a recipient language (Lazarev, 2017; Maniez, 2020).

The key terms in this study were also explored, in particular, hybridity, language flux, and linguistic landscape. These terms will be discussed further in the following chapter which presents the methods used in this study.



Image 5 Tattoo Bearer 518



### 3 Methods

### **3.1 Introduction**

Chapter 2 presented the previous research that has been carried out on graffiti and tattoos. It was revealed that much of the research focusing on these areas was concentrated on its artistic merit or its deviant nature. This chapter builds on the literature review by describing the methods, theories, and tools used to analyse the data. This is followed by the stages of data collection and harmonisation for both the graffiti inscriptions and the script tattoos as well as the difficulties encountered with the two datasets. The problems with the data, including reliability, generalisability, and researcher influence, will also be discussed in addition to the ethical guidelines followed.

#### **3.1.1 Review of Research Questions**

To answer the research questions (section 1.2: Research Questions), we had to first collect graffiti and tattoo data. The following methods of data collection were used to create a database of English language tattoos: online survey, face to face interviews, email correspondence, and posts on social media. The data was then compiled into two corpora which were used to answer the main research question:

What can we learn about L2 English use through graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos in France?

#### **3.1.2 Rationale for Methods Used**

This study is focused on language and society therefore it has a sociolinguistic focus. According to Spolsky (1998), sociolinguistics applies 'a plethora of methods to a multitude of subjects that all have in common one single thread: languages and their use in social contexts' (p. 4). The following sections will present the approaches and theories used. Increasingly, researchers are using more than one method, principle, and/or process (Bryman, 2006; Lal et al., 2015), this can be called an eclectic approach.

An eclectic approach was used in this study, encompassing both qualitative and quantitative research methods to analyse the data. According to Fløttum (2000),

eclecticism is ‘the practice of selecting what seems best or most fruitful from several sets of ideas, beliefs or theories’ (p. 16). It can be argued that an eclectic, or mixed methods approach (J. W. Creswell, 2003), ‘can increase the best features of the two methods and eliminate their weaknesses’ (Jamaleddin & Lashkarian, 2016, p. 55). Glaser & Strauss (2017) agree that ‘both [quantitative and qualitative] forms of data are necessary – not quantitative used to test qualitative, but both used as supplements, as mutual verification’ (p. 18). Bryman (2006) writes that a mixed method approach can be used to answer ‘different research questions’ (p. 106). In this study, the research question ‘what words are being written and used by these L2 speakers’ is answered by quantitative methods whilst the question ‘what can this show us about the relationship French speakers have with English’ is explored through qualitative methods.

The use of triangulation, or mixed methods, is commonplace in ethnographic research (Brewer 2003). Triangulation ‘refers to the traditional view that quantitative and qualitative research might be combined to triangulate findings in order that they may be mutually corroborated’ (Bryman, 2006, pp. 105–106). There are three types of triangulation: data, theory, and methodological triangulation (Cho & Lee, 2014), this study uses all three types of triangulation.

The decision to use both quantitative and qualitative methods is also due to the uncertainties and error of margin present in both qualitative and quantitative research. It is advisable to use both to account for the misgivings of the other. For example, in this study a qualitative approach is used to analyse the interviews and surveys of tattoo bearers. This follows a social constructivist approach to ‘understanding, through locally situated investigation, participants’ social construction of reality’ (K. Richards, 2003, p. 148), whereas quantitative methods are used to analyse the data in the corpora. Quantitative methods are in constant flux and are plagued by uncertainty:

‘If there is one certainty in quantitative methods, it is that uncertainty is always with us. Hidden behind the analytical curtains, hard-wired into data collection and interpretation, and fundamental to both methodological and conceptual development, uncertainty shapes every stage of the research process in quantitative human geography.’ (Franklin, 2022, p. 689)

In this study, qualitative research is defined as a closed study of selected occurrences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The selected occurrences were collected through surveys, interviews, and observation of graffiti inscriptions. The qualitative methods allowed for the tattoo bearers to be appreciated as individuals (McCarty, 2019) and for each graffiti inscription to be analysed on its own. Whereas in quantitative



research, the aim is to draw general conclusions about the population from a sample group (Osborne, 2008), examining how often and how many times certain behaviours occur (Jamaleddin & Lashkarian, 2016).

This study is also comparative and contrastive as it uses two distinct datasets that were compiled and analysed using both the same and differing methods in order to prevent the researcher from imposing their own perspective and reading on the data (Ben-Said, 2011). The data used in this study is organised in two corpora: graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos. The two corpora contain 1,237 and 825 inscriptions respectively. Despite their relatively small size, they are big enough to draw conclusions and comparisons about the language used in graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos. The combined graffiti inscription corpora (city, desktop, and graffiti together) have a total of 4,227 tokens and the script tattoo corpus has 3,409 tokens. The word token is used to describe 'the total number of words' and the word type refers to 'the number of different words' (Cunningham & Haley, 2020, p. 2).

This thesis was also influenced by the benefits that a local ethnographic study can bring to the local (micro) context of English language teaching at the University of Bordeaux as well as what it can bring to the global (macro) level of L2 English use.<sup>24</sup> This study had elements of an ethnographic beginning: as I started looking into graffiti inscriptions I found myself discussing English in my personal life and I began 'examining people in interaction in ordinary settings' (J. W. Creswell, 2007, p. 71), in particular why these French speakers preferred to use English. The instances that started the study, spotting an English graffiti inscription in a French public house and proofreading a tattoo for a French acquaintance, will be discussed further in section 4.2: Presentation of the Graffiti Corpora and in the interview with Sara in section 5.9.1.

The study of tattoos written in English was made possible through the creation and distribution of a survey online, the complete survey can be seen in the appendices. The initial method for creating the corpus, asking people in the public domain with tattoos for an interview and a photograph, had to be abandoned following the COVID-19 crisis and the resulting lockdowns. To avoid losing time I decided to use an online survey to reach tattoo bearers. The survey was posted in various groups on the social media platform Facebook. This meant that the graffiti inscriptions were from a

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<sup>24</sup> This is explored in the appendices: Implications for English Language Teaching

controlled geographical area, but the tattoos were no longer confined to the city of Bordeaux as the participants in the survey were no longer limited to people living in Bordeaux, rather L1 speakers of French. The creation of the survey will be discussed in more detail in sections 3.3: Data Collection and sections 3.5.1: Data Compilation.

In order to study graffiti inscriptions in English, I undertook an extensive fieldwork project taking photographs of all hybrid and English graffiti in the Bordeaux area between 2019 and 2022. The data collected was stored online and written out in spreadsheets. The digitalised format was then used as the corpora for analysis. The complete collection of photographs can be seen in the appendices.

The study of graffiti and tattoos is often associated with semiotics, for example, Scollon and Scollon (2003) describe graffiti as a form of ‘transgressive semiotics’ (p. 36). Semiotics is the ‘science of signs and their meaning-making potential’ (C. W. Martin, 2018, p. 35). Curtin (2007) defines semiotics as being concerned with ‘meaning; how *representation*, in the broad sense (language, images, objects) generates meanings or the processes by which we comprehend or attribute meaning’ (p. 51). This thesis veers away from a mainly semiotic study of the graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos focusing primarily on the semantic properties and meanings in the inscriptions. However, there is a geosemiotic element to the study as the location of the graffiti provides context to the inscriptions. Geosemiotics considers the spatial and geographical context of the visual semiosis (Andron, 2018). According to Scollon and Scollon (2003), in geosemiotics ‘the word “sign” means any material object that indicates or refers to something other than itself’ (p. 3). The geosemiotic analysis of the data in this study begins with the fact that the inscriptions are in English, written in France and that they represent more than their ostensive message.

### **3.1.3 Introduction to the Research Site: Bordeaux**

As of the 2016 census, Bordeaux is the sixth biggest city in France and the capital of both its department: Gironde, and region: Nouvelle Aquitaine. It boasts a population of 256,045 inhabitants (Bordeaux en chiffres, 2017). According to INSEE (Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques), this figure increased to 260,958 in 2019 (2022). Greater Bordeaux is divided into 28 municipalities, and is home to 796,273 inhabitants (Bordeaux en chiffres, 2017).





The town of Bordeaux has two universities, two IUT (Instituts Universitaires de Technologie), and over 40 Higher Education establishments (Bordeaux en chiffres, 2017). The fact that Bordeaux has an extensive range of Higher Education facilities

has an effect on the composition of its population, and according to INSEE, the biggest age group in Bordeaux has consistently been 15- to 29-year-olds since 2008 (INSEE, 2022).

Table 6 Population of Bordeaux Residents by Age Group

	2008	%	2013	%	2019	%
<b>Age Range</b>	235 891	100.0	243 626	100.0	260 958	100.0
<b>0-14</b>	31 812	13.5	32 915	13.5	36 750	14.1
<b>15-29</b>	73 162	31.0	76 026	31.2	78 636	30.1
<b>30-44</b>	49 088	20.8	50 216	20.6	55 740	21.4
<b>45-60</b>	39 217	16.6	39 011	16.0	41 281	15.8
<b>60-74</b>	23 417	9.9	26 283	10.8	29 959	11.5
<b>75 or more</b>	19 194	8.1	19 176	7.9	18 590	7.1

Table 6 shows the age groups of the inhabitants of Bordeaux. It is in keeping with the presence of the Higher Education establishments. In 2013, the policy: Fioraso Law,<sup>25</sup> allowed for English to be used in Higher Education establishments. The use of English in the French education system is explored in more detail in section 2.7.3 of the literature review.

<i>Photographs and Map of Bordeaux</i>	
<p><i>Image 6 Photograph of Bordeaux Place de la Bourse</i></p> 	<p><i>Image 7 Photograph of Bordeaux Pont de Pierre</i></p> 
<p><i>Image 8 Photograph of Bordeaux Place de la Victoire</i></p> 	<p><i>Figure 6 Map of Bordeaux Districts</i></p>  <p>(Bordeaux Communes, n.d.)</p>
<p><i>Clockwise from top-left: Place de La Bourse, Pont de Pierre, a map of the municipalities of Bordeaux and Place de la Victoire.</i><sup>26</sup></p>	

<sup>25</sup> LOI n° 2013-660 du 22 juillet 2013 championed by the French socialist Minister for Higher Education and Research at that time, Geneviève Fioraso: “Les enseignements en langue étrangère seront autorisés lorsqu’ils sont dispensés dans le cadre d’un accord avec une institution étrangère ou internationale. La loi prévoit la mise en place d’un agenda stratégique de la recherche.”

<sup>26</sup> Photographs taken by Alexis Loumeau

In addition to the basic demographic information given above, a short description of Bordeaux will help to understand the city and in particular its historical context. Bordeaux is often called La Port de La Lune [*Moon Harbour*] which refers to the city's shape as it hugs the river Garonne (UNESCO, 2023). In the past, it was an important port for France and brought a lot of money into both the city and country; evidence of this wealth can still be seen today in the city's architecture (Rodriguez, 2022).

Both Bordeaux and the region of Aquitaine were closely linked to the United Kingdom in the past and immigration between the two countries has continued ever since. It is difficult to accurately estimate the number of British and EU citizens currently living in France as EU citizens are not required to declare that they reside in the country. Following Brexit, many British citizens who are permanent residents in France applied for French nationality in order to protect their right to stay in the country and avoid using a visa (M. Benson, 2020; Godin & Sigona, 2022). This further hides the true number of Britons living on French soil. A report by Tchiveindhais (2017) for INSEE, suggests in 2014 there were approximately 39,000 Britons living in Aquitaine alone. Their presence affects the combined graffiti corpora as through its anonymous nature we cannot be sure that they were written by L1 French speakers and not the immigrants who share the city.

### **3.2 Approaches and Theories**

This section will introduce the methods, approaches, and theories used in this study. A brief description of each theory will be given as well as an explanation of their relevance to the current study. Glaser and Strauss (2017) write that theory is:

*'...a strategy for handling data in research, providing modes of conceptualization for describing and explaining [...] Theory that can meet these requirements must fit the situation being researched, and work when put into use. By "fit" we mean that the categories must be readily (not forcibly) applicable to and indicated by the data under study; by "work" we mean that they must be meaningfully relevant to and be able to explain the behaviour under study.'* (p. 3)

Thomas and James (2006) highlight the problems when defining the word 'theory', they write that 'theory' can refer to 'systems of evolving explanation, personal reflection, orienting principle, epistemological presupposition, developed argument, craft knowledge, and more' (p. 6). The theories in this study follow the above guidelines and are data focused.

### 3.2.1 Linguistic Landscape

As this study is concerned with occurrences of written language in public places, including (semi-) permanent graffiti inscriptions and nomadic script tattoos, I am using linguistic landscape as one of the main tools. Linguistic landscape, according to Andron (2018), is a 'tool used for approaching text-in-cities rather than cities-as-text and was designed to capture this layered textual complexity and offer methods for its elucidation' (p. 74). In simple terms, 'an overview of the languages that are spoken [or written] is then referred to as the linguistic landscapes' (Gorter, 2006b, p. 1).

As shown in the literature review, the definition of the linguistic landscape varies from researcher to researcher, see section 2.5.3. In this thesis, I choose to focus on the occurrences of written graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos that may or may not be visible in the public domain. Landry and Bourhis' (1997) study introduces the concept of linguistic landscape, referring to visible and salient language in public and commercial signs within a given area. Although they did not originally include non-commercialised language in their vision of linguistic landscape, the tools used to analyse commercial signs and language can be applied to other areas of language such as graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos, as will be demonstrated in this study. Linguistic landscape has been used to study graffiti in previous studies (cf. Andron, 2016, 2018; Backhaus, 2006; Ben-Rafael et al., 2006; Gorter, 2006b; Ouaras, 2018; Witbooi, 2020) and has also been used to study tattoos (cf. Mora et al., 2016; Peck & Stroud, 2015; Roux et al., 2018).

The words used to describe the objects of analysis also vary, Barni and Bagna (2010) use the term 'linguistic landscape item' (p. 9). In my study of the linguistic landscape, for the graffiti to be counted in my corpus it must have at least one recognisable word in English and have been written in the 'field', which in this case is the metropolis of Bordeaux. The presence of a distinguishable word rather than a tag that is only legible to graffiti writers is my reasoning for using the word 'inscription' to describe the graffiti data. This corpus therefore excludes all illegible tags and all street art without a legible word in English. I have also chosen to use the term 'script tattoo' to refer to tattoos that contain language, or as the tattoo artists say 'script', initials and proper nouns were not counted in the data. Similarly, for the script tattoos to be included in the corpus they also needed to contain at least one legible word in English. There was no geographical limit placed on the tattoo bearers who answered the survey, rather the participants were required to be L1 French speakers and have an English script tattoo.

As presented in the literature review, this study considers graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos as being part of the linguistic landscape. The eclectic nature of linguistic landscape research is well suited to this study, as both draw on methods from applied linguistics and sociolinguistics (Gorter, 2013). Gorter (2013) suggests that the study of linguistic landscapes increases our knowledge and understanding of societal multilingualism by concentrating on language choices, language hierarchy, and aspects of literacy. Peck and Stroud (2015) use the framework of linguistic landscaping by considering the body 'as a corporeal linguistic landscape, or skinscape' to study tattoos (p. 3). If tattoos on the body expand the linguistic landscape to the skin, it could be argued that the presence of graffiti where there was no text previously also transforms that space into a 'communicative arena' and therefore an extra area of study (Peteeet, 1996, p. 149). Therefore, it is an appropriate method for this study which combines both graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos.

Linguistic landscape has been described as a 'methodology for addressing macro-sociolinguistic questions about language vitality in multilingual settings' (Leeman & Modan, 2009, p. 334). When more than one language is spoken or written this is called multilingualism (Gorter, 2006b, p. 1). Landry and Bourhis (1997) write that 'the linguistic landscape may be the most visible marker of the linguistic vitality of the various ethnolinguistic groups living within a particular administrative or territorial enclave' (p. 34). Barni and Bagna (2010) suggest that visibility is not the only factor in a language's vitality, they reference language policy, speaker attitudes, and immigration levels. In this study, the multilingual setting refers to the skin of L1 French speakers and the metropolis of Bordeaux. Whilst the term language vitality is an umbrella term which refers to the maintenance, endangerment, and loss of languages (Mufwene & Vigouroux, 2008), in this study, the increasing presence and vitality of English is the focus, rather than a decrease and decline of French. Leeman and Modan (2009) note that there is a lack of research that analyses the 'potential connections between what a sign says and what language it's written in' (p. 335). As this study focuses principally on the use of English by L1 French speakers it intends to fill this gap in the literature on multilingual linguistic landscape studies.

According to Kallen (2010), linguistic landscape as a tool is useful when studying complex social issues surrounding community, society, and globalisation. In this study, there is evidence to suggest that there are graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos that refer to society and its issues, as well as the notion of community. The presence of

English and hybrid graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos is arguable proof of globalisation.

Gorter (2006b) suggests that linguistic landscape is also a means to explain 'the power relations between dominant and subordinate groups' (p. 4). Skulte and Kozlovs (2020) describe graffiti as being part of the:

*'...battle for the aestheticization of the public space [and] the answer provided by the rebellious sons to the "fathers of the city" who possess money and power with which to design urban public space using architectural means. The generation of sons, who are excluded from this real estate discourse due to a lack of means, put into play the only thing they own, i.e. their body, which they subject to the danger of imprisonment, because graffiti is an illegal activity which in legal terms is interpreted as vandalism, a view that also prevails within the mass media.'* (p. 73)

As demonstrated in the quote above, the use of graffiti allows for the inhabitants to become 'participant[s] in the city' [*'habitant est aujourd'hui participant à la ville*] (Beyaert-Geslin, 2019, p. 122). However, it could be argued that the groups that use graffiti as a means of communication are not subordinate. In the same line of thought, having a tattoo was originally non-conformist. Nonetheless, neither group could be described as being a 'power' and therefore the analysis of the relationship between their texts and the government or authority 'power' is possible with the linguistic landscape tool. Avramidis and Drakopoulou explain that despite many graffiti writers starting as adolescents, drawn by the thrill of writing, they often become politically engaged and notice the power dynamics in public space; they use graffiti to articulate their concerns about their perceived lack of influence and power (2012).

Linguistic landscape studies are often associated with a quantitative approach: the researchers document every occurrence of language and use statistics to compare the percentages of texts in the target languages (Leeman & Modan, 2009). Indeed, one criticism of linguistic landscape research is that it fails to explore the content of the messages in each language (Leeman & Modan, 2009). This study, following this criticism, includes a brief quantitative analysis of the two datasets separately followed by a more in-depth qualitative analysis of themes and individual inscriptions.

I have chosen not to follow Landry and Bourhis' original model of the linguistic landscape framework asking Francophones about their language identity as the relationship to graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos is not as neutral as the linguistic landscape elements proposed in the original study. This has been replaced by the corpus-based analysis of the texts and the interviews with the tattoo bearers, tattoo artists, and graffiti writers.

One limitation in linguistic landscape research is ‘achieving a comprehensive representativity’ of the linguistic units ‘within a given environment’ (Ben-Said, 2011, p. 64). This study follows the examples of Gorter (2013) using linguistic landscape methods that focus on one geographic area: the city of Bordeaux. Whilst the script tattoo data will be collected based on ethnographical teachings where a wider variety of responses are more favourable and therefore there was no geographical limit, just that the tattoo bearers were L1 French speakers (Murchison, 2010).

There is not only the question of a geographical limit when studying the linguistic landscape, but also the historical time frames that will be considered. The first time frame is that of data collection: the data collection of the graffiti inscriptions spanned four years from 2018 to 2021, the script tattoo data was collected between 2020 and 2023. However, the second time frame refers to the historical context of the geographical area being analysed, in this case Bordeaux (see section 3.1.3). Gorter (2006b) writes that ‘the meaning of linguistic landscape is extended to include a description of the history of languages or different degrees in the knowledge of languages’ (p. 1). Low (1993) highlights the importance of considering the history of a place:

*‘Explaining built form in its relation to culture provides us with clues to meaning encoded in historically generate spatial forms. The built environment not only reflects sociocultural concerns but also shapes behaviour and social action; thus, embedded in these designs forms is a living history of cultural meanings and intentions.’ (p. 75)*

In this study the built environment would be the city of Bordeaux and France in general, the social action would refer to the graffiti inscriptions as well as the script tattoos, and the cultural meanings and intentions would be the reasons for the inscriptions in English.

Research using the linguistic landscape framework often compares and contrasts the use of translations next to one another (c.f. Coupland, 2012; Leeman & Modan, 2009). For example, these studies focus on language in shop signs where the text is repeated in one or more languages. There are no examples of a phrase present in both English and French in this study in neither the graffiti inscriptions nor the script tattoos. This study focuses on the monolingual and hybrid phrases that do not offer a translation and the indexicality of these inscriptions.

According to Scollon and Scollon (2003), ‘...indexicality is the property of the context-dependency of signs, especially language; hence the study of those aspects



of meaning which depend on the place of the sign in the material world' (p. 3), therefore the context of the inscriptions must be taken into consideration during this analysis. This could be, for example, background information about the tattoo bearer or the placement of the graffiti inscription. Kallen (2010) writes that 'studies of the linguistic landscape generally start from the assumption that signage is indexical of more than just the ostensive message of the sign' (p. 41). According to Noy (2009), 'the term "indexical" concerns representational relationship[s] that convey some inherent continuity - physical or other - between what is said (sign) and what it stands for or represents' (p. 422). In this study, the assumption would be that the graffiti inscription or script tattoo is indexical of more than the ostensive message that is seen. The surveys, interviews, and socio-historical background of Bordeaux and France, aid in explaining the context of the script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions.

Previous studies using the linguistic landscape framework have often drawn a distinction between 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' signage, 'top-down' refers to official signage and 'bottom-up' is used for private language (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006, p. 10; Kallen, 2010, p. 42). In this study, I consider graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos to both be examples of private language and therefore bottom-up inscriptions rather than public/government signs. This study differs from other research in that it does not compare top-down and bottom-up signs/inscriptions, rather it compares two sets of private language: graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos.

In order to analyse the inscriptions in the linguistic landscape, Scollon and Scollon (2003) propose four questions that could be asked of a speaker or an inscription:

*'We need to ask of the stop sign the same four questions we would ask of a person: Who has 'uttered' this (that is, is it legitimate stop sign of the municipal authority)? Who is the viewer (it means one thing for a pedestrian and another for the driver of a car)? What is the social situation (is the sign 'in place' or being installed or worked on)? Is that part of the material world relevant to such a sign (for example, is it a corner of the intersection of roads)?' (p. 3)*

Two of these questions can be used to support this study, particularly in the qualitative analysis of the individual occurrences or shared themes. Namely, who the writers and tattoo bearers are, what can be learnt about them from their inscriptions, and who the message is aimed at. The message could be for the tattoo bearer themselves, for people associated with the placement of the graffiti or for all passers-by. Similar questions were asked by Said (1983): 'Who writes? For whom is the writing being done? In what circumstances?' (p. 7). These questions will be explored in chapters 4 and 5 through the qualitative analysis of the inscriptions.

### 3.2.2 Ethnographical Elements

Defining ethnology has become somewhat difficult in recent years (Hammersley, 2018). According to Hobbs (2006), ethnology is 'a research method in the practice of both sociologists and anthropologists, and which should be regarded as the product of methodologies that share the assumption that personal engagement with the subject is key to understanding a particular culture or social setting' (p. 100). Hammersley (2018) identifies seven key features for defining ethnography: (1) the data collection process generally takes place in naturally occurring settings, (2) over a long period of time, (3) the research includes a range of data types, and (4) relying on participant observation and/or personal engagement. Feature (5): the ethnographer aims to document what is actually taking place, (6) whilst emphasising the significance of the meanings people have given to objects (in this study script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions), and finally, (7) having a holistic focus.

Hammersley (2018) accepts that the seven features may raise more questions than they answer. In relation to this study, the seven features can be applied as follows: (1) the data collection process took place in the streets or via an online survey and therefore researcher influence was minimised and the setting was as natural as possible. (2) The graffiti inscription data was collected for a total of three and a half years (June 2018 – December 2021). The script tattoo survey was open for two to four months at a time and the interviews took place over a three-year period (June 2020 – March 2023). Features (3) and (4) in this study are the photographic data of graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos, surveys filled out by tattoo bearers, and interviews with graffiti writers, tattoo bearers and tattoo artists. (5) the use of the photographs is testimony of the validity of the graffiti inscription and script tattoo data: they are real inscriptions written by or on real people. Features (6) and (7) are the surveys and interviews which allowed for the participants to express themselves and give meaning to their respective artwork and for the researcher to take into account the background of the participants, not just the inscription(s).

Brewer (2003) argues that the term ethnography is used incorrectly as a synonym for both participant observation and qualitative research. Jamaledin and Lashkarian (2016) also write that ethnography has been used interchangeably with the term qualitative research as 'it aims to describe beliefs and cultures, in other words it has a tendency to interpret the processes and products of cultural behavior, kinship patterns and ways of living' (p. 54). According to P. Atkinson (2014), the meaning of ethnography is narrower than qualitative research, he writes that ethnographic

research methods are not restricted and bound to any particular theoretical perspectives, therefore this is an eclectic approach influenced by ethnography.

Hobbs (2006) writes that participant observation is a key part of ethnography, but that interviews and photographs are the tools that are the most used. However, in this study, the use of participant observation has been limited to two encounters with graffiti writers whilst they were tagging and/or writing on walls. I could have asked to observe someone being tattooed, but since the COVID-19 lockdown and following restrictions, I felt it was better to let the tattoo artists work in peace and interview them outside of their working hours. Instead, I would argue that the observation process was focused on participant production: the graffiti inscriptions found in the city, on desktops, and toilets, as well as the script tattoos on people's skin. The inscriptions were observed, the writers and bearers were not.

As this study concentrates on the linguistic landscape, the main focus is on language use in public spaces. This work can therefore be classified as linguistic ethnography (Bucholtz & Hall, 2010). Hobbs (2006) writes that the ethnographer researches 'the culture of places and spaces' (p. 101), in this study, the culture of the city, desktops, toilets, and the body. The study of these spaces and places requires the ethnographer to spend time in the field. Brewer (2003) suggests that ethnography should be understood as "field research" or "fieldwork" (p. 99), whereas Hobbs (2006) argues that ethnography is 'the product of various forms of fieldwork' (p. 101).

One of the reasons that ethnography as a research strategy is appropriate for this research is that it 'aims to study life outside of a controlled environment' (Murchison, 2010, p. 4). Jamaledin and Lashkarian (2016) explain that in ethnography 'the researchers intend to study real people in real settings' (p. 55). In this case, the skin of the tattoo bearers, and the walls of the graffiti writers create the real, uncontrolled environments to be studied. Brewer (2003) argues that 'ethnography focuses on those naturally occurring non-experimental situations that characterise the methodological position of naturalism' he adds that 'ethnography is predisposed to naturalism: it concentrates on topics that lend themselves readily to the study of people's views, beliefs and meanings' (p. 100). It might be argued that it is a bit far-fetched to describe tattoos and graffiti as 'naturally occurring' but as they are not created for the purposes of research they can be considered 'naturally produced/worn' by the writers/bearers.

This study focuses on language and communication through the medium of graffiti and tattoos. Ethnography of communication is where language is studied 'in relation to

the entire range of extralinguistic variables which identify the social basis of communication, the emphasis being on the description of linguistic interaction' (Crystal, 2008, p. 174). According to Murchison (2010), ethnographers collect data and learn through '*firsthand* involvement with research subjects or informants' (p. 4). In this study, the ethnographer is understood as participating:

*'...overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research.'* (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 1)

The four ethnographic tools used in this study were primarily a survey of 602 tattoo bearers, approximately 120 email exchanges, 11 semi-guided interviews, and a collection of photographs obtained through fieldwork. The script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions were extracted from the survey answers and the photographs to create two corpora which were analysed using tools from corpus linguistics, see section 3.2.3.3. The remaining answers from the surveys were analysed both by tattoo bearer and by survey question. These surveys allowed for the collection of 'experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals' from the tattooed participants (J. W. Creswell, 2007, p. 54). The participants gave their opinions through both oral and written exchanges which were then kept in a written format for analysis. This study differs from a phenomenologist approach whereby the researcher determines the common element to participants as they experience a phenomenon (J. W. Creswell, 2007).

An ethnographic approach also implies studying a community that predates the research, in this case: tattoo bearers (J. W. Creswell, 2007), and graffiti writers. The tattoo bearers all had tattoos and were members of the online groups before being contacted for research purposes. The graffiti writers also formed a community of inhabitants of Bordeaux who partake in graffitiing. The role of the ethnographer in this instance is to explore the key issues present within the focus community: French L1 tattoo bearers and graffiti writers.

This research is however not fully ethnographic due to the lack of time spent by the researcher amongst the graffiti writers and tattoo artists/bearers (P. Atkinson, 2014). P. Atkinson (2014)'s description of ethnographic fieldwork, where the ethnographer lives with their participants, follows the work of Lévi-Strauss (1955), and in particular, *Tristes Tropiques*. Therefore, I do not claim to be following a purely

ethnographic process but rather I am borrowing elements from ethnography to support my research into the linguistic landscape.

### **3.2.3 Supporting Approaches**

As mentioned above, the main theory used in this study is linguistic landscape. However, this study draws on and borrows elements from other research methods. The theories that have influenced and lent tools and techniques are presented in the following subsections.

#### **3.2.3.1 Grounded Theory**

One of the aims of this study was to be data focused. The literature review concentrated on the artistic areas of graffitiing and tattooing, as well as the linguistic identity of language learners and users in general. This is in part due to the lack of literature on graffitiing and tattooing in a second or third language, but also so that this study was in line with the teachings of Grounded Theory (GT) which inspired me to focus on the data first and foremost. GT was first formulated by Glaser and Strauss in 1967, the method is exploratory in its approach and it requires the research to be unrestricted by pre-existing theoretical knowledge whilst gathering data about a specific topic (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Early grounded theorists were even encouraged to avoid conducting the literature reviews before the data collection stage (Hoddy, 2019). Glaser and Strauss (2017) describe the process as 'a discovery of theory from the data-systematically obtained and analyzed in social research' (p. 1).

According to Lal et al. (2015), GT is viewed as a methodology that aids researchers in understanding psychological and social processes. GT focuses more on what is being said or written, rather than how it is being said or written and any influences on how it was said or written (Lal et al., 2015). In this study a modified GT approach has been used, the data was not used to prove or disprove a hypothesis, the goal instead was to use inductive reasoning to analyse the data quantitatively and qualitatively and draw conclusions from the emerging information (J. W. Creswell & D. Creswell, 2018).

Hoddy (2019) describes GT as one of the most prominent methods for research. The data collected from fieldwork is identified and linked 'to generate a theory that is *grounded* in the data' (p. 114). A criticism for this theory is that by not using pre-existing theory it does not give research the possibility for more depth when analysing the underlying social structures and mechanisms at play (Ali et al., 2019; Hoddy, 2019).

GT also focuses on the use of coding procedures and fragmenting to find patterns in the data (Lal et al., 2015). The coding and fragmenting techniques used in this study

are presented in the next section as they encompass both GT and thematic analysis techniques. There are two schools of GT, Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) and Objectivist Grounded Theory (OGT). CGT in particular, outlines a methodical, and at the same time flexible model for data collection and analysis: '1) initial and focused coding of data; 2) memo-ing;<sup>27</sup> and 3) abduction' (Charmaz, 2006; Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012). In this study, the data was coded in an excel spreadsheet, the notes and memos were written into a word document, and the abductions came from referring to both the data and the initial memos. CGT focuses on the importance of 'multiple perspectives of participants and the researcher; the influence of social structures and processes at micro and macro levels during analyses; and the reflexive role of the researcher throughout the research process' (Lal et al., 2015, p. 8). Unlike CGT researchers, OGT theorists maintain a distance from the research. This study draws from both schools, maintaining a distance from the research whilst prioritising the exploration of multiple perspectives.

In keeping with the eclectic approach in this study, the use of more than one data collection method is acknowledged and used in GT (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). According to Lal et al., (2015), in GT the sample sizes are typically between 10-60. Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggest that data collection should be about the quality of the data rather than the quantity of the individuals recruited. One advantage of GT, is that data analysis and data collection can occur simultaneously, therefore the analysed data can guide the rest of the data collection stage (Cho & Lee, 2014). For example, in this study, I attempted to balance the data from the different genders but ultimately the majority of responses came from females. Several of the interviews were also transcribed and analysed after each meeting and not once all of the interviews had been completed.

The names and numbers of steps of the coding process varies between researchers (Charmaz 2006). Cho and Lee (2014) briefly summarise the analysis process in grounded theory, they write that it 'involves concept labelling, categorizing, identifying core categories, finding relations among categories, and generating a

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<sup>27</sup> The concept of memo-ing is similar to a research log (Birks & Mills, 2015). Memos are the non-conventional notes that a researcher makes while coding and analysing the data in the preliminary stages. Memos can also be feelings, decisions making notes, issues, reflections and so on. It is a personal process of written reflection. For me, it meant listing the interesting data into my thesis draft as a reminder of the ideas and interesting points that they revealed so that I could revisit the points at a later time.

theory from such relationship [sic]' (p. 7). The first and second steps which they call concept labelling and categorizing can also be referred to as open coding and selective coding, whereby the qualitative data, in this case the transcriptions and survey responses, are broken into discrete parts (Cho & Lee, 2014). Their third step, finding relations among categories, refers to axial coding, in which the connections are drawn between the codes (Cho & Lee, 2014). This is followed by selective coding which identifies the most frequent and significant codes (Cho & Lee, 2014). This technique was supported by the use of thematic analysis. The final stage consists of generating a theory based on the data, this is in keeping with the use of ethnography, P. Atkinson, (2014) writes that 'the generation of ideas is the main goal of ethnographic research' (p. 16). Thomas and James (2006) write that grounded theory is not aimed at explaining the data, it interprets the data (p. 7). Therefore, the theory cannot be used alone in this analysis.

### **3.2.3.2 Thematic Analysis**

In order to focus primarily on the data, the thematic analysis (TA) method was also used. TA is 'a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). TA allows the researcher to analyse the data through the research questions, starting by coding the data which is relevant to the research questions and then identifying key themes within that data. TA resembles GT in that they both code the data inductively and allow themes and theories to emerge from the data itself (K. Richards, 2003). Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that TA has a more procedural approach to data analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) go on to state that repetition is not synonymous with importance, and that even ideas mentioned only once can be important if linked to the research questions.

Due to the size of my corpora and the nature of the data, TA is a necessary theory to consider. Repetition of entire phrases in the corpora is rare and it is often the individual script tattoos themselves and the graffiti inscriptions that are most interesting. The shorter phrases, such as *ACAB (All Cops Are Bastards)*, that are commonly used required less thought on the part of the writers than the writers who wrote 50 words of song lyrics. There was more risk undertaken by the writers of longer phrases as well as more cognitive input whereby the writer probably recalled song lyrics that they had learnt.

In order to analyse the themes and content of both the script tattoos and the graffiti inscriptions, spreadsheets were used. The graffiti inscriptions were written in column B, each inscription was in a new cell. Column A was used to write the code of each

inscription: C1, C2, C3... for the graffiti inscriptions found in the city, D1, D2, D3... for the graffiti inscriptions found on desktops and in classrooms, and T1, T2, T3... for the graffiti inscriptions found in toilet cubicles. The data from the online tattoo survey was arranged by respondent not by inscription. The code used for the tattoo bearers was TB1, TB2, TB3...

Each graffiti inscription was then analysed and coded according to its structure, place, location, type, format, content, language, length, case, colour, part of speech, verb form, and whether there was a grammatical or spelling error or a drawing accompanying the inscription. The coding of these characteristics facilitated the quantitative analysis. See Figure 7 for an example of the spreadsheet, the complete spreadsheet can be found in the appendices.

Figure 7 Graffiti Data Spreadsheet

Code	Text	Text				Place	Location	Commissioned			Paint	Spray	Graffiti Pen	Pencil or crayon	Chalk	Correction fluid	Pen	Engraving	Sticker	Throw up	Street Art				Abbreviation	Agreement	Anime / Manga / Comic	Apology	Art	Book / Play / Poem	Capitalism / Money	Commercialism	Community	Covid	Criminality	Death	Drugs / Alcohol	Education		
		Non SVO structure	Unclear or incomplete	Exclamative	Declarative			Legal Graffiti Area	Temporary	Vandalism											Misc	Desktop	Graffiti	Stencil															Throw up	Tag
C1	HK city			1		Bordeaux Wall				1		1																												
C2	Lily		1			Bordeaux Wall				1				1																										
C3	sweet		1			Bordeaux Pipes				1																														
C4	TEACH		1			Bordeaux Public sign				1	1																													
C5	fuck off			1		Bordeaux Public sign				1		1																												1
C6	1.3.1.2			1		Bordeaux Public sign				1		1																												

A similar approach was used for the data collected from the online survey on tattoos. However, as the data was more than one inscription per tattoo bearer, the elements were separated and analysed in separate sheets.

Figure 8 Original Spreadsheet of Survey Data

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1		2. Combien ?	3. Comment décriez-vous vos tatouages ?	4. Autre :	5. Sont-ils écrits dans une langue précise ?	6. Autre :	ENGLISH TATTOO	7. Écrivez le texte que vous avez écrit sur vous et la traduction en français ou anglais	8. Pourquoi avez-vous choisi cette langue pour votre tatouage ? Pourquoi avez-vous choisi cette phrase ou mot ?
2	TB1	2	Des phrases / Lettres; Symboles / Images / Dessins		L'anglais		Who are you	Who are you / Qui êtes vous	La phrase donnait beaucoup mieux en anglais qu'en français, ça passait mieux dans le cou et je trouve que l'anglais est nettement plus jolie que le français
3	TB2	30	Des phrases / Lettres; Symboles / Images / Dessins		L'anglais		Faith hope love	Faith hope love Foi espoir amour Success réussite	Parce que ce sont des mots qui ont des significations particulière pour moi . Et j'ai choisi l'anglais car je trouve ça plus jolie

The spreadsheet above shows the original data after being harmonised. The English script tattoos were also extracted from column H, question 7, and rewritten in column G to facilitate the analysis. Additionally, the answers were copied by question into separate sheets to focus on one question at a time.

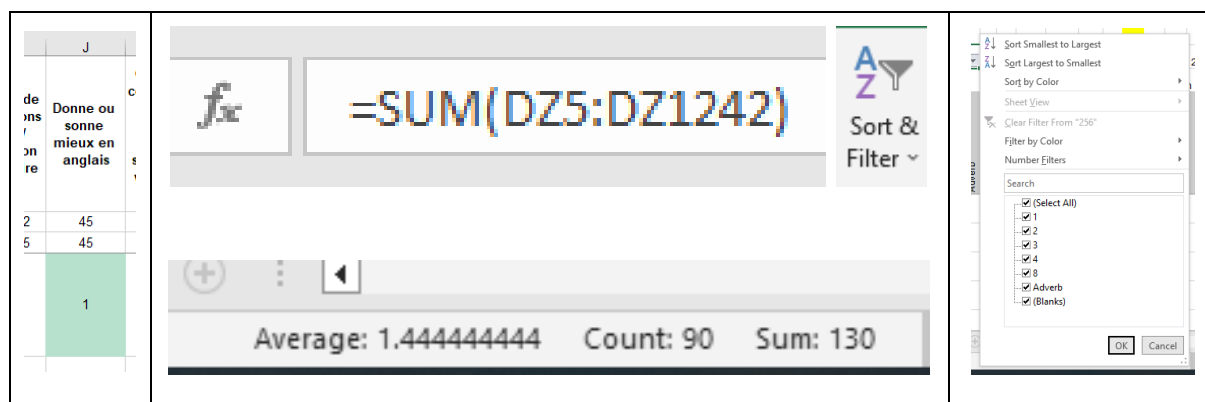


Figure 9 Spreadsheet focusing on Reasons for the Tattoo(s)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q
1		7. Écrivez le texte que vous avez écrit sur vous et la traduction en français ou anglais	8. Pourquoi avez-vous choisi cette langue pour votre tatouage ? Pourquoi avez-vous choisi cette phrase ou mot ?	9. Quel âge avez-vous ?	10. Associez-vous avec quel genre ?	11. Autre :	12. Quelle est votre langue maternelle ?	Languages	Pas de réponse / raison claire	Donne ou sonne mieux en anglais	Original content or Origin from English speaking world/in English	Langue internationale / universelle	manque de traduction	Bilingue	So lots of people understand it	So not everyone understands it	Prefer it in English
2							COUNT	720	122	45	154	31	5	14	11	49	20
3							SUM	1480	125	45	169	31	5	14	11	49	20
4	TB1	Who are you / Qui êtes vous	La phrase donnait beaucoup mieux en anglais qu'en français, ça passait mieux dans le cou et je trouve que l'anglais est nettement plus jolie que le français	21-25	Homme		Français	Anglais /allemand		1							
5	TB2	Faith hope love Foie espoir amour Success réussite	Parce que ce sont des mots qui ont des significations particulière pour moi . Et j'ai choisi l'anglais car je trouve ça plus jolie	26-30	Homme		Français										

Figure nine shows the spreadsheet containing the tattoo bearer codes (TB1, TB2), the script tattoos (column B), and the responses given for choosing a tattoo in English (column C). The reasons given were not always easy to understand without the script tattoo to refer to, therefore column B was added during analysis.

Figure 10 Spreadsheet Tools



The various tools available in the spreadsheet aided in the analysis of the data. The conditional formatting function turned any cells containing data in a specific area to green so that they could be easily seen. The use of numbers in the spreadsheet allowed me to use the tools and formulas in the spreadsheet to count the data. By highlighting a column, the programme would tell me the mean average, the count, and the sum of the numbers in the column. The filter tool was used to compare inscriptions that had one or more elements in common.

In accordance with GT and TA, categories of the content and themes were created from the data and not from categories already established in previous research. The previous categories are used in the analysis of the themes rather than in the creation of them.

### 3.2.3.3 Corpus Analysis

In order to study the corpora of script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions, I have borrowed some of the tools and approaches seen in corpus linguistics (CL), quantitative linguistics (QL) and keyword analysis (KA). This is due to the particularities of both corpora. Both QL and KA will be discussed in more detail after CL.

Recently, the merits of CL have played an important role in discourse analysis (P. Baker, 2004). Teubert (2005) highlights the importance of the use of corpora in linguistics research. Gries (2009), writes that corpus linguistics can be considered a theory, a model, or a method(ology). CL offers a range of procedures when analysing the data including but not limited to: collocations, concordances, dispersion plots, and frequency lists (P. Baker, 2004). Conrad (2003) gives the following definition for CL:

*'Corpus linguistics is an approach to investigating language that is characterized by the use of large collections of texts (spoken, written, or both) and computer-assisted analysis methods. The approach encompasses great diversity in the kinds of research questions addressed, the specific techniques employed, and the contexts in which it is applied.'* (p. 385)

I will argue that elements of corpus analysis are necessary in the study of graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos. Reppen (2022) argues that 'a corpus is essential when exploring issues or questions related to language use' (p. 31). When studying graffiti from anonymous artists and writers, the only data left to analyse are the words and pictures left behind. Compiling the graffiti inscriptions into one corpus and the script tattoos into another corpus allows for the study of these artistic mediums as if they were a compilation of traditional texts used in linguistics. However, it is essential that each script tattoo and graffiti inscription is identified by the software used as a complete text otherwise the programme finds collocations that do not exist.

CL, not unlike the other techniques that have influenced this study, relies on the words in the corpus and deciding which ones are key and appropriately reflect the corpus. According to P. Baker (2004), keywords are based on frequency and the minimum frequency is determined by the researcher themselves. According to Scott (1999), the three main types of keywords are proper nouns, indicators of 'aboutness', and indicators of style. Indicators of 'aboutness' are the keywords that are easily recognised by humans whereas indicators of style are words such as *because* and *already* (P. Baker, 2004; Scott, 1999).

This study aims to incorporate both qualitative and quantitative research methods in its analysis. CL is often associated with quantitative analysis but P. Baker (2004)

argues that there is more to CL than the quantitative element because researchers are obliged to develop interpretative skills. P. Baker (2004) suggests that one approach to CL is to lemmatise the data when calculating the keywords. Lemmatising the data on the one hand allows for more inclusive results, grouping different verb conjugations together for example, and on the other hand can cause problems because it would not consider the fact that not all word forms take the same collocates when lemmatising (P. Baker, 2004). The data will be presented with and without lemmatising where appropriate. Stubbs (2001) gives the example of the verb *seek* whose conjugations do not all share the same collocates. The use of collocates will be explored in the data analysis sections for both the script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions.

The term collocation was first used by Firth (1957), who considered that the meaning of a word is in part determined by the contextual environment, which he called a 'meaning by collocation' (p. 194). Collocation is a term used to describe 'the occurrence of two or more words within a short space of each other in a text' (J. Sinclair, 1991, p. 170). Concordance analysis is also useful when analysing collocates. The concordance tool searches for one lexical item and displays all of its occurrences in context (Evison, 2010). As Reppen (2022) explains 'simply counting items or displaying their occurrences does not actually tell us anything in itself; it is the associated analysis, which may be both quantitative and qualitative, which provides the insights' (p. 122).

The lengths of the texts in the script tattoo and graffiti inscription corpora also lend themselves better to a paradigmatic frequency analysis (frequency of word use in the corpus) versus a syntagmatic patterning analysis (the relationship between syntax and meaning) (Billoti de Gage, 2012). This technique is important in these restricted datasets due to their size and nature. Firstly, most script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions are one to four words long in this study. This does not leave a lot of flexibility for the writers to express themselves. Secondly, only looking at one word restricts a true comprehension of the themes and ideas in the script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions. Taking the word *love* and seeing what it is collocated with gives further understanding of the writers, their emotion, and the object of that emotion.

In this study, the corpus has been analysed manually, using spreadsheet programmes, and with the programme AntConc. Each method facilitates a different angle of analysis. For example, in the case of the graffiti inscriptions, the lines between the manual and the spreadsheet analysis are blurred. The raw data is in the form of the photographs taken by the researcher during the fieldwork stage (see appendices

for all the photographs). The data was then entered by hand into the spreadsheet from the photographs. Then the spreadsheet programme was used to code the data using GT and TA frameworks as guides. In the case of the script tattoos, the data was entered into a survey by the participants, the results were then downloaded as a spreadsheet, and the data harmonisation was executed by the researcher. Once both sets of data were reduced to a list of graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos the two corpora were analysed using the AntConc programme. The programme facilitated the study of collocates and word placement. AntConc also allowed for the comparison of the corpora with other corpora.

As techniques from corpus analysis are being used in this study, other theories and approaches that use corpora are also incorporated into and influence the analysis of the data. One of the techniques used in the quantitative analysis was QL (quantitative linguistics), which Crystal (2008) describes as 'a branch of linguistics which studies the frequency and distribution of linguistic units using statistical techniques' (p. 399). According to Fang and Wang (2018), QL is the study of language phenomena 'i.e. language structures, structural properties and their interrelations in real-life communicative activities' (p. 109). The aim of this approach is to 'establish general principles about the statistical regularities governing the way words, sounds, etc., are used' (Crystal, 2008, p. 399). In this study, the QL analysis focuses mainly on the statistical regularities of the use of the words featured in the sample population's script tattoos and the graffiti inscriptions.

As suggested earlier, not all corpus analysis approaches are best suited to corpora of such short length. QL can be one solution to the analysis of such a unique dataset focusing on the frequency of the words used in the inscriptions and the linguistic units present. The data was divided into linguistic units and this in turn was counted to reveal the grammatical structures in the texts.

During this study, KA (keyword analysis) was also used to analyse the data. According to P. Baker (2004), the KA technique is where the most frequent words in a corpus are compared to other corpora to ascertain whether the frequency is coherent with normal English language use or specific to the genre and corpus in question. In this case, comparing the script tattoo and graffiti inscription corpora to other corpora such as the American English 2006 (AmE06), two graffiti corpora (Madrid Signatures and Bloomington City, sections 4.9.1 and 4.9.2), and four script tattoo corpora (French, Killian, Convict, and Zagreb section 5.8).

The decision was made to use an American English corpus for comparisons as references to the United States of America outweighed references to other English-speaking countries. A preference for American English spellings can also be seen in the data, for example the word 'mom' appears 10 times (11 including the alternative mommy) compared to the word 'mum' which was used once. The AmE06 contains 1,017,879 tokens of published texts containing written American English. Due to the significant difference in size between my corpora and the AmE06, it was necessary to use relative frequency. In order to calculate the relative frequency, the number of occurrences of the selected token was divided by the total number of tokens and then multiplied by 10,000 to give a relative frequency over 10,000. The relative frequency is indicated when it is used ( $rf = X$ ) whereas, ( $n = x$ ) is used to refer to the number of occurrences.

A KA (keyword analysis) focuses on the lexical differences, not the lexical similarities (P. Baker, 2004). The assumption is that if a keyword is more present in one corpus than the other it would suggest it is more important in one dataset than another. For example, we would expect to see the word *wall* in combined graffiti corpora more than in the tattoo corpus as walls are a common canvas for graffiti artists. However, keywords are not automatically the words that appear most frequently in a corpus, they can be the words which are statistically used more in the target corpus than in the reference corpus (Evison, 2010).

One problem that arises with the KA approach is the use of multiple inscriptions and therefore multiple authors (P. Baker, 2004). The combined graffiti corpora contain tags which are a graffiti writer's nickname that they write to show where they have been. If the corpus contains a high number of instances of the same tag, the frequency will be higher and suggest this word is key in combined graffiti corpora, even if it is only one person writing it.<sup>28</sup> A solution is to count how many texts contain the keyword rather than how many instances there are in the corpus as a whole (Scott, 1999). This technique would not resolve the tag issue, as tags are often only one or two words long and generally make up the entire inscription. Due to the nature of tags, they are easy to identify and if necessary, they can be separated from the data for individual analysis. P. Baker (2014) also suggests that this method reveals 'the most obvious differences'

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<sup>28</sup> The use of tags in the city corpus allowed me to estimate the number of graffiti artists present in my corpus.

(p. 355), and that the most interesting differences could be stylistic, for example the use of personal pronouns or active versus passive tenses.

#### **3.2.3.4 Discourse**

In this study, my hypothesis is that the one-word and short sentences figuring in the script tattoos and the graffiti inscriptions are a form of discourse. As forms of discourse, I will have recourse to tools, techniques, and concepts borrowed from ethnography (see section 3.2.2) and corpus analysis (see section 3.2.3.3).

The term discourse has several meanings, Crystal (2008) writes that discourse is normally used for spoken language that is longer than a sentence, whereas Burr (1995) defines discourse as ‘a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a version of events’ (p. 48). Gee (1999) goes on to define discourse as ‘a “dance” that exists in the abstract as a coordinated pattern of words, deeds, values, beliefs, symbols, tools, objects, times, and place, and in the here and now as a performance that is recognizable as just such coordination’ (p. 36). In this study, I will use Gee’s definition of discourse and argue that script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions are both examples of discourse as they have: meaning, imagery, symbols, and make a statement. This is supported by previous research whereby graffiti is identified as discourse (cf. Mendonça, 2020), and due to their similarity, I argue that script tattoos can also be considered discourse.

If we accept the premise that graffiti and tattoos are occurrences of discourse, then the logic follows that they can be subjected to discourse analysis. Discourse analysis (DA), according to Crystal (2008), is when linguists aim to find ‘linguistic regularities in discourse [...], using grammatical, phonological and semantic criteria’ (p. 148). In order to analyse the data using a DA approach, the graffiti inscriptions and the script tattoos will be assessed grammatically and semantically. As the inscriptions are written and not spoken there will be limited phonological analysis in this study. The graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos will be divided into parts of speech and the verb tenses will also be identified. This will aid in identifying which sentence types can be found in the corpus, as well as which verb forms and which verbs are used. There will be a morphosyntactic analysis of each inscription and the variety of the language used will also be analysed. It will be argued that the variety of language is testament to the level of English of the research group: tattoo bearers and graffiti writers.

Within DA there is the theory of critical discourse analysis (CDA). Elements of CDA have influenced my data and my work. I have tried to be objective in my study through

the use of quantitative methods but my data, the script tattoo in particular, is grounded in subjectivity as I am relying on answers from a survey.

### 3.2.3.5 Polyphony

In this study, there are examples of inscriptions that have more than one author. Inscriptions by more than one author can also be referred to as a macrotext: the collective author is an example of polyphony, the predecessor of unconscious hybridity (Demska, 2019). According to Fløttum (2000), polyphony is concerned with semantic meaning, ‘the polyphonic structure is to be found at “langue”-level (sentence level)’ (pp. 21). The term polyphony was first used by Bakhtin (1970) to refer to literary discourses, such as those of Dostoïevski’s, or texts which contain several voices. Bakhtin (1970) goes as far as saying that Dostoïevski is ‘est le créateur du roman polyphonique’ [*the creator of the polyphonic novel*] (p. 11). Mendonça (2020) also follows the Bakhtinian approach writing that:

*‘... o grafite inscrito na cidade é resultado da interação social entre o/a escritor/a do grafite, a pessoa que lê/vê o escrito na cena urbana e o tema de que trata o grafite. Assim, o grafite é analisado em sua polifonia ou dialogia em sua dimensão sócio-histórica. É polifonia porque o grafite com um enunciado concreto tem nele presença das varias vozes que participam do processo dialógico.’ (p. 10)*

*[graffiti inscribed in the city is the result of social interaction between the writer of the graffiti, the person who reads/sees the writing in the urban scene and the subject of the graffiti. Thus, graffiti is analysed in its polyphony or dialogue in its socio-historical dimension. It is polyphony because graffiti as a concrete utterance has in it the presence of the various voices that participate in the dialogical process.]*

This is supported by Lynn and Lea (2005) who are also inspired by Bakhtin’s work about utterances, they suggest, however, that graffiti ‘is more than just an “utterance”’: unlike the spoken word, which once uttered is gone forever, graffiti is an utterance in a tangible form – living on beyond the moment’ (p. 43).

Fløttum (2000) writes that the aim of polyphony is ‘to demonstrate how utterances can signal the presence of several voices’ (p. 20). In this study, the voices refer to the multiple graffiti writers present in the inscriptions. García-Arenal Rodríguez (2018) uses Bakhtin’s (1981) term polyphony of voices to describe the graffiti inscriptions in prison cells as an indication of the multiple writers. Examples of polyphony can be seen in section 4.9: Conversational Graffiti.

According to (Fløttum, 2000), polyphony can be used as a ‘factor in conversational analysis’ (p. 23). In this study, there are examples of conversational graffiti which is a small branch of conversational analysis. Conversational graffiti is the name given to

graffiti inscriptions that solicit a written response from other writers (Sheivandi et al., 2015). In this study, I use the term to refer to all inscriptions that have had two or more writers. Sheivandi et al. (2015) state that conversational graffiti is most commonly found in public restrooms. This study will build on that research focusing not only on conversational toilet graffiti, but also the examples found on desktops and in the city. Sacks et al. (1974) identify 14 key features of oral conversation. All 14 features can be applied to conversational graffiti:

*Table 7 Key Features of Oral Conversation*

<i>Key features of Oral Conversation Adapted from (Sacks et al., 1974, pp. 700-701)</i>	<i>Key features of Oral Conversation in relation to Conversational Graffiti</i>
<i>Speaker-change recurs, or at least occurs.</i>	<i>There is evidence of writer change through the use of colours and handwriting style. Menis (2002) argues that speaker-change is not a necessary characteristic of graffiti, nonetheless it is a necessary element of conversation graffiti. Trahan (2011) identifies writer change through the use of new lines and often the replies being positioned underneath the original message(s).</i>
<i>In general, one party talks at a time.</i>	<i>Most graffiti writers respect the space of other writers. The spatial and temporal nature of graffiti discourse makes it difficult for more than one writer to contribute at the same time (Menis, 2002).</i>
<i>Occurrences of more than one party talks at a time, but brief.</i>	<i>Graffiti writers can overlap one another in the same way oral interlocutors interrupt and speak over one another. There are three reasons as to why graffiti writers would overlap previous writers: limited space for writing, to change something previously written, or to emphasise (Menis, 2002).</i>
<i>Transitions (from one turn to the next) with no gap and no overlap are common.</i>	<i>Menis (2002) states that graffiti naturally has transitions from one writer to the next, whether it be spatially or temporarily.</i>
<i>Turn order is not fixed, but varies.</i>	<i>The free nature of graffiti follows the turn order rules seen in spoken conversations.</i>
<i>Turn size is not fixed, but varies.</i>	<i>Similarly, to spoken conversations the graffiti contributions vary in length per inscription, a person often writes a sentence and other writers respond to this with shorter phrases of agreement or criticism.</i>
<i>Length of conversation is not specified in advance.</i>	<i>Due to the asynchronous and anonymous nature of graffiti, the conversations are not preprepared by the participants. They constitute written responses to one another and can happen hours or years apart from one another. García-Arenal Rodríguez (2018) studies graffiti inscriptions spanning decades.</i>
<i>What parties say is not specified in advance.</i>	<i>Like the reasoning above, the nature of graffiti renders it impossible for the anonymous parties to predefine what will be written.</i>
<i>Relative distribution of turns is not specified in advance.</i>	<i>Following on from point 5, turn order is not established by anything more than the volition of the writers to return to the same space: the same toilet or the same wall. In the case of desktops, the students can</i>



	<i>only return to a previous conversation if they sit in the same seat or are assigned the same seat in exams.</i>
<i>Number of parties can vary.</i>	<i>For the graffiti inscriptions in this study to be counted as examples of conversation, I deem it necessary to have a minimum of two authors. However, in reality, each inscription is a physical representation of a monologue, and the listeners are the readers of the graffiti.</i>
<i>(Talk) [Interaction] can be continuous or discontinuous.</i>	<i>Due to the asynchronous nature of the graffiti inscriptions, there is little interruption from other writers. Interruptions could occur during the production of the inscription: an illegal writer could stop for a passer-by or be caught by the authorities, or a student could be seen writing on the desktop. In addition, due to the nomadic nature of graffiti one could argue that the use of different areas could be seen as discontinuous talk. A person repeating their message around the city in written form could be equated to someone walking around repeating their message.</i>
<i>Turn-allocation techniques are obviously used.</i>	<i>Turn-allocation techniques are not used in written discourse as the parties are anonymous and generally not all present at the same time. All graffiti communication is self-selected. The writers choose to put pen to desk or spray to wall.</i>
<i>Various 'turn-constructional units' are employed; e.g. turns can be 'one word long', or they can be sentential in length.</i>	<i>The corpus will reveal later on that graffiti inscriptions can also be one word long or a full paragraph.</i>
<i>Repair mechanism which governs turn-taking.</i>	<i>The repair mechanisms seen in graffiti writing can be linguistic, whereby one person changes the language that the other person has written: sex &gt; sexe, or content-based Kef was here &gt; Kefta was here.</i>

I would argue that in conversational graffiti there is an extra element in that the writer is always writing for someone else to read their message, unlike writing in a private diary which is hidden away, these inscriptions are in public places. Said (1983) writes that 'no one writes simply for oneself. There is always an Other, and this Other willy-nilly turns interpretation into a social activity' (p. 137). Said was referring to the politics of interpretation, but Peteet (1996) explains that the concept of the other is also valid in the case of graffiti, particular tagging in the street: the writers wish for their message to be heard by as many people as possible. As seen in the literature review the message can be an announcement of a new graffiti writer or a reminder of an experienced writer's existence (Lannert, 2015; Macdonald, 2001).

Polyphony can also be used to describe the modifications made by one writer to another writer's inscription. Image nine is an example of conversational graffiti where the first writer has left a message and it has been added to and modified by one or more other writers.

Image 9 Example of Conversational Graffiti D611



The text in Image nine reads: *'Kefta was here and Rach too'*. The first writer appears to have written *'Kef was here'*, this was then modified by another writer to read *'kefta'*. Kefta, an alternative spelling for kofta, refers to a traditional meatball from Algeria. A final writer has added *'and Rach too'* to the message. The inscription demonstrates many of the key features of oral conversation in Table 8. For example, there are one or two speaker (writer) changes, the texts do not overlap (no interruption), there are no illogical gaps, and there is evidence of a repair mechanism whereby one writer changes the original message.

One of the difficulties of using data triangulation is that the data itself is different and therefore not all techniques and tools can be applied to all of the data. In this case, the CA framework cannot be used to analyse the script tattoos in this study as they are all individual phrases, or longer texts from songs or poems. There are a few examples of group tattoos but these phrases are repeated rather than a continuation of the 'conversation'. There are phrases in the corpus that multiple people have tattooed without a connection to one another such as: *'never give up'* (n = 8) and there are also shared tattoos, commonly referred to as 'bro tats', such as *'wait for it'* shared by two best friends and *'brother'* shared by two brothers, only one of each pair completed the survey.

However, the principle of location relevance can be applied to both graffiti and tattoos. Islam (2011) explains that studying graffiti 'as a spatially bound text [...] allows a bridge to be drawn between spatial and discursive approaches to cultural analysis' (p. 248). Tattoos are also spatially bound, according to Kjeldgaard and Bengtsson

(2005), the placement of the tattoo on the body is not only about intimacy, but also about the bearer's self-expression. An example of a sexually suggestive tattoo due to its placement can be seen on tattoo bearer 518, see section 6.3.3: Sex and Sexuality.

### **3.2.3.5.1 The Cooperative Principle in Graffiti Inscriptions**

If the premise that some written graffiti can be considered a conversation is accepted, then the phrases written can be seen to represent turn taking which is in keeping with the cooperative principle. Lynn and Lea (2005) argue that writers react to the people who respond to their 'work' (p. 59): and create a written dialogue (Bakhtin 1981). The cooperative principle, according to Grice (1989), is where the interlocutors make sure that the contributions are required during the interaction and that their contribution has purpose or direction which relates to the previous content. According to Crystal (2008), 'the principle states that speakers try to cooperate with each other when communicating' (p. 114). If the speakers are considered interlocutors, the principles can be applied to graffiti writers communicating in written form. Blume (1985) would argue that the 'lack of social connection between the author and reader of graffiti means that Grice's maxims play effectively no role whatsoever' (p. 62). However, I believe that there is strong evidence to support the use of the maxims defined by Grice (1975). I will now examine this principle and its four maxims (quantity, quality, relevance, and manner) against the graffiti data type:

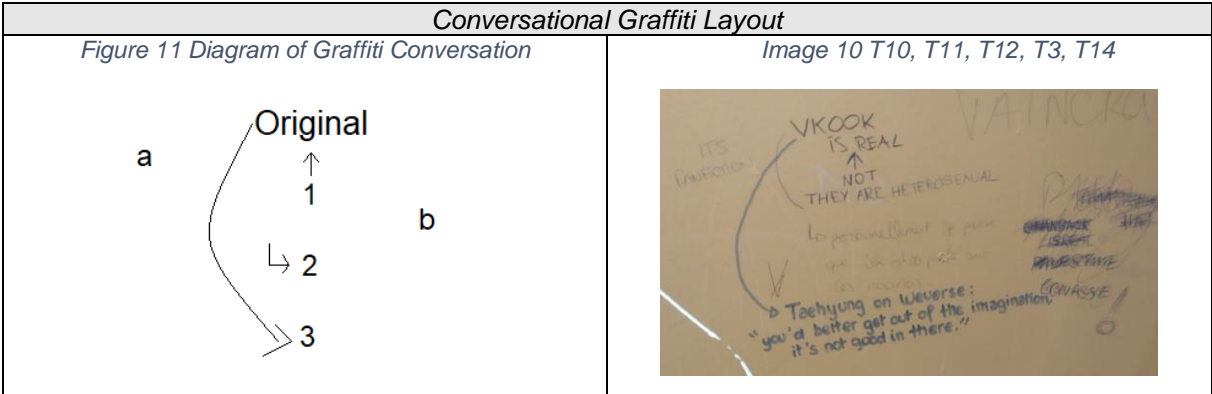
*Quantity: interlocutor informs the reader*

(Grice, 1975)

The data will show that graffiti is never 'required', it could even be argued that graffiti, by nature, is often forbidden and therefore the polar opposite of 'required'. It could also be argued that sometimes the original writer's message requires a response from another writer, but the examples in this corpus show that it is primarily the next writer, the responder, who decides if and when a response is required, or rather, appropriate (Menis, 2002). As Menis (2002) explains, it is very hard to determine the 'right amount' of information in a graffiti exchange. In my corpus the 'right amount' appears to be one idea or theme per graffiti inscription, this is in part due to the average size of the phrases, the modal average is one word graffiti, but the mean average is three words long. In written language there are no time constraints or verbal or non-verbal indicators by listeners to suggest that someone has spoken too much or not enough (Menis, 2002). However, the graffiti writers may be bound by time constraints as they hide their activity from the authorities. Graffiti writers often only require a few

seconds per tag (Lynn and Lea, 2005). One indication of what the ‘right amount’ is in written texts could be linked to the content. If the writer has not finished their sentence, the reader could be left wanting more information.

Each contributor chooses their own purpose or direction (Menis, 2002). The physical layout of graffiti also gives the later contributors the opportunity to reply to the first comment or later comments. Figure 12 shows the presumed original comment with different chains of written dialogue coming out of it. Comments a, 1 and 3 are all linked to the original comment. Comment 2 is linked to comment 1. Comment b appears to be a reply to the conversation in general rather than to one specific comment.



The diagram is a visual representation of responses to one graffiti inscription. The original inscription is written by one person and other writers choose to engage with the topic replying to the original writer. The writers themselves indicate which comment they are replying to using arrows, either pointing to their comment or the one they are replying to. According to Trahan (2011), this layout of responses could be considered partial ‘encircling’ as the original message is partially encircled by opposing responses (p. 5).

Another problem with inscriptions created by more than one author highlighted in linguistic landscape research is defining the linguistic units. Gorter and Cenoz (2008) refer to the concept of ‘the unit of analysis’ and ask what constitutes each linguistic unit (p. 351). This study considers most graffiti inscriptions to have one author, but that several authors can modify or contribute to a single unit of analysis. See section 4.9: Conversational Graffiti for examples.

*Quality: the interlocutor is presumed to tell the truth*

(Grice, 1975)

The ambiguous element is the maxim of quality: whether the content is true or not, which cannot be proven due to the anonymity of the graffiti. In oral communication research the interlocutors are assumed to tell the truth, it would therefore be fair to assume that the graffiti writers are also writing the truth, or at least their interpretation of the truth. Determining whether the content of the graffiti is true or not is not possible, therefore the researcher must assume that the writer is telling the truth (Menis, 2002). P. Atkinson (2014) and Hammersley (2018) suggest that the issue of truth is of little concern to the ethnographer: P. Atkinson (2014) advises that the researcher avoids the debate on whether 'the informant is telling the truth' when analysing the 'coherence and plausibility of accounts' (p. 9), whilst Hammersley (2018) proposes focusing on 'what discursive resources are employed' in the language being studied (p. 9).

Due to the anonymity of graffiti, the writers have no fear of repercussions when writing, this could be an argument for believing the content as they have no reason to lie to make themselves appear a certain way (Christen 2003). García-Arenal Rodríguez (2018) suggests that graffiti could be considered as a chronicle rather than as a narrative. Conversely, this could also be a reason to mistrust the writers as they are anonymous and therefore not held accountable to what they have written. Gasparyan (2020) argues that the language of graffiti is often "clear", as it is used sincerely by the author, and obviously, it reflects the "existing social conditions", for graffiti mirrors the surrounding social, political situations' (p. 42).

*Relation: the relevance of the inscription*

(Grice, 1975)

The content of the graffiti inscription can be relevant to the location of the inscription. In the study of graffiti, it is necessary to acknowledge the presence of the relationship between the writers and the authorities of the spaces they write in. When a swear word is written on a government building, there is a strong reason to believe that the profanity is aimed at the government. Whereas if the same phrase were on a university desktop or in a university toilet it would be reasonable to assume that the profanity was aimed at the university as an institution. Peck and Stroud (2015) write that tattoos, not unlike graffiti, can be seen as transgressive when in particular social spaces. That is to say, certain professions do not hire people with visible tattoos and displaying tattoos is considered against the rules in some workplaces. In the same way, a commissioned piece of street art is acceptable on the allocated wall, but when it is on private property it can be considered vandalism. Graffiti inscriptions are a visual,

written example of a power struggle through language. Bourdieu (1982) describes graffiti inscriptions as a 'struggle over the specifically symbolic power of making people see and believe, of predicting and prescribing, of making known and recognized' (p. 181). Additionally, as the writers are asynchronous there is no guarantee that all of the contributions will be relevant to the exchange, in general, irrelevant contributions are either ignored, questioned, or mocked by the next writers (Menis, 2002).

*Manner: the interlocutor is clear and direct*

(Grice, 1975)

As graffiti writers often have a time/space constraint and/or have to be discreet in their chosen location, one could argue that speed is of the essence when writing graffiti (Blume 1985). The messages also tend to be short and to the point. Menis (2002) argues that some obscurity is possible when reading graffiti due to the use of certain symbols which may only be significant to certain groups. Obeng (2000) also writes that some graffiti is written so that only other graffiti writers understand the 'pragmatic import of what is written' (p. 339), therefore the manner of the text is accessible to a specific group, rather than the general public.

### **3.2.4 Language Flux and Hybridity**

The terms language flux and hybridity do not have a clear definition agreed upon by researchers. As seen in the literature review, most researchers ascertain that 'languages are constantly in a state of flux' (Teubert, 2005, p. 2). The words and inscriptions that this study labels as examples of language flux and hybridity are not borrowed, they are used in specific situations and it cannot be assumed that they are used in other linguistic contexts by the same people.

Previous research has identified ways in which English graffiti inscriptions contain examples of LX language modification. Gasparyan (2020) suggests that graffiti inscriptions can be modified through phonological procedures and morphemic processes: phonological procedures can be the alteration of vowels, consonants and use of puns and morphemic processes refer to the alteration of words through the roots and affixes. In their study, AbuJaber et al. (2012) find that graffiti writers often use unnecessary capitalisation, use of punctuation, spelling simplification, the elongation of vowels (for example, the word *loser* can be written *looooser*), spelling errors, as well as popular spelling variants, and influence from the writer's L1. Similar language modifications and topics can also be seen in script tattoos. Examples of the above

modifications in both graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos will be presented in section 6.2.5: (Un)Intentional Errors.

### 3.2.5 Sociolinguistics

As this study explores how language is used in the context of graffiti writing and tattoo culture in France, it can be argued that it should be studied from a sociolinguistic approach. Sociolinguistics can be defined as ‘the study of language in society’ (Jamaledin & Lashkarian, 2016, p. 51), or the ‘relation between language and society’ (Spolsky, 1998, p. 3). Siregar (2021) writes that ‘as an object in sociolinguistics, language is not seen or approached as a mere lexical arrangement but is seen or approached as a means of interaction or communication in society’ (p. 37). Witbooi (2020) describes sociolinguistics as ‘what people *do with words*’ (p. 53), and Uithol (2020) writes that sociolinguistic aspects of language can be analysed to describe a person’s ‘ascribed social status’ (p. 2). Bucholtz and Hall (2016) suggest that the body is discursive and that this is a key area of study for sociolinguistics. In this study, the body is responsible for graffiti writing, as well as tattooing and/or being tattooed. Graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos are examples of language use in general society as well as in their own communities and geographical locations.

In order to study language in society, ‘sociolinguists have developed a number of methods to investigate how language is shaped by, and in turn shapes, social factors, and how speakers creatively use language to enact their own identities’ (Sneller & Barnhardt, 2023, pp. 1–2). In this study, however, the instances of language being analysed are written rather than spoken. Furthermore, the creative use can be seen in examples of constitutive intertextuality and hybrid words and phrases. Finally, the language is used to embody, rather than enact, the identity of the graffiti writer or tattoo bearer. P. Atkinson (2014) writes that:

*‘Social actors have bodies, and their physical presence in the world is an embodied one. Bodies are not only natural but are thoroughly socialised. The body is a means of carrying out the techniques and practices of competent everyday conduct. It is a means of expression. It is also a resource through which ordinary activities get done. Embodied work is one of the means whereby practical activity is accomplished and through which co-ordinated activity is managed. Even the most mundane of physical actions reflects its social basis.’ (p. 17)*

Beyaert-Geslin (2019) describes graffiti writing, in particular, as inscribing ‘an equivalence of [one’s] body in the furthest reaches of the ground’ (p. 119), the equivalence being the writer’s tag, message, or the artist’s piece.

Sociolinguistics is focused on empirical research, it aims to explore how humans use language in 'real, everyday life situations and studies languages exclusively in their naturalistic social context' (Hernández-Campoy, 2014, p. 5). The naturalistic social contexts in this study are on the bodies of L1 French speakers and on the surfaces of Bordeaux. Witbooi (2020) suggests that recent sociolinguistic theories and research focus on the 'body, space and habitus; language approach to the study of space and place; and the linguistic landscaping' (p. 25).

Sociolinguistic research methods can be used for quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods research (Jamaledin & Lashkarian, 2016). Quantitative sociolinguistics explore 'how the identity of a person or a social group relates to the way that person uses languages' (Jamaledin & Lashkarian, 2016, p. 52). For example, corpus analysis, which is used in this study, can be useful for the study of sociolinguistics (Gries, 2009). Spolsky (1998) suggests that sociologists focus on 'statistically determinable tendencies that can be extracted by analysing large quantities of data' (p. 9), and proposes that this can be complemented by ethnography which interprets events on an individual basis, see section 3.2.2 for the use of ethnography in this study.

As this study uses linguistic landscape (see section 2.5.3 and 3.2.1), the context of sociolinguistic processes, the negotiation of identities and different styles and genres, the creation of hybrid linguistic registers, words, and phrases (Witbooi, 2020), are seen as a necessary part of the research process (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). In the survey, the demographic information (age, gender, languages spoken etc.) is an example of sociolinguistic information about the participants (Gries, 2009), whilst the inscriptions were instances of language mixing and language contact (Backhaus, 2006).

This section has detailed the main theories that have influenced this study and how they were applied to the context of analysing graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos. The next section outlines how the data was collected in this study.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

This study contains three sets of data collected by the researcher: an online survey (of tattoo bearers), visual data consisting of linguistic units (script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions), and interviews. The three sources of data combine to create a data triangulation (Ben-Said, 2011) which is used to analyse the multilingual linguistic



landscape in France. The data was collected from 2018 to 2023 and had four stages as outlined in Table 8.

*Table 8 Data Collection Stages*

<i>Data Collection Stage</i>	<i>Time Frame</i>	<i>Data Collection Method</i>	<i>Number of Participants</i>
<i>Stage 1 – Fieldwork</i>	<i>June 2018 – December 2021</i>	<i>Ethnographic Observation and Photography</i>	<i>N/A</i>
<i>Stage 2 - Pilot Surveys</i>	<i>May 2020 - June 2020</i>	<i>Online Self-Reporting survey</i>	<i>40 + 98 (English vs French version)</i>
<i>Stage 3 – Secondary Survey</i>	<i>September 2020- December 2020</i>	<i>Online Self-Reporting survey</i>	<i>1,318</i>
<i>Stage 4 – Interviews</i>	<i>June 2020 – March 2023</i>	<i>Semi-Guided Interviews</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Total Number of Participants</i>			<i>1,466<sup>29</sup></i>

### **3.3.1 Fieldwork**

From 2018 to 2023 I became a graffiti hunter and tattoo voyeur, using both surveys and semi-directed interviews to learn about the two areas. There are two distinct groups in both the tattooing and graffitiing communities: (1) the gatekeepers and experts and (2) the aficionados. Gatekeepers and experts include the artists themselves as well as academics who study the artists and their work. The interviews with graffiti writers and tattoo artists provided insight by the gatekeepers, whilst the data from the aficionados was taken from the survey, the interviews with tattoo bearers, and the graffiti inscriptions.

The first part of the data collection consisted of fieldwork whereby I walked around the city of Bordeaux, the Universities of Bordeaux and Bordeaux Montaigne, and visited the public toilets (both in the universities and the city) looking for graffiti and taking photographs of the graffiti inscriptions in English. Fieldwork and its research context is constantly being renegotiated (Clifford, 1980). The ethnographic task within fieldwork is aimed at recording the ‘indigenous’ view of society but also to illustrate the issues in society (Page, 1988, p. 165). According to Crystal (2008), ‘the usual sense of the term fieldwork (or field study) is also used in linguistics referring to the principles and procedures of obtaining linguistic data from informants, especially in their home environment’ (p. 188).

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<sup>29</sup> Before data harmonisation.

## Photographs of the Fieldwork Stage

Image 11 Photograph of Fieldwork



Collecting occurrences of graffiti inscriptions in English

Image 12 Photograph of Fieldwork



Interviewing tattoo bearers in Bordeaux

In this study, a fieldwork project was essential: the graffiti data, in particular, was only accessible through fieldwork. As the data collection involved no direct contact with the writers, it can be considered an unobtrusive method (Cho and Lee, 2014, p. 3). The complete collection of photographs of the graffiti can be found in the separate appendix: Graffiti.

### 3.3.2 Corpora Creation

According to P. Baker (2004), corpus-based analysis allows the researcher to be more objective when identifying patterns in language. A corpus can be based on both written and spoken texts, and 'must have been produced in a natural communicative setting' (Gries, 2009, p. 1233). Crystal (2008) defines a corpus as 'a collection of linguistic data, either written texts or a transcription of recorded speech, which can be used as a starting-point of linguistic description or as a means of verifying hypotheses about a language' (p. 117).

This study rests on the creation of two separate corpora: one for script tattoos and one for graffiti inscriptions. The corpus for graffiti inscriptions can also be divided into three significantly smaller corpora focusing on three distinct areas: the city, desktops and public toilets. The division of the larger graffiti corpus allows for further analysis in the form of a comparison between the three data types. This will allow me to establish the features that are more common to script tattoos, graffiti inscriptions in general, and the three distinct areas.

Evison (2010) writes that 'in themselves, corpora can tell us nothing [...] they are collections of electronic texts' (p. 122). A corpus differs from a text in that a text is read

horizontally, whereas a corpus can be read both horizontally and vertically (Billoti de Gage, 2012). The aims of corpora and texts are also different, texts are meant to be understood and therefore cohesive and communicative, Billoti de Gage (2012) suggests that a text is what Saussure would have described as *parole*. While the aim and purpose of a corpus is to aid in analysing a micro-sample of language and make generalisations about language on a macro-level. Billoti de Gage (2012) writes that corpora are ‘a means to understand what Saussure has called the *langue*, that is, the whole system of a language, based on a large number of elements which achieve a particular meaning according to their forms and arrangements’ (p. 16).

In this study, the corpora are considered specific rather than general as they are restricted to a particular use of language: script tattoo and graffiti inscriptions (Gries, 2009). The use of corpora in this study will allow me to analyse the micro level of graffiti inscriptions in Bordeaux and use it to make generalisations about the macro-level language usage in Bordeaux. Similarly, the admittedly small corpus on script tattoos will allow me to analyse the data on a micro-level and make assumptions about English use in French tattoos on a national or macro-level. The corpus will be presented and analysed in chapter 5: Script Tattoos in English.

### **3.3.3 Surveys**

This study used online surveys to collect data which were then analysed through both a quantitative and qualitative approach. Surveys are usually associated with quantitative methods where the data is counted and frequencies of responses are compared (Dörnyei, 2007). The quantifiable elements of the tattoo bearers include age, gender, number of tattoos, and content of tattoos. The surveys also allowed the respondents to give longer answers, justifying and explaining their responses, which allowed for a qualitative analysis of the data. These qualitative elements of this study focused on the ‘perception of individual diversity’ in regards to the linguistic creativity of the tattoo bearers and graffiti writers (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 25). The distinctions and advantages of both approaches can be seen in the following quote:

*‘The QUAN[titative] solution is to take a large enough sample in which the idiosyncratic differences associated with the particular individuals are ironed out by the sample size and therefore the pooled results largely reflect the commonalities that exist in the data. Qualitative researchers, on the other hand, question the value of preparing an overall, average description of a larger group of people because in this way we lose the individual stories’ (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 27).*

Using both approaches, this study can focus equally on the individual stories and the generalities that are present in the linguistic creativity observed in graffiti

inscriptions and script tattoos. This study applied both qualitative and quantitative methods to focus on the individual graffiti writers and tattoo bearers, as well as the overall L2 English usage in France.

The survey was posted online in social media groups for a duration of two periods in 2020. The participants were all members of tattoo groups or connections on my social media accounts. The social media posts explained the research project and contained both a visual and a hyperlink that redirected the recipient to the *Sphinx* survey.

Figure 12 Social Media Post



**Parlez de vos tatouages!**  
Dans le cadre  
d'une étude sur  
*l'usage du langage sur le corps*



nous sommes à la recherche  
de porteurs de tatouages  
de mots ou phrases

Faites avancer la recherche

→ en allant sur ce lien: <https://enquetessphinx.u-bordeaux.fr/v4/s/vh5jzp>

ou  
→ en scannant ce QR code:



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MONTAIGNE

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The response rate is difficult to determine as the survey was posted in online groups each with thousands of members. There is no functionality on the social media

page to show how many people saw the survey. There were 1,452 responses to the survey which was harmonised to 602 respondents, including only the participants who had a script tattoo in English and were an L1 French speaker. This created a corpus of open responses (~24,000 tokens).

The programme *Sphinx* allowed for a variety of question types including multiple choice, number, long, and short open-ended answers. The open-ended questions invited the participants to explain their tattoo choices in more detail, whereas the multiple-choice questions were aimed at acquiring demographic information such as age and gender. Furthermore, the software has a feature whereby specific answers direct the participants to different sections in the survey. For example, if the first question “Do you have a tattoo?” was answered with “no” the programme automatically directed the participant to the final page and thanked them for taking part (n = 6).<sup>30</sup>

The online survey fulfilled several purposes. First of all, it provided access to a wider community of tattoo bearers despite the lockdown. The second purpose of the survey was to learn about tattoo bearers through questions about their demographic identity. After answering questions concerning their age, gender etc. the survey focused on its third purpose: script tattoos. The participants were asked to give the following details about their tattoos: quantity, language, content, translation, and meaning. The responses from *Sphinx* were extracted and used to make the tattoo corpus. This text, containing the script tattoos, was then analysed in accordance with the approaches outlined above. The survey could be read either participant by participant, or question by question.

The participants from the survey were asked if they would be willing to send a photograph of their tattoo(s) or be interviewed about their tattoo(s). Those that agreed to take part in further research left their email addresses and contact details (n = 142), others contacted me directly with a photograph of their tattoo (n = 152). All of the photographs from emails and the Facebook post were downloaded and stored in a secure Google Drive (n = 241).<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> (n = X) this will be used to the number of occurrences of phrases, letters, people etc.

<sup>31</sup> Not all of the photographs sent to me were from people who did the survey. This is discussed later in section 3.6.1: Photographs

The use of technology has changed the way in which surveys and ethnographic data can be obtained (Evans & Mathur, 2005). There are both advantages and disadvantages associated with web-based surveys: they are affordable, easy to disseminate, and they provide ‘enhanced participant anonymity and confidentiality’ (Hayes & O’Neal, 2021, p. 4). The survey was posted online and the members of the tattoo focused groups were invited to take part. I relied on self-administration, a strategy which, according to some research, should increase results and decrease item nonresponse (Tourangeau & Yan, 2007). Whereas other research suggests that online surveys have lower response rates than other traditional methods (Manfreda et al., 2008). The implications of nonresponse bias will be discussed in the analysis section.

The survey amassed demographic information about the tattoo bearers including age, gender, level of English, and language abilities. The gender distribution was overall female, and this has been discussed in detail in the non-response bias section: 3.6.6. The study did not intend to separate the genders and their relationships to their tattoos. No gender issues emerged during the analysis process.

Table 9 Demographic Information of the Respondents

<i>Demographic Information of the Respondents (n = 602)</i>		
<i>Gender</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Female</i>	452	75.1
<i>Male</i>	115	19.1
<i>Both</i>	7	1.2
<i>Other</i>	4	0.65
<i>Neither</i>	4	0.65
<i>Prefer not to say</i>	20	3.3
<i>Age</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Under 20</i>	34	6
<i>20-30</i>	361	60
<i>30-40</i>	166	28
<i>Over 40</i>	41	6

Participants ranged from 18 to 55 years old. Over half of the participants were in their twenties, and this is in line with the demographic that is most active on social media and Facebook in particular. The complete results of the survey can be found in the appendices.

**3.3.4 Interviews**

Interviews are a valuable resource in ethnographic research, ‘the stories people tell are the vehicles through which experiences are studied’ (Lal et al., 2015, p. 6). Researchers disagree on the ideal number of interviews or participants for successful narrative research (McCarty, 2019). Morrow (2005) argues that more participants does

not necessarily result in an improved quality of research. A total of eleven interviews were conducted from October 2019 to April 2023. The individual interviews ranged from approximately 1 minute 50 seconds to 14 minutes 54 seconds in length. I recruited the participants myself through the survey, chance meetings, or mutual connections. The interviews were conducted either online via Zoom or Skype, or in person in Bordeaux, follow up conversations also took place via telephone. The participants all met two eligibility criteria: either having a tattoo or being a tattoo artist or being involved in graffiti writing or street art, and being over 17 years of age in order to avoid requiring parental consent (Herlihy & Corey, 2014). The interviews took place in either French or English according to the participant's preference. Questions were prepared in advance but were used as a guide rather than an obligation. Where possible, the interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants, either using the video conferencing software or my personal mobile telephone. The recordings were uploaded and saved to my cloud drive whilst the signed paper permission forms were kept in a folder. To protect the identity of the participants they have been assigned pseudonyms. Four participants were friends, family, or acquaintances. Two were through personal connections and three were chance meetings in the street, one participant was approached at a conference and they agreed to spend some time discussing their experiences with me, and I contacted one person via their website.

Initially, I would approach the potential participants and explain my research aims and propose an interview answering any questions the participant may have. During this initial contact a second meeting would be established if necessary. Seven interviews took place straight after the initial meeting. The participants were sent or given the same consent form for both the interviews as well as the use of their tattoo images. I explained the study and the implications to the participants before the interviews started. During the interviews I attempted to ascertain the individual's thoughts and feelings towards their tattoos/graffiti and their relationship towards English and language in general. How often were they tattooed, in which languages, why were certain languages chosen, the reason behind the phrases chosen etc. The interviews often ended with the participant sending me a photograph of their English script tattoos or allowing me to take a photograph.

These interviews were transcribed by an online programme<sup>32</sup> and then listened to and checked by me and a native French speaker. For this study, both the respondent and the researcher (myself) took part in the story telling element of the interview, sharing personal and professional past experiences. I started the analysis by reading and highlighting all the interesting and salient parts of the data in the transcripts. The next stage consisted of rereading the interviews and identifying overarching themes present in the entire dataset. Rapley (2007) states that transcriptions give readers access to the conversations. All the transcriptions are available in the appendices.

The dynamics within the interviews are also affected by the presence of the interviewer, in this case: me. The role of the researcher and researcher bias is also examined in this study through reflexivity and self-conscious examination. According to Roulston (2010), examining the role of the researcher is considered 'an integral feature of well-designed research' (p. 7). It is therefore important to be mindful of my relationship with the tattoo bearers and graffiti writers and the influence that my teaching career can have on my research, as well as my personal subjectivity, preconceptions and background. For example, the social context of the interviews affects the interviewees themselves. The social context includes the place of the interview as well as the concept of status (Davies, 2008). Hobbs (2006) writes that the method chosen by the ethnographer 'is marked out by the intensity of the relationship between the researcher and the field, and in particular, the researcher and his/her informants' (p. 101). My outsider status prevented an interview with one graffiti writer as, understandably, they did not feel comfortable engaging with someone about their illegal graffiti writing. Researchers who are involved in graffiti writing often have more access to other writers as it is generally understood that people open up more in an interview with people who share the same social world (O'Reilly, 2005).

Some of the participants had agreed to be filmed but most of the recordings were audio only, therefore the audios were focused on rather than the video images and body language of the speakers. The decision not to use detailed analysis of the body language was with the intention to focus on the inscriptions themselves rather than the behaviour of the tattoo bearers and graffiti writers.

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<sup>32</sup> After testing several different programmes, I chose the Google docs voice typing tool and played the audios directly on my computer which was understood by the programme and typed out.



#### **3.3.4.1 Defining the participant profiles**

The rationale behind choosing to focus on a non-academic community derives from personal experience living and working as an English teacher and British immigrant in France since 2016. My British eyes were drawn to the increasing level of English words being used around me. In addition, being British meant that there was a certain distance between myself and my French counterparts. Their language usage would change around me, exaggeratedly dropping English words into the conversation for example. For most of the French speakers in my personal life, I was their only British friend and therefore the person to ask when they had questions about the English language and English-speaking culture. This unique position inspired me to examine language use in 'ordinary settings' (J. W. Creswell, 2007, p. 71). The streets, toilet doors, desktops and people's skin became those 'ordinary settings' in which language could be studied. The advantages and disadvantages of researcher proximity are discussed in section 3.7.2 of the methods.

The main participants of this study were divided into two categories: anonymous writers, or voluntary tattoo bearers. The anonymous writers in the streets can be identified at minimum as passers-by in the city of Bordeaux and at best, inhabitants of the city. The graffiti found in the universities would suggest that they are students, the inscriptions could be the work of French students, Erasmus students, or international students. The profile of the tattoo participants was formed from the number of tattoos they had, their age, language level, and gender. The only common points are that they were an L1 French speaker and that they possessed a minimum of one script tattoo in English. The responses were anonymous but the survey format allowed me to build a picture of each tattoo bearer through their responses. Interviews took place with both participants from the survey and people who did not take part.

When analysing the graffiti, I would compare the inscriptions that contained the same content to see if the handwriting or spray style resembled one another. If the words were very similar it would suggest that the inscription was a tag, and therefore the work of one person, this then explained the high frequency of certain words in the corpus. In the case of the desktop graffiti, the repeated inscriptions were also compared to determine whether the phrases being written represented the interests of several writers or one writer, see section 4.6: Most Common Words and Phrases.

#### **3.3.5 Google Trends**

The final tool used is called Google Trends. Google Trends is a separate search engine from the standard Google search which allows the user to see the words and

phrases being searched for via the standard Google search engine (Yu-Cheong Yeung, 2019). Valdez (2021) describes Google Trends as a 'useful tool for data-driven analysis of real-world phenomena by compiling data on search query volumes to determine the interest of certain topics over time' (p. 679). Google Trends records start in 2004 and are available up until the present. According to Franzén (2023), Google Trends was launched in 2006 and has been used since the early 2010s by researchers in medicine and the social sciences. Mavragani et al. (2018) conclude in their study that 'Google Trends provides the field of big data with new opportunities, as it has been shown to be valid and has proven valuable, accurate, and beneficial for forecasting' (p. 2). In the social sciences, Google Trends has been used to examine the effects of racism in the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections (Stephens-Davidowitz, 2014), to measure religious beliefs on a national level (Yu-Cheong Yeung, 2019), and to explore British and North American politics (Trevisan et al., 2018).

Google Trends present the data of the internet searches in normalised results (0-100) where 100 represents the maximum value for a particular query during the indicated period (Chang et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2015). Franzén (2023) begins by stating that the existing literature in the social sciences is positive towards Google Trends as a research tool. This is in line with the findings of Nuti et al., (2014) of overwhelming positivity towards Google Trends, yet they discover that the algorithms used by Google Trends are secret and that replicable results are often problematic. Like Franzén, a German research team also found that depending on the time of the search, the results could vary considerably (Behnen et al., 2020). Some researchers argue that Google Trends is effective for collecting information and views that people may be hesitant to share with researchers (Stephens-Davidowitz, 2014; Yu-Cheong Yeung, 2019).

In this study, the data from the Google Trends search is used comparatively with the data collected by the researcher. Due to the anonymous nature of the graffiti writers, Google Trends can also be considered an alternative resource to interviews and surveys with the writers. The results from the Google Trends analysis can be seen in section 6.2.2: Google Trends.

This section has presented all of the data collection methods used in this study. The next section presents the origins of the graffiti study in more detail and explains the processes of data compilation and harmonisation.

**3.4 Graffiti Study**

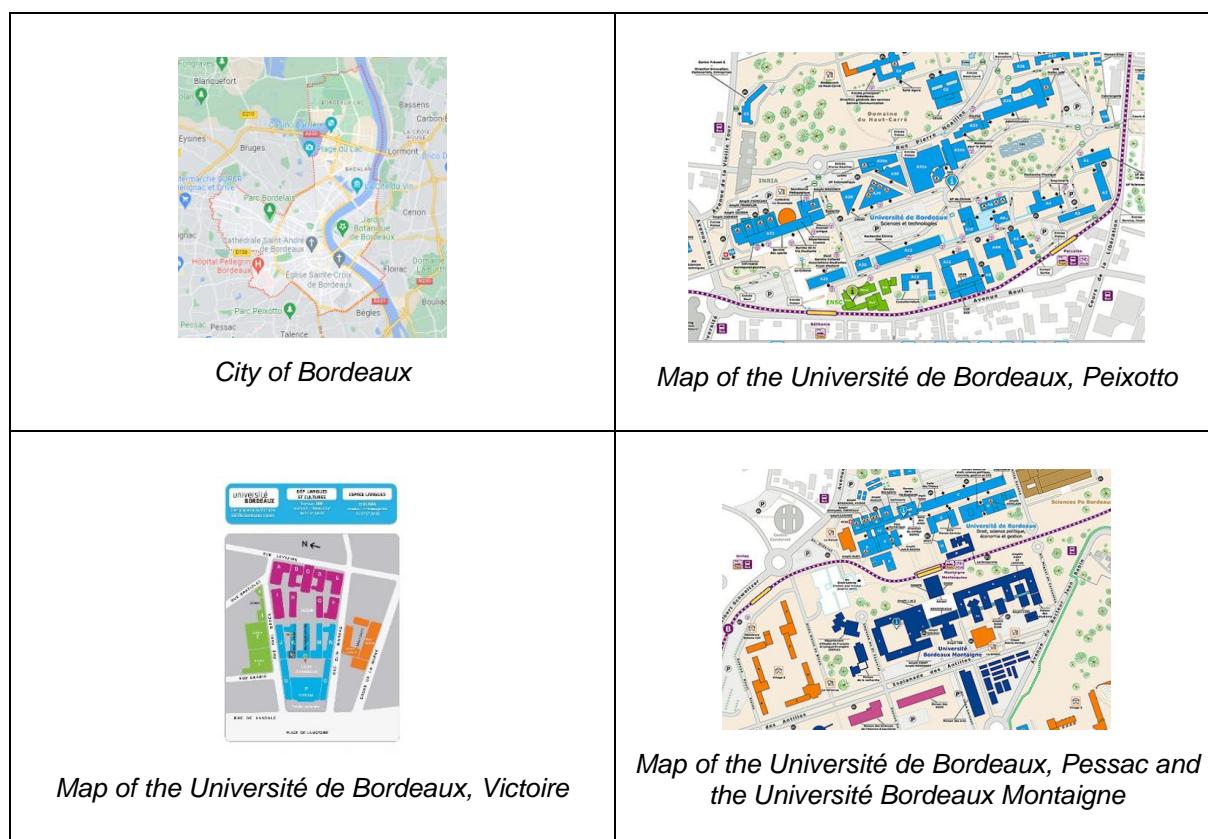
The inspiration for the graffiti section of my master’s and then doctoral studies started in June 2018 when I was in the city of Bordeaux. I was in a Canadian style public house, and I noticed that the toilet doors were covered in graffiti. As I read the graffiti I was surprised to see so much in English. One inscription caught my eye: *FOR A GOOD SUCK JOB CALL 1 646 750 46*, the original phrase had been changed by another passer-by: *SUCK JOB* to *BLOW JOB*. This interaction was intriguing, it implied that there were two writers, one writer who was more familiar with sexual language in English than the original writer. A second piece of graffiti found on this door inspired the hybrid element of this study. *CREVETTE RULES* is an example of a hybrid phrase in this corpus. These two initial inscriptions incited the quest for more graffiti in the Bordeaux area.



**3.4.1 Data Compilation**

As mentioned earlier the combined graffiti corpora is compiled of 1,237 instances of graffiti found in and around the city of Bordeaux. I chose this city as it is my home, as well as my place of work and study. It is the fieldwork equivalent of a convenience sample. As Bordeaux has two universities spread over eight campuses, it also lends itself to a comparison of the two universities. I believe it is also fitting to study the city which inspired the initial study. Figure 13 represents the location of this research study.

Figure 13 Maps of Bordeaux and the University campuses



Photographs are an important resource when studying graffiti due to its transient nature. They provide ‘first-hand, historical accounts of how urban literacies shape up over time’ (Mora et al., 2016, p. 10). Gorter and Cenoz (2008), write that most of the data in linguistic landscape studies are analysed through digital photographs. The photographs that formed the corpus were taken by myself, sent to me by friends and acquaintances, or taken by male volunteers willing to go into the male bathrooms at the universities. The data collection started in June 2018 and finished in December 2021. Any graffiti examples found after this date were photographed and stored for future research. The data collection in this study followed previous linguistic landscape techniques whereby a large number of photographs were taken (Gorter, 2013). In this study there are approximately 1,100 photographs, each containing one or more graffiti inscriptions in English.

### 3.4.2 Data Harmonisation

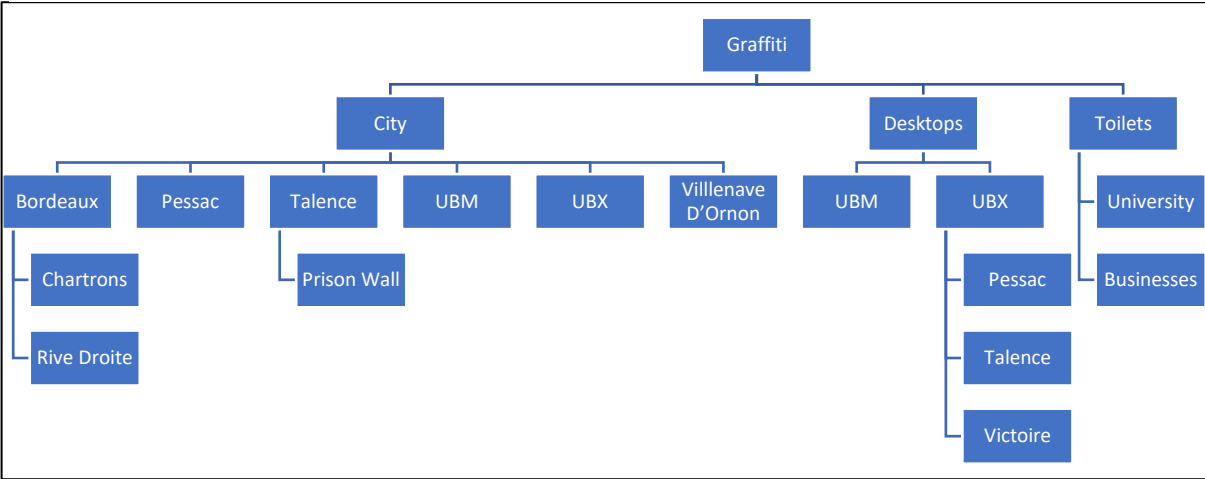
Originally, I took photographs of English language graffiti wherever I was. I have examples from several cities in France: Lyon, Paris, Marseille etc. This passion followed me to other countries and I amassed photographs of English language graffiti in the Spanish cities of Cadiz and Jerez, and then the Croatian cities of Pula, Rovinj and Pazin. I decided to refine my search area to Bordeaux in order to compare three

distinct areas in the vicinity: city graffiti, university desktop graffiti, and toilet door graffiti. Some Spanish and Portuguese graffiti was found in Bordeaux but these were removed from the dataset in order to focus on the English language graffiti. Similarly, any words that are spelt the same in English and French such as *silence* were removed from the corpus as there is no evidence that they were intended to be in English or even intended to be understood in both languages and therefore the assumption was that they were French words. The corpus includes loan words that are used in English such as *shopping*, but does not include spurious English loan words such as *footing* (Maniez, 2020).

**3.4.3 Corpus Creation**

The Combined graffiti corpora is composed of 1,237 graffiti inscriptions. Chapter 4: Graffiti inscriptions in English will go into further detail as to the distribution of the graffiti. After having finished the data collection, the photographs of the graffiti were then uploaded to a Google Drive and sorted into folders according to their location, area of Bordeaux, and placement e.g. amphitheatre, toilet etc. Each folder contains the photographs from that area as well as a spreadsheet in which I transcribed the photographs, noting their content, colour, method of creation, size, and language – English or hybrid. See Figure 14 for the layout and organisational system used.

Figure 14 Geographical organisation of the data



In order to analyse the data, I used a combination of formulas in the spreadsheet and manual counting to produce a statistical overview of the results. The data is presented in both graph and table format. The intention of this exercise was to identify the overall themes and linguistic features of the corpus. This was followed by a more in depth, qualitative exploration of individual graffiti inscriptions by word and themes.

Alrawashdeh (2021), in her thesis, writes that the majority of graffiti in her corpus are 'wild' and are produced by writers who do not prioritise linguistic norms. The same assumption can be applied to the graffiti in this corpus (p. 128). When letters in the word are not clear they are replaced with [?]. For example, in graffiti C115, the last letters are too faded and are unclear. The visible inscription is: DONT CALL ME WITHE[?]

Image 15 Graffiti C115



In order to determine the part of speech of the words, I used online sites to verify my understanding of the words, namely: <https://parts-of-speech.info/> and <https://textinspector.com>. When these two sites did not reflect my instinct, I checked the word in a dictionary and often found it belonged to several categories of part of speech according to the way in which the word was used. For example, *love* can be a verb: to *love* or a noun: for the *love* of something. In this case, the word was either identified due to the surrounding words: *I love you*, or it was labelled as both: *verb or noun*.

### 3.5 Tattoo Study

The inspiration for the tattoo section of my data was when an acquaintance contacted me through our mutual friend to ask if I would be willing to proofread their tattoo. The person had chosen the English phrase 'fall down seven times, stand up eight' and wanted to check that the English was correct. It is thanks to this encounter that I became interested in how people choose a language for artistic works and their relationship to the language, see section 5.9.1 Sara – Tattoo bearer for the interview.

The initial method, asking people in the public domain with tattoos for an interview and a photograph, had to be abandoned following the COVID-19 crisis and the resulting lockdown. To avoid losing time I decided to use an online survey to reach tattoo bearers. The survey was posted in various groups on the social media platform Facebook. I relied on self-administration, whereby the participants decide whether or not to take part and there is little interaction between the researcher and the participant. It is an opt-in rather than opt-out strategy.

### **3.5.1 Data Compilation**

The first survey was published on my personal Facebook account and shared by friends and family from the 30th of May 2020 to the 9th of June 2020, there was an English and a French version. This pilot study was considered when refining the questions for the second survey. The second survey was disseminated across 11 Facebook groups over the period of 70 days from the 25th of September to the 3rd of December 2020. In three of the Facebook groups a total of 86 people did not respond to the survey but instead chose to post a photograph of their tattoo on the Facebook post. Participants were asked to leave an email address as a means of contact in order to carry out interviews and/or answer questions relating to their tattoos. To further the analysis, I conducted four interviews with tattoo bearers and three with tattoo artists.

### **3.5.2 Data Harmonisation**

There were 1,452 responses to three online surveys. To achieve the final dataset the raw data had to be harmonised. Twenty-three people responded that they did not have a tattoo and were removed from the dataset. 642 participants indicated that they had a tattoo in English. Of those 642 participants, there were 28 respondents who indicated that they had a tattoo in English but did not provide the script tattoo, the participants either omitted the text; or translated it into French and were therefore removed from the dataset. Four subjects identified themselves as being only L1 English speakers and were also removed. This left a corpus of English language script tattoos entered into the survey by the tattoo bearers and their respective demographic information. The final dataset consisted of 602 participants.

This section presented the data collection and harmonisation stage for the study of the script tattoos. The next section presents the various difficulties encountered during the data collection and analysis stage.

## **3.6 Difficulties Encountered**

This section intends to outline the difficulties encountered during the study and the solutions that were used to navigate said problems. Where necessary, examples are given in order to explain the problems and the solutions that were used.

### **3.6.1 Photographs**

The linguistic landscape researcher faces many problems such as deciding how many photographs to take, what areas to analyse, how many occurrences are enough and so on (Gorter, 2006). Huebner (2006) suggests that linguistic landscape research is not meant to be 'an indication of the linguistic composition of the city as a whole, but

simply an illustration of the range of linguistic diversity that can be found' (p. 50). The following paragraphs detail the possible problems once the photographs have been collected.

One of the difficulties when researching handwritten texts can be the quality of the writing itself. It can be complicated to read and understand. Sometimes there are spelling mistakes which can imply that the writer used a language that is not their first language (AbuJaber et al., 2012). This was also seen during the tattoo survey when people either incorrectly copied their own tattoo into the survey or did not notice that autocorrect had changed the sentence or word into French. Spelling mistakes can also be seen in the combined graffiti corpora.

One issue with the photographs of the script tattoos was that not all the text was present in the image. For example, one tattoo reads *LIFE WOULD NOT BE WORTH BEING LIVED IF THERE W[?] NO SECOND CHANCE*. If the person left contact details, I was able to check the entirety of the phrase. If not, I indicated the gaps with a question mark in between square brackets: [?]. Another issue was that the script tattoo photographs were not always clear and legible. People had taken the photographs themselves and therefore the text was backwards, upside down, and/or blurry. When analysing the data, sometimes it was necessary to rotate the image 90° or 180° and/or flip the image horizontally or vertically to be able to read the inscriptions. It was only after some of these modifications that the text was legible. Finally, some of the files were corrupted and unable to be opened.

Instead of responding to the survey, which was the initial method chosen for collecting data, some participants replied to the Facebook post by posting a photograph of their tattoo in the comments of the original post. This in turn attracted more photographs. In order to check potential typographical errors, I downloaded and saved all of the images that members of the tattoo groups posted under my original post. However, the images and phrases are not featured in this study unless they correspond to an answer in the survey, or written permission was obtained through further correspondence. A total of 181 photographs were taken from the Facebook post.

I cross referenced the data from the survey and from the photographs that had been uploaded to the original Facebook posts or emailed to me. This would resolve certain problems concerning typographical errors and word placement where people had given a full description of their tattoo(s). However, it raised other issues: namely



which photograph corresponded to which survey response. As the survey was anonymous and not everyone left contact details, it was hard to determine which photograph corresponded to which survey response. The phrase *LIFE GOES ON* appeared in both the survey corpus and the photograph corpus twice. If the person had multiple tattoos or wrote a detailed description of their tattoo, I was able also to match the photograph to the respondent. If the participant left a name or email address in the survey, I could match the person to their tattoo, if they did not leave any contact details, I was not able to tell if this was a third person with the same tattoo or one of the people in my survey and therefore, I did not include it in my appendices with the survey responses.

### **3.6.2 Image Use**

One of the issues with graffiti and tattoo research is the question of the right to publish images. Graffiti artists and writers are often anonymous or difficult to contact because of the legal ramifications they could face if charged with vandalism. Equally with tattoos, it could be argued that permission to use the photograph is required from both the tattoo bearer and the tattoo artist, as the tattoo is both on one person's body and another person's artwork. Under French law if the graffiti was photographed by myself in a public place, I can publish it. French law also allows for the publication of tattoos when either the artist or the tattoo bearer has given written permission.

### **3.6.3 Data Anomalies in the Tattoo Corpus**

There were 73 respondents who wrote their tattoo in English in the survey, but the text was not completely in English and/or was not the wording expected from their translation/explanation. As the survey was completed online, typed on a mobile telephone, or computer/laptop the inconsistencies were not due to handwriting as was the case in the combined graffiti corpora. The inconsistencies in the tattoo corpus could be the following:

- One: It is the actual phrase the person has tattooed.
- Two: The participant incorrectly copied their tattoo when completing the survey
- Three: It was changed by the auto-correct software
- Four: It was a typographical error

For example, one participant, tattoo bearer 291, wrote that her tattoo was *My childrens my lire* and gave the translation: '*Mes enfants ma vie*'. From the translation it appears that the tattoo should read '*my children my life*' however, as the participant did not leave an email address or send a photograph, I could not determine whether

the answer is the text of the actual tattoo or whether it is a typing error. In another example, the respondent had written ‘*Mémoires = souvenirs*’ and in the next question they had responded: ‘*Je préférais écrire “Memories” plutôt que “Souvenirs” [I preferred to write “Memories” rather than “Memories”]*’. In this instance I noted that the tattoo reads *memories* and that the first instance was autocorrect.

Table 10 Tattoo Bearer 153 Script Tattoos and Translations

Response written	<i>Une</i> life, one chance Maman, <b>toi</b> know I love you, you’re <b>thé</b> Queen of <b>m’y</b> Heart
Translation given	<i>Une</i> seule vie, une seule chance Maman, <b>tu</b> sais que je t’aime, tu es <b>la</b> rien de <b>mon</b> cœur
Presumed phrase	<i>One</i> life, one chance Maman, <b>you</b> know I love you, you’re <b>the</b> Queen of <b>my</b> heart

Table 10 shows the phrases written by tattoo bearer 153. The words *one*, *you*, *the* and *my* were probably all changed to their closest French counterparts: *une*, *toi*, *thé* and *m’y* by the auto-correct programme. This presumption is based on an understanding of auto-correct and also the placement of the letters on an azerty keyboard.

As demonstrated by the participant above, a common issue was typing errors in both French and English. In order to better understand the tattoos, the participants were asked to write their tattoos in both French and English. However, this did not always reduce the errors.

One participant wrote that they have the tattoo: *Lire is not a Dreams, it’s hard reality* and gave the translation: *La vue n’est pas un rêve c’est une dur réalité*. The problem here is that the word *lire* means *to read* and in their translation they have written *vue* which means *view*. As the participant sent me photographs of their two tattoos, I was able to verify the correct format of the tattoo: *Life is not a dream, it’s a hard reality*.

Image 16 Tattoo Bearer 269



In my data, I observed that the level of typing errors increases slightly as the sentence length increases and then decreases for the longest phrases. Typing errors include autocorrections from English to French, for example, *my* becomes *m'y* and *problem* becomes *problème*. Other typing errors could be due to the participant. One participant wrote *nothing os impossible*, this should probably be *nothing is impossible* but without confirmation from the participant it is categorised as unidentified.

Figure 15 Diagram of an Azerty Keyboard




Figure 15 shows the layout of an azerty keyboard. Typographical errors are usually made when letters are close together and the wrong key is touched. For example, writing *live* instead of *love* due to the proximity of the 'l' and 'o' keys. This could be the case for the tattoo *nothing os impossible*, but as *os* is the French word for bones it could also be an auto-correct mistake.

On the French azerty keyboard the accents are accessible by touching the appropriate number key at the top of the keyboard without holding down shift. This makes other inconsistencies, such as *thé* instead of *the* unlikely to be a typographical error as the keys are not next to each other. In the tattoo *bury all tout secrets in m'y skin* it is unlikely that the person accidentally typed the apostrophe in the word *my* and therefore it is more likely an example of autocorrect. The same can be presumed of the word *tout* instead of *your* due to the placement of the letters on the keyboard.

Of the 73 instances of incoherent texts, 26 participants left an email address which I wrote to and 14 of them replied confirming the correct spelling of their tattoo, 11 did not reply. One respondent wrote the text incorrectly in one part of the survey and correctly in the following question. One respondent sent a photograph of their tattoo and this confirmed the correct spelling of the tattoo. Two respondents had written the source of inspiration for their tattoo. Forty-five respondents did not send a photograph or leave a means of contacting them to check the spelling of their tattoo. Where a script

tattoo has been unable to be checked the code [UNCHK] = unchecked] will be written after the inscription. See examples of each case below in the following table:

Table 11 Inconsistencies in the Survey

Survey Response	Translation provided	Means of Verification	Evidence
Never un my heart [NC]	A jamais dans mon cœur	X	X
"Alive & free " "Embrace your dark side to let your sun shine trough " "Black roses " "Fallen Angel" Et le refrain de la chanson "In the shadows " de The Rasmus	Vivante & libre Embrasse ton côté sombre pour laisser ton soleil briller à travers Roses noires Ange déchu	Email	"Bonsoir, Oui ce sont les bonnes traductions. C'est Through ☺ Et oui, c'est le bon refrain, de la bonne chanson de The Rasmus ☺  Cordialement"
Mémories = Souvenirs	Souvenirs	The participant corrects the spelling in the following response	"Je préférais écrire "Memories" plutôt que "Souvenirs".
Guaranteed grumpy note juste à mood it s a Lifestyle	Garanti grincheux pas un effet de mode c est un mode de vie	Photograph	Image 17 Tattoo Bearer 295 
"Bury all tout secrets in m'y skin Caress thé needle prick in m'y été"	Enterré tout tes secrets dans ma peau Carresse la piqûre d'aiguille dans mon œil	Cross reference of translation provided by the participant and the source cited: CF Slipknot and Machine Head	"Bury all your secrets in my skin Caress the needle prick in my eye"

As demonstrated in the table above, the ethnographic element of this study was very important. In some cases, I was able to contact the participants and ask them for clarification on the spelling or the meaning of their tattoo. The problems resolved by contacting the participants are detailed below.

One major challenge was when there were instances in the online survey where the response from the participants was not clear. Tattoo bearer 225 has the tattoo: 'Create your life by living your dreams' gave the following reason for this choice:

*‘Créer ta vue en vivant tes rêves’*

*Plus élégant et car c’est un leitmotiv pour avancer dans la vie’*

*[Create your life by living your dreams*

*More elegant [in English] and because it’s a mantra/motto for moving forward in life]*

This translation was complicated because of the word “leitmotiv” which is more commonly spelt: *leitmotiv* or *leitmotif* in English.

Finally, during the creation of the appendices, I reverified the data and realised that one participant, tattoo bearer 7, had answered the survey twice. The second entry has been removed from the results but the codes were not rewritten as it was too late to make such an adjustment.

### **3.6.4 Language Ability**

When asked for the languages the participants spoke, many of them wished to indicate their level writing “notions d’anglais”, “je parle anglais couramment” and so on [*basic English*], [*I speak English fluently*]. Unfortunately, I did not have the foresight to restructure this question and ask all the participants to indicate their level of English. This would have been most useful and opened up more avenues of analysis for the research.

### **3.6.5 Participants’ Gender(s)**

The ratio of male to female to non-binary genders in my survey does not reflect the French demographic or the demographic of Facebook users (75.1% female, 19.1% male, and 5.8% non-binary or undisclosed). According to the data provided by Facebook users, 56.5% are male and 43.7% are female. According to INSEE, as of January 2019, 51.6% of the population in France are female (INSEE, n.d.). This means that there is significant disparity between my participants, the users of Facebook, and the French nation. One reason for this could be the number of men and women in the Facebook groups where my survey was posted. Given the size of the Facebook groups, which have between 2,700 and 46,500 members,<sup>33</sup> it is hard to determine the groups’ demographics to see if they are an accurate representation of the Facebook community. The high percentage of female respondents goes against findings in the

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<sup>33</sup> Approximate figures given by Facebook.

late 90s where the research suggested that younger males are more likely to respond to surveys on the Web' this was collaborated by several studies of college aged students and low survey response rates (M. A. Smith & Leigh, 1997).

### **3.6.6 Nonresponse Bias**

One of the reasons that the data for the ages and genders of the participants does not reflect the global population or French population is nonresponse bias. Nonresponse can be divided into two categories: *total* and *item* or *unit* (Sax et. al. 2003). *Total* nonresponse is when individuals choose not to participate in the survey and are therefore not counted in the data, whereas *unit* or *item* nonresponse refers to incomplete survey responses (Sax et al., 2003). Nonresponse bias is the bias that is created when respondents to a survey do not correspond to the demographic or attitudinal variables (Sax et. al. 2003), in this case instead of having an almost equal response rate from males and females, the ratio is almost four females to every one male. Couper (2000) explains that 'not all people included in the sample are willing or able to complete the survey' (p. 473). Another issue with using the Facebook groups is that the identity of the user can be hidden, the groups could be 90% female but as the identity of the nonrespondents is unknown no assumptions can be made (Sax et. al 2003). One reason for nonresponse bias and/or a low response rate is the fact that online surveys lack a human interviewer, this can reduce the motivation to start and/or complete a survey (Manfreda et al., 2008).

## **3.7 Ethics**

In this section, the ethical implications of this current research are outlined. This is a particularly important section as tattoos are physical markers on the participants that make them identifiable and graffiti writers are often anonymous to avoid legal repercussions for their writing.

### **3.7.1 Image Usage, Rights and Permission**

The question of rights and permission with graffiti writers is difficult. It is often hard or impossible to contact the writers. In this study, the graffiti inscriptions are written in public places and therefore do not need permission to be photographed or published and are therefore available for research (Reppen, 2022).

At the beginning of the online surveys, the participants were informed how their data would be used in this study. By completing the survey, it was understood that they agreed to the use of their answers.

## Les tatouages de langues

Ce questionnaire se fait dans le cadre de la recherche d'une doctorante de l'Université Bordeaux Montaigne.

Vous êtes libre d'arrêter à tout moment. Vous êtes libre de vous retirer de l'étude à tout moment. Vous pourrez, si vous le souhaitez, accéder aux résultats de cette étude, lorsque celle-ci sera entièrement terminée.

En cliquant sur "Suivant" vous donnez votre consentement à l'utilisation de vos réponses pour cette recherche. Toutes les données seront utilisées de manière anonyme.



Written permission was necessary to use the interview in this study. Prior to each exchange with a participant, I explained the research project and my intentions for the interview. Once the participants were happy, we began the interview. At the end of the interview, I gave them the consent and image authorisation form that I had created based on existing English models and had these verified by a doctoral colleague and his director at the University of Bordeaux Law faculty. The same form was also sent to the tattoo bearers from the online survey who were willing to share photographs of their tattoos with me. The consent and image authorisation form explained the research project to the participants and gave my details and those of my directors should the participants have any further questions. The form allowed for the participants to choose whether they were filmed with or without images and audio, and give permission for their tattoo images to be used. An example of the consent and image authorisation form can be found in the appendices.

In order to preserve the anonymity of the participants, each participant was given a pseudonym or a code name (for example, tattoo bearer 101). Faces were also removed from the photographs. One participant had designed their tattoo and asked to be credited with the design. After much deliberation it was decided that it was best not to use this photograph in the main body of the thesis to avoid an issue of anonymity. Only the Universities of Bordeaux and Bordeaux Montaigne are identified by name. As public institutions and places of research it was deemed acceptable for an ethnographic study to name the universities.

### 3.7.2 Researcher Implications

Feminist research has acknowledged that the relationship and interaction between the participants and the researcher has a significant role to play, particularly when there is a friendship that predates the study (Bucholtz & Hall, 2010; Oakley, 2016). The

online survey used to obtain data on tattoo bearers was originally posted on my social media account and therefore the only responses were from my friends and family. Oakley (2016) suggests that the bond between researcher and participants is not an obstacle but rather an asset, and can be helpful when collecting quality data. It should be acknowledged that the participants in this study, and many studies, give their time and share their personal information without receiving any monetary compensation, just the knowledge that they are helping a researcher. The first people who are often willing to help a researcher are said friends and family as well as their friends and family. Friends, family, and acquaintances can be considered a convenience sample (Brewis, 2014; Özdemir et al., 2011). Convenience samples can be essential for the researcher, particularly when the study requires a lot of participant cooperation.

To add to the convenience sample of my friends and family the survey was shared in public groups on social media. Although the survey was sent out online to people I did not know, the other group members could see the name of my social media account and access my personal photographs and information that are made public by the social media website. Once they had clicked on the survey, the participants could see my full name, email address, and information about my research.

As researchers, we cannot deny the existence of our own values and interest in our research topic and as such the bias that we bring to the subject and the study. Researcher bias is inevitable but manageable. According to McCarty (2019) and Shenton (2004), the researcher can affect the study more than the other instruments used, particularly in qualitative research. Bias may have influenced some of the choices made about methods, participant groups, guided the interview process etc. I have done my utmost to minimise researcher influence through the use of online surveys and allowing the participants to speak freely and openly during the semi-guided interviews.

Brewer (2003) explains the influence of the researcher is also a part of ethnographic studies because the ethnographic descriptions are 'partial, selective, even auto-biographical, because they are tied to the particular ethnography and the contingencies under which the data were collected' (p.101). This study exists because of who I am, my personal context, and background in France. Post-activist research often considers the background of both the subject and of the researcher, as well as their respective backgrounds and contexts (Cohen et al., 2011). The linguistic ability and background of the tattoo bearers will be explored through the survey and the case



studies. My personal background not only inspired this work, but my professional background helped to shape it.

In this study, the advantage is that the script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions predate the participant completing the survey, giving an interview, or being photographed. As the inscriptions being studied were written before interaction with the researcher they are not part of the 'researcher-instigated situation' and discourse (Hammersley, 2018, p. 8). Furthermore, studying graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos is a means to avoid Labov's (1981) observer's paradox, which is also referred to as the experimenter effect in other fields. The researcher only observed two graffiti writers in the act, see interviews with Mr. Liberté and Jean, and did not observe anyone being tattooed. Therefore, the non-observed inscriptions are distanced from and unaffected by the researcher.

### **3.8 Concluding Remarks**

This chapter has outlined the methods, approaches and techniques used to conduct this study as well as the difficulties incurred. The methods used were both quantitative and qualitative to exploit the data from a variety of angles considering the data as a whole, as well as the individual case studies of the inscriptions and the tattoo bearers. The range of data meant that the approaches were equally inspired by the data and aimed at responding to the research questions.

The study primarily used the tool of linguistic landscape and an approach which was broadly corpus based. The script tattoo corpus contains 3,409 tokens and the graffiti inscriptions contains 4,227 tokens. This was complemented by ethnographical approaches in the form of surveys and interviews of tattoo bearers, tattoo artists, and graffiti writers. The overall approach to the study was in keeping with the definitions of linguistic identity outlined in the literature review.

My own position as a researcher has been recognised as the starting point of the research study and impactful on the data collection process, particularly in the interviewing process. Efforts have been made to reduce my impact as well as take advantage of my position. The next chapter contains the data and results of the research into graffiti inscriptions. Examples of the data are provided throughout the text and in the accompanying appendices.

Image 18 Graffiti C171



#### 4 Graffiti Inscriptions in English

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the graffiti inscriptions, which was built from fieldwork during this thesis, through the theories and approaches discussed in the methods chapter. The data for this thesis was collected from three main areas: the city of Bordeaux, public toilets, and desktops at the Universities of Bordeaux and Bordeaux Montaigne. As the original photographs of the graffiti were not the easiest medium for analysis, each piece of graffiti was then copied and input into a digital corpus. The graffiti will be presented in a similar manner to that of Menis' (2002) research<sup>34</sup>, whereby the graffiti is typed by the researcher and then analysed. The combined graffiti corpora are a metaphorical snapshot of the inscriptions as graffiti is temporary, since it can often be cleaned or covered over. This means that the photographs, and therefore the data in them, if revisited, could be different upon each visit. Each of the graffiti inscriptions has been written verbatim according to what can be seen in the photograph, where any letters or words are unclear or unknown this is marked with brackets and a question mark: [?].

I will analyse the data together in one combined corpus, nonetheless the disparities between the three smaller corpora will be presented throughout. I will support the findings of my analysis with examples from the combined corpora. The full collection of photographs can be found in the appendices. All the photographs in this thesis were taken by the researcher, a volunteer working with the researcher, or were sent to the researcher by colleagues.

It has been observed that there are specific language and systematic processes within graffiti inscriptions (Ley & Cybriwsky, 1974; Mangeya, 2014). This chapter intends to follow the previous research in this way and explore the regularities and irregularities in English graffiti inscriptions found in the Bordeaux area. It can be argued that despite the negative perceptions and connotations of graffiti, graffiti inscriptions

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<sup>34</sup> Menis (2002) was inspired by the works of Hentschel (1987)

themselves remain an alternative form of discourse thus allowing for a sociolinguistic exploration of the inscriptions (Mangeya, 2014).

**4.2 Research Questions**

For this chapter the data was collected during a three-year period in the city of Bordeaux plus four interviews with graffiti writers/artists. The data was used to create three corpora, one for each area, and also one combined corpus with all of the results. This was used to answer the following research questions:

1. What words and phrases are most written in graffiti in the sample area?
2. What can these words and phrases show us about the relationship L1 French speakers have with English?
3. How is identity expressed through graffiti inscriptions?
4. How can language be an indicator of language flux and hybridity?

The findings to these research questions will aid in answering the main research question concerning graffiti inscriptions: what can be learnt about L2 English use through graffiti inscriptions in France?

**4.3 Presentation of the Corpora**

The study of graffiti was inspired by two inscriptions found in a public toilet in a bar in the city of Bordeaux. One inscription, which was of a sexual nature, had been written by one person and modified by another, see graffiti T48. The study of language hybridity was inspired by a second piece of graffiti found on this door, graffiti T47, see section: 4.5.1 Hybrid Phrases for more examples.



The graffiti inscriptions found in all three areas (city, desktops, and toilets) are produced in various forms: tag, street art, engravings, collages, and slogans. This study focuses solely on graffiti inscriptions containing English. These categories have been devised due to the spatial distribution of the inscriptions. The data will be analysed both as a combined corpus and as three separate corpora.

Table 12 Composition of the Corpora

	<i>Total</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Desktop</i>	<i>Toilet</i>
<i>Inscriptions</i>	1237	392	797	48
<i>Tokens</i>	4227	1127	3016	295
<i>Types</i>	2072	744	1575	231
<i>Type-Token Ratio</i>	0.49...	0.06...	0.52...	0.78...

The type-token ratio is used to determine lexical diversity (Templin, 1957). To obtain the ratio, the total number of types are divided by the total number of tokens. The higher the number, the more diverse the lexis. In this study, the toilet corpus is the most diverse whilst the city corpus is the least diverse. According to B. Richards (1987), the ‘ideal’ score would be 1.00 whereby none of the words in the sample would be repeated.

Despite boasting a high level of lexical diversity, it can be argued that the toilet corpus is small and potentially too small for research. However, the other two corpora and the combination of the three corpora are in keeping with other research projects on graffiti inscriptions, see Table 12. In previous studies, Olusoji (2013) analysed a corpus of 152 inscriptions, Bartholome and Synder’s (2004) study contained 269 graffiti inscriptions, Trahan’s (2011) work was focused on a total of 323 inscriptions, Islam’s (2011) corpus contained 338 individual texts, and Green (2003) analysed 723 inscriptions. Furthermore, this study also includes a chapter on tattoos with its own corpus, and this additional corpus contains 826 inscriptions for analysis and comparison as a corpus and with the combined graffiti corpora. The quantity of inscriptions does not impact the quality of the data and analysis that is possible for this research.

The first corpus contains the inscriptions taken from the city of Bordeaux. City graffiti is part of the cityscape; Demska (2019) argues that ‘a cityscape usually forms part of the past, present, and future’ (p. 1). The city walls are covered in individual experiences which are in constant flux (Moran, 2016). As demonstrated during the literature review, graffiti can be considered the unofficial text of the streets. If urban graffiti is the ‘indigenous’ view of society (Page, 1988, p. 165), it could be argued that desktop graffiti is the ‘indigenous’ view of universities. García-Arenal Rodríguez (2018) referred to graffiti on prison cell walls as the ‘chronicle of the life in the cell, the references and the evolution of the inmates, in soliloquy or dialogue’ (p. 66). Therefore,

I would argue that in this study the graffiti on the desktops could be considered the chronicle of the life of the students, their evolution, in both soliloquy and dialogue.<sup>35</sup>

Graffiti, despite being an ancient means of communication, is often linked to young people (Ball, 2019), it is often found on desktops. Ball (2019) defines desktop graffiti as 'student-authored graffiti on student desktops' (p. 1). I am going to broaden the study of desktop graffiti to include classroom chairs and walls. It could be argued that the same graffiti process takes place on the walls and chairs as it does on desktops as it is found in the same vicinity: a classroom setting. I have chosen to keep Ball's term, desktop graffiti, as it is the most used surface written on in the classroom setting. The desktop graffiti can be used to access the thoughts and feelings of the students. According to Gasparyan (2020), graffiti in a place of education can be studied from a pedagogical angle by teachers to identify students' problems.

The final area of the data consists of graffiti that is found in toilets, both in public and university facilities. Graffiti found in toilets can be referred to as 'latrinalia' or 'private' graffiti (Halsey and Young, 2002; Lynn and Lea, 2005). Green (2003) writes that 'toilet graffiti is a unique window into the relationship between gender, language, and social context' (p. 282). In this study the distinction between the genders has not been one of the main focuses of the analysis for two main reasons: the size of the corpus and most toilets where graffiti were found are unisex.

The graffiti found on toilet doors varies from being informative, discursive, insulting, to conversational. This intimate area sometimes reveals intimate graffiti, Menis (2002) finds that in the graffiti in women's toilets the main themes covered were: problems in relationships, sex, politics, jokes, and poetry. The graffiti in men's toilets was also sexual, either showing off or discussing women in a sexual manner, as well as insulting other men (Menis, 2002). Islam (2011) finds that toilet cubicles are culturally important and can have strong implications when understanding authorship of graffiti within institutions.

The toilet graffiti corpus is composed of 48 examples taken from the universities of Bordeaux and Bordeaux Montaigne, as well as two public bars. No examples of

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<sup>35</sup> Blume (1985) also likened prison to school-based graffiti due to their 'situational relations' (p. 139).

English-language toilet graffiti were found at the Peixotto Campus of the University of Bordeaux.

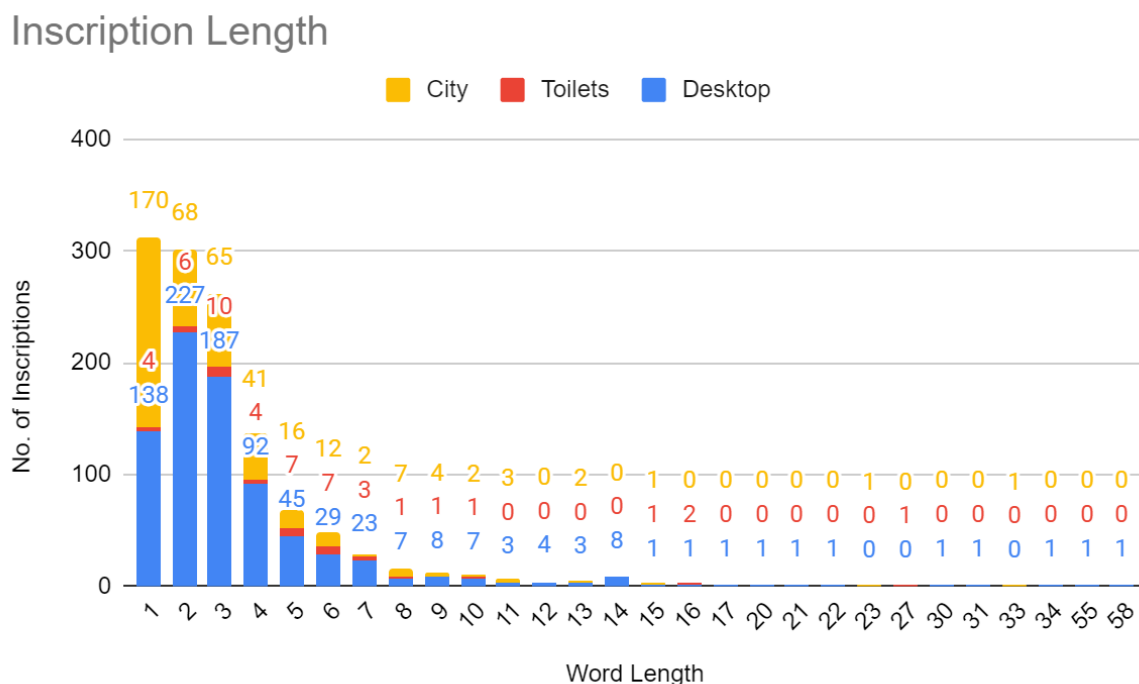
Table 13 Location of Toilet Graffiti

Total	UBx Pessac	UBx Victoire	UBM	Public Bars
48	1	7	36	4
	Female	Unisex	Unisex	Unisex

The table shows that the majority of the toilet inscriptions came from unisex toilets. Having one unisex toilet is commonplace in the bars in Bordeaux. Unisex toilets are also common at both the universities used in this study.

At a syntactic level, the graffiti inscriptions are not always complete sentences, they are often just one or two words long. There were 312 one-word inscriptions, 301 two-word and 262 three-word inscriptions. The mean length of graffiti inscriptions is 3.41 words. When the word or words are illegible, they will be replaced with the marker [?].

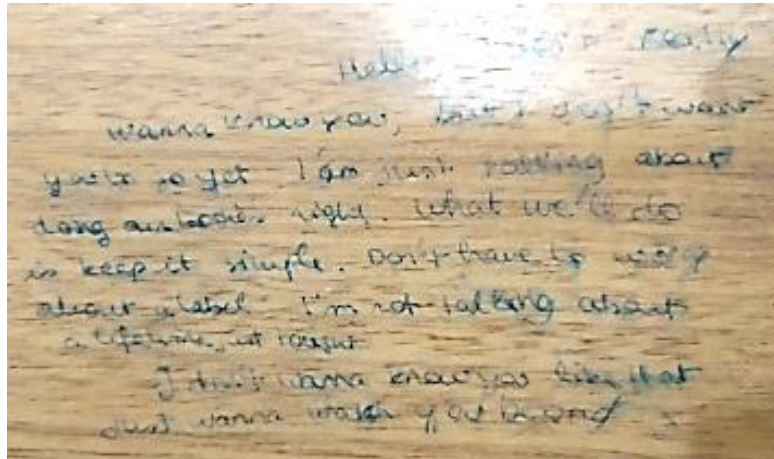
Graph 1 Inscription Length



Graph 1 shows that all three corpora include mainly short phrases between one and three words in length. The city corpus has the most one-word inscriptions (n = 170) which accounts for 43% of its respective corpus, this could be in part due to the time/spatial constraints of the writers and/or the presence of one-word tags (n = 96 tags). The desktop corpus contains 227 two-word inscriptions which accounts for

almost a third of the inscriptions. The most frequent word length in the toilet corpus is three words ( $n = 10$ ) and this accounts for 21% of the inscriptions in that corpus. The longest inscription in the city was 13 words long, the longest inscription in a toilet was 27 words long. The longest graffiti inscription overall was 58 words long and found on a desktop.

Image 22 D40 The Longest Graffiti Inscription



'Hello really want know you, but I don't want you to go yet I am just talkin about doing our bodies right. What we'll do is keep it simple. Don't have to worry about a label I'm not talking about a life time just tonight I don't wanna know you like that just wanna watch you be bad'

Desktop, Université Bordeaux Montaigne

The 58-word inscription is from a song called *Nomad* by a group called *Walk Off The Earth* written in 2017. It is an example of manifest intertextuality, other examples of manifest intertextuality containing song lyrics can be seen in section 4.8.1.1: Music.




#### 4.4 Graffiti Forms

The following paragraphs are dedicated to presenting the forms of graffiti data. The following categories and divisions are based on my own interpretations of the data in keeping with grounded theory and thematic analysis, see section 3.2.3.1 and 3.2.3.2 in Methods.

Graffiti, by nature, is often illegal and in this corpus 1,210 inscriptions were categorised as being illegal (Skulte & Kozlovs, 2020). Twenty-seven English inscriptions were found in a known legal graffiti area in Bordeaux. There were 12 examples of temporary graffiti in the form of collages and stickers which are more easily removed than paint or spray. Sticker graffiti is considered a way to accomplish a considerable quantity of tagging with minimal risk and effort (Alvelos, 2004).



Table 14 Examples of Graffiti Legality

Legal		Illegal	
Temporary	Permanent	Temporary	Permanent
	Image 23 Graffiti C286	Image 24 Graffiti C114	Image 25 Graffiti C53
			
N = 0	N = 27	N = 12	N = 1198









According to my graffiti writer sources, the two main sites for legal graffiti in Bordeaux are the Darwin centre and a park near the river. It could be argued that the temporary graffiti are not true examples of graffiti, however, I would argue that they are still a form of street communication. There is the possibility that some of the pieces were commissioned but I was unable to find evidence to support this. Illegal graffiti is found everywhere and on everything. The main locations identified in this study are desktops (n = 762), walls (n = 239), and toilets (n = 48).

Table 15 List of Graffiti Inscription Locations

Location	Frequency
Desktop	762
Wall	239
Toilet	48
Underpass	33
Door	23
Electrical Box	20
Public Sign	14
Business Shutter	9
Container, Seating, Lamp Post, Ground	8
Blocus, Bin, Barrier	7
Shop Windows, Parking Meter	5
Drain Pipe	4
Wooden Structure, White Van, Train, Bus Stop	3
Poster, Road	2
Classroom Chair, Gate, Notice Board, Own Structure, Table, Rocks	1

Not unlike the varied locations of graffiti inscriptions, as seen in Table 15, the tools used to create the content are also varied. The different graffiti forms are presented below with a photograph from the combined graffiti corpora to demonstrate.

Table 16 Tools used to create Graffiti Inscriptions

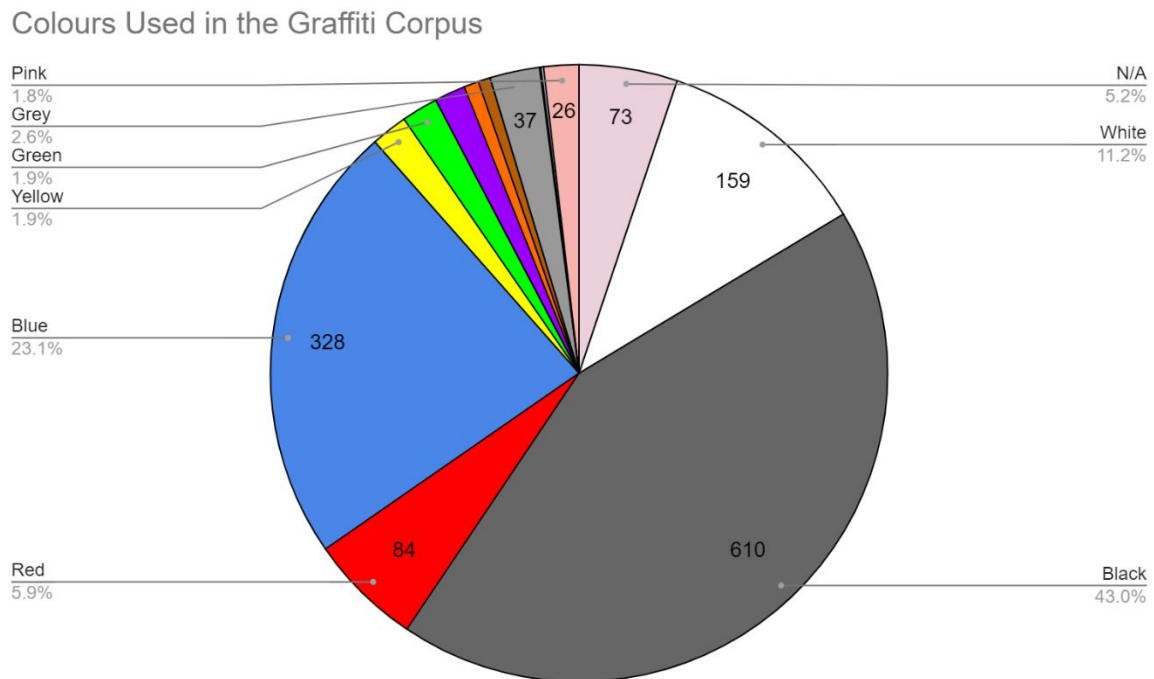
Pen and Engraving	Paint and Spray	Corrector Fluid	Graffiti Pen
<p>Image 26 Graffiti D182</p> 	<p>Image 27 Graffiti C54</p> 	<p>Image 28 Graffiti D144</p> 	<p>Image 29 Graffiti C184</p> 
Pencil or Crayon	Stickers	Chalk	Collages
<p>Image 30 Graffiti D100</p> 	<p>Image 31 Graffiti C250</p> 	<p>Image 32 Graffiti C388</p> 	<p>Image 33 Graffiti T44</p> 

The tools used to create the graffiti inscriptions can also be divided into the following categories: pen (n = 748), engravings (n = 582), spray paint (n = 224), graffiti pen (n = 99), corrector fluid (n = 75), pencil or crayon (n = 16), paint (n = 16), stickers (n = 7), chalk (n = 6) and collages (n = 5). Many of the desktop graffiti inscriptions are engraved with a pen, therefore they are counted as both pen and engraving where appropriate. Some inscriptions in the city were made using a combination of graffiti pen, paint, and spray paint. These are the reasons why the total number of forms is bigger than the total of the inscriptions.

On the desktops, the use of pen (n = 639), corrector fluid (n = 66), and engraving (n = 581) are the most common forms. There is one example whereby a writer has engraved their message into the stone wall in the city corpus. The use of stickers is mostly present in the city (n = 5) and toilet corpora (n = 2). The use of paint (n = 14) and spray paint (n = 225) are exclusive to the city corpus. The use of what appears to be a graffiti pen is mainly found in the city corpus (n = 62) and in a few examples in the toilet corpus (n = 10). The choice of utensil for graffiti writing could be influenced by practicality: it would be difficult to use spray paint during a lecture in an amphitheatre. This would suggest that the desktop graffiti writers favour the utensils that they have with them during their classes. This could be because the desktop writers do not all intend to write graffiti, whereas the collages are prepared by graffiti writers using printers before being pasted onto the walls, and therefore the act of graffitiing is intentional.

Although the focus of this study is primarily on the words themselves, the data relating to colour was also noted. A total of 13 colours were used in the inscriptions, some of the inscriptions were created using more than one colour. Graph 2 shows the distribution of colours used in the corpus.

Graph 2 Colours used in the Combined graffiti corpora



Of the 1,237 inscriptions, 1,107 contained just one colour which was predominant black or blue (n = 518 and 267 respectively). In Ouaras's (2018) study, the Algerian writers explained that they used colour to say 'no' in their street art. This study focuses primarily on graffiti slogans rather than street art, and the limited use of colour in these inscriptions suggests that colour is not as important a factor for graffiti writers as it is for street artists. The terms used to describe the two groups also hints at this differentiation: graffiti 'writers' and street 'artists'. As I focus primarily on graffiti writing, I use the term graffiti writers.

Table 17 Distribution of Colours in Graffiti Inscriptions

Number of colours	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven
Frequency	1,107	97	22	9	1	0	1

As demonstrated in Table 17, the most colourful inscription contains seven colours: black, red, blue, yellow, green, purple and orange. As the message of the inscription was linked to colours, the use of colours further emphasises the message.<sup>36</sup>



Graffiti C56 was a banner seen from the road in the city of Bordeaux. The inscription is a variation of the phrase *All Cops Are Bastards* which will be explored in more detail in section 4.6.3.1: ACAB. The above inscription is combined with two characters from North American popular culture: a Minion from the film *Despicable Me*, and Rick Sanchez from *Rick and Morty*. There also appears to be a phrase covering the eyes of the characters, but the writing style of graffiti lettering is often illegible for people outside of the graffiti world. When graffiti, and often tags, are illegible, this can be considered an affront on the part of the tagger against the institutionally created and maintained alphabet (Beyaert-Geslin, 2019).



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<sup>36</sup> During the creation of the graffiti appendices I realised that graffiti C256 and C257 (*beautiful and colors*) are actually part of a second occurrence of the phrases *All colors are beautiful*. That inscription also used colours to emphasise the point with each word being a different colour.

The use of more than one colour is also unusual in the desktop corpus. Of the 847 inscriptions, graffiti D558 is the only inscription with more than one colour. The inscription is in three parts and has three colours. Green for the personal pronoun 'I', red for the heart symbol, and blue for the words 'BRIGNOU' which could be a French-language nickname. The changes in colour suggest that the writer chose to change colour and chose the colours accordingly, red for example, is often associated with love and this could be why it was chosen for the heart.

#### 4.5 Part of Speech and Semantics

This subsection focuses on the grammatical analysis of the graffiti inscriptions as one combined corpus through their grammatical features also known as part of speech. Part of speech refers to the grammatical feature or category of the word, i.e. noun, verb, adjective, determiner etc. For example, the graffiti inscription C73 *Time is the answer* contains two nouns: *time* and *answer*, one verb in the third person present simple: *is*, and one determiner *the*. The grammatical features can be divided into two categories: language style and language content. Language style is considered as 'a person's use of function words including pronouns, articles, conjunctions, and several other categories that make up the grammatical structure of utterances' (Ireland & Mehl, 2014, p. 204). Whereas language content refers to 'a person's use of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and most adverbs' (Ireland & Mehl, 2014, p. 204).

I identified 4,181<sup>37</sup> words or numbers in the corpus. Each inscription is broken down into individual words. These words are then each categorised according to the grammatical feature which I refer to as the part of speech. The website <https://parts-of-speech.info/>, which was based on the Stanford University Part-Of-Speech Tagger, was used to check the phrases as well as dictionaries. Analysis of the part of speech is one of the most common forms of corpus annotations (Reppen, 2022).

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<sup>37</sup> This differs slightly from the 4,227 tokens identified by the AntConc programme as I was able to separate some compound words such as *snapchat* and *easyweed* and analyse them separately whereas the programme counted them as one token rather than two.

Image 36 Graffiti C11



For example, in graffiti C11 *Pallo and Priss*: *and* is categorised as a conjunction, *priss* is an adjective, but the word *pallo* did not feature in any of the dictionaries that I checked and was therefore classed as unclear. In the overall corpora, 107 were marked as unclear, in the city corpus (n = 100), in the desktop corpus (n = 70), and none in the toilet corpus.

Table 18 Frequency of Parts of Speech

Abbreviation/Acronym 75	Adjective 274	Adverb 256	Conjunction 61
Contraction 74	Determiner 234	Interjection 14	Proper Nouns 229
Negation 32	Noun 999	Number 81	Prefix 3
Preposition 215	Pronoun 324	Slang 47	Verb 715

Table 18 shows the distribution of the main categories. The most frequently written part of speech in the graffiti inscription corpus were nouns (n = 999) followed by verbs (n = 715) and pronouns (n = 324). These results differ slightly from previous findings whereby the predominant parts of speech used were: adjectives, nouns, and verbs (Paudel & Neupane, 2019). In Krawiec's (2007) study, the order of most commonly borrowed English lexis was nouns, verbs and adjectives. There were also a total of 218 French words identified in the corpus as part of hybrid phrases. Punctuation was used in 275 inscriptions.

There were 113 words that could be classed as one or more categories of part of speech. A total of 109 inscriptions could be categorised as either a verb or a noun.

Graffiti D77: *snap chat* contains two words that can be both nouns and verbs, however together they are the name of a social media application.



The name of the social media application is written as one word: Snapchat, and the inscription above is two words: *SNAP CHAT* therefore I have categorised both of the words in the category of verb or nouns rather than a proper noun. The two graffiti inscriptions *oLo clean* and *VOID* could be classed as either containing a verb or an adjective, *oLo* is marked as unclear.



There were two inscriptions that could be classified as a noun, adjective or verb. The two inscriptions were both a one-word inscription that read: *shit*. The word *shit* can be used as a verb: to defecate, as a noun to mean faeces, or as an adjective to mean very bad. All the occurrences of the word *shit* are discussed in section 4.6.2: Swearing.

**4.5.1 Nouns**

Nouns were the most frequently written part of speech. Of the 1,237 inscriptions, 661 contained a word that was defined as a noun (not including proper nouns). Table 19 presents the full list of nouns used in the combined corpora.

Table 19 List of Nouns in Combined Corpora

Nouns	Frequency
Love	21
Life	17
Art	14
Power	13
Day; peace	11
Time; World	10
Bitch; sex; weed	9
Duck	8
Hell; star; youth; shit	7
Bang; iron; maiden; people; rock; sky; street	6
Crew; war; god; dog; end; death; mask	5
City; system; funk; pussy; earth; thing; light; wars; boys; mother; dude	4
Society; drugs; night; dream; luck; ball; money; clitoris; queen; fire; water; eye; style; mister; toys; daddy; heaven; ass; fish; trance; man; way; thug; force; doors; cake; blood; looser; pumpkins; dick	3
Toy; cow; key; spirit; party; energy; colors; shark; answer; effect; nightmare; warning; humans; trash; borders; nations; police; jungle; community; drink; girl; error; bandit; knowledge; things; words; stairway; kids; heart; talent; billionaire; house; sun; year; hole; winter; master; soul; guy; umbrella; ghost; army; eyes; baby; school; human; spring; suicide; asshole; bollocks; lords; guns; roses; pixies; hobbit; revolution; metal; meat; tsunami; music; acid; cult	2
Lily; worlds; lifes; dive; communism; tattoo; drone; guys; palm; progression; viewpoint; honey; sexism; hour; assholes; spike; clue; mission; bleakness; cider; bee; cobra; painters; walls; fascism; boot; leg; poison; sock; voice; action; punk; nazis; wind; gold; pony; camel; haters; badboy; weekend; eggs; homes; vibes; cats; rats; graffitis; stories; president; gel; lover; spot; bastard; animals; souls; brain; friends; drain; parabellum; self; joy; breath; vandalism; velvet; fanfiction; weverse; queens; university; highway; tops; days; moment; calm; kings; horse; town; road; body; movie; theater; place; seed; dirt; shadows; pills; smoothie; tree; destiny; bodies; shades; slut; slug; table; kink; moon; butterfly; chef; arms; boats; morning; lady; bug; theft; taxation; brick; trap; clout; chaser; nudes; sword; workers; month; knight; bubble; witch; hands; cookie; jar; tale; universe; bowl; squad; river; satan; fate; hippies; foot; flashbacks; memories; goodbye; kitchen; academy; wolf; sea; doll; thuglife; refugees; crime; machine; dollar; fashion; fucker; maths; womanizer; surf; devils; underdog; topdog; trick; mercy; slayer; wing; cradle; filth; injuries; hoops; games; thrones; voodoo; child; tool; toad; lesson; north; lesson; warrior; blob; brother; sorrow; trouble; fag; motherfucker; monkey; church; lord; winner; letter; edge; nightwish; dragon; cramps; rainbow; madness; ladies; core; mustard; duality; name; snowboard; sentence; nudity; reason; cure; helmet; dinosaur; pickle; spa; faith; magic; stones; years; battlefield; freak; rabbit; flames; beach; pussies; tragedy; million; deaths; statistic; offspring; emperor; bullet; valentine; duty; playboy; festival; soldiers; vampire; snow; fist; club; chemistry; ticket; country; crotch; wings; noise; taxi; destroyer; banana; weapons; spear; vegan; aliens; pearl; jam; league; flesh; herb; fruit; wax; challenge; cock; peanuts; kisses	1

The most frequently used noun was *love* (n = 21) and this was followed by *life* (n = 17), *art* (n = 14), *power* (n = 13) and so on. Table 20, shows the frequency of occurrences and relative frequency of the 16 most frequently used words in the combined graffiti corpora.



Table 20 Sixteen Most Used Nouns

Nouns	Combined Graffiti Corpora		AmE06 Corpus
	Frequency	Relative Frequency	Relative Frequency
<i>Love</i>	21	49	3 <sup>38</sup>
<i>Life</i>	17	40	8
<i>Art</i>	14	33	3
<i>Power</i>	13	30	3
<i>Day; peace</i>	11	26	6; 1
<i>Time; World</i>	10	23	16; 8
<i>Bitch; sex; weed</i>	9	21	0.1; 1; 0.05
<i>Duck</i>	8	18	0.4
<i>Hell; star; youth; shit</i>	7	16	0.8; 0.6; 0.5; 0.2

The relative frequency of the words are presented in both the combined graffiti corpora and the AmE06. The relative frequency in the 16 most used words in the combined graffiti corpora is significantly higher than in the AmE06. This is an indication of their relevance to graffiti writing. As seen in the literature review, graffiti writing is often associated with negativity and swearing, however, the most used nouns in the combined graffiti corpora are *love*, *life*, and *art*, which all have positive or neutral connotations. I will focus on the three most used nouns: *life*, *art* and *power*, excluding *love* as it can also be a verb. These nouns are used five to ten times more in the combined graffiti corpora than in the reference corpus. This suggests that these themes are key features of graffiti inscriptions. As certain conjugations of the word *love* are written the same as the noun *love*, it will be analysed in the most common words section rather than as a noun, see section 4.4.2: Love. The use of the word *world* is analysed in the most common phrase section, see section 4.2.5: The World, occurrences of the swear words *bitch*, *sex*, *weed*, *shit* and *hell* are presented in the section on swearing, see section 4.6.2.1: Swearing.

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<sup>38</sup> This includes all occurrences of 'love' as both verbs and nouns.

Table 21 Most Common Nouns in Graffiti Corpora

Life (n = 17)	Art (n = 14)	Power (n = 13)
<p>DRUGS LiFES! Thug Life THUGE W/LiFE! Fuck LiFE France [?] life Fuck LiFE iS GONE SEX RULES LiFE HATE PAIN LOVE LiFE THE [?] RUN 4 U LiFE BAD BOYS FOR LiFE CJ FOR LiFE Water Life community (n = 2)</p> <p>Love of my life you've [?] me you've broken my heart and now you have me love of my life don't you see ? bring it back bring it back Don't take it away for me</p> <p>hello really wanna know you, but I don't want you to go yet I am just talkin about doing our bodies right. what we'll do is keep it simple. Don't have worry about a label I'm not talking about a life time just tonight I don't wanna know you like that just wanna watch you be bad</p> <p>Welcome to the Good life Jungle! HELLO</p> <p>TOMORROW IS THE 1ST DAY OF THE REST OF YOUR LiFE</p>	<p>STREET ART NO STREET ART NO ART</p> <p>Nik LE STREET ART</p> <p>This is NOT ART Selor</p> <p>EN ART COMME EN AMOUR, L'INSTiNCT SUFFIT ! Fred Rush Collins</p> <p>HARMONiE ART – MONEY</p> <p>STReeT aRT iS YouR Love</p> <p>I SHIT ON YOUR STREET ART</p> <p>MAKE ART NOT WAR DO THE WRONG THING (n = 3)</p> <p>Sword art online 😊</p> <p>Do 'ART But smart art Please</p>	<p>RitA-LiNe ! power !</p> <p>B-A. FASE... O &gt; 2019 "KeROZEN" RiTaLiNe* PoweR!</p> <p>RitAliNe power ENERGY-FiX</p> <p>ZOB Dopamine power team! RitaLiNe</p> <p>Knowledge is not power it's an escape</p> <p>KNOWLEDGE IS POWER</p> <p>Flower Power</p> <p>FloweR poweR</p> <p>Flower ♥ Power</p> <p>-RIAN FLOWER POWER</p> <p>THE COBRA POWER</p> <p>POWeR GiRI</p> <p>HiGH POWER</p>

The word *life* has a relative frequency of 40 in the combined graffiti corpora and a relative frequency of eight in the AmE06. *Life* appears in three phrases associated with drugs, and three sentences are negative about life, negativity is discussed further in section 4.6.2: Negativity. Two examples are related to a charitable organisation, see section: 4.6.3.3: Anarchy vs Community. Three are song lyrics. The remaining three examples are unlinked: one is referring to a possible person, one is about relationships, one is about sexual intercourse. These initial findings support the hypothesis that graffiti is used for expressing negativity.

The literature review concluded that graffiti writing can be considered an art form as well as showing that the practice of graffiti writing is often a means to regain power in the public place, therefore it is not surprising to find these two terms in the

inscriptions. The word *art* has a relative frequency of 33 in the graffiti corpus and three in the AmE06. Eight of the examples are about street art, these are analysed further in section 6.3.5: Art within Art. One example is about online sword art, and another is about the link between harmony, money, and art. This suggests that graffiti writing is associated with art by the writers themselves. The word *power* also has a relative frequency of 30 in combined graffiti corpora and three in the AmE06. This could suggest that for this community of graffiti writers, the artistic element and power achieved through graffiti writing are equal. There are four inscriptions using the word *power* that also mention the drug *Ritaline*, three inscriptions that involve the phrase *flower power*, and there are two phrases that refer to a link between knowledge and power. The remaining three inscriptions are an artist's name, a feminist phrase, and a potential reference to spirituality.

As nouns represent content, this brief analysis can be seen as a small slice of the corpora. The examples mentioned above are examined in more detail in their respective themes.

#### 4.5.2 Verb Forms

An analysis of the verb forms used in the combined corpora can further the understanding of the phrases. The writers can use the present to refer to their thoughts and feelings, the past to describe events, and the imperative to call the readers to action.

In the combined graffiti corpora, the inscriptions containing a verb are divided into 14 categories. I have only included the words that are identified solely as verbs and not those that could have also been a noun. Graffiti inscriptions such as '*what are we doing here? Sleeping*' are identified as having three verbs in the part of speech analysis: *are*, *doing* and *sleeping*.

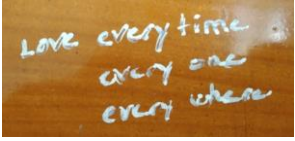

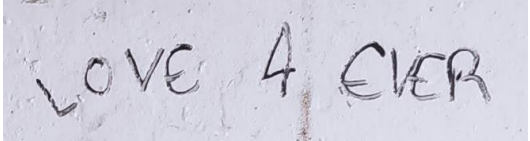
Table 22 Verb Forms Present in Graffiti Corpus

<b>Base form</b> 65	<b>Conditional</b> 3	<b>Future 'going to'</b> 2	<b>Future 'will'</b> 14	<b>Imperative</b> 240	<b>Infinitive</b> 32	<b>-ING<sup>39</sup></b> 20
<b>Modal</b> 12	<b>Present Perfect</b> 6	<b>Past Participle</b> 18	<b>Simple Past</b> 99	<b>Present Continuous</b> 10	<b>Present Simple</b> 235	<b>Unclear</b> 4

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<sup>39</sup> Gerunds and present participles have been grouped together due to the polysemy of the short phrases.

As demonstrated in Table 22, the imperative is the most used verb form in combined graffiti corpora (n = 240). The most used verb in the imperative in the combined corpora is the verb *fuck* (n = 76). The use of the word *fuck* is examined in more detail in section 4.4.1: The ‘F’ Word. The second most used verb in the imperative is *love* (n = 10). This suggests that graffitiing is used more for expressions of anger rather than encouraging people to love.

Occurrences of the word ‘love’ in graffiti inscriptions		
Image 40 Graffiti D132	Image 41 Graffiti D36	Image 42 Graffiti C181
		

The word *love* is used as an imperative to encourage people to love people and concepts. The inscriptions aimed at people read: *love yourself*, and *love me*. The inscriptions that refer to concepts read *love (A)*, *hate pain love life*, and *love gay*. Other inscriptions use the imperative to encourage the reader to love in general for example: *love!* and *love 4 ever*. More examples of the word *love* are given in section 4.4.2: Love.

Islam (2011) describes the graffiti in his study that contained the imperative mood as ‘inciting statements’ and divides them into two groups: those with a sexual context and those that are politically focused. The word *fuck* in this study is used both sexually, *fuck my asshole*, and politically, *fuck authority*. This supports Islam’s findings of the use of *fuck*.

The combined corpora contain 189 inscriptions that use the present simple, (n = 235). The use of the present simple in English can be for general truths and feelings, and the combined corpora reflect this usage with phrases such as: *I wanna Be a Billionaire* and “*HOW ARE YOU?*” The most used verb in the present simple is the verb *be* in the third person: *is* (n = 55) followed by the verb *love* (n = 34) – which was not seen in the third person singular. The conjugation ‘*is*’ is used significantly more in the combined graffiti corpora than in the AmE06 reference corpus. The relative frequency in the combined corpus is 141 compared to 82 in the AmE06. This could be because the simple present tense is often the first tense taught in English classes, or it could be that the simple present best represents the thoughts, feelings, and messages of the writers.


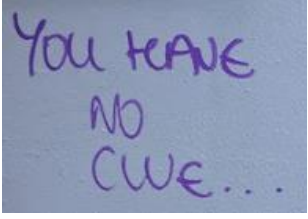
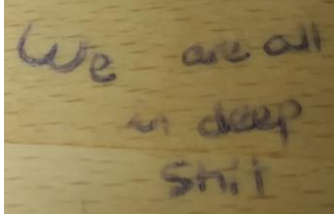
### 4.5.3 Pronouns

The repeated disparity between combined graffiti corpora and the reference corpus is evidence of the manner in which language can be used in different contexts. The pronouns *I* and *you* are used approximately three times more in combined graffiti corpora than in the AmE06 corpus, see Table 22. *We* is also used slightly more in combined graffiti corpora compared to the AmE06. Ireland and Mehl (2014) found that the use of first-person plural and second person pronouns, *we* and *you*, are used more often by extraverts, but that phrases using *I* were used by both introverts and extraverts. This suggests that the English in the graffiti inscriptions is more focused on introspection using the pronoun *I* and focusing on the artist themselves, for example, *I'm a bad guy* and *I'm a dinosaur*. Obeng (2000) writes that graffiti writers employ inclusive and exclusive pronouns to create proximity or distance with the potential readers.

Table 23 Relative Frequency over 10,000 of English Pronouns per Corpus

	<i>I</i>	<i>You</i>	<i>He</i>	<i>She</i>	<i>It</i>	<i>We</i>	<i>They</i>
All Graffiti	246	165	4	4	61	54	14
AmE06	85	46	71	44	82	31	36
City	97	79	0	0	8	26	17
Desktop	192	172	3	2	33	53	6
Toilet	406	33	0	0	0	0	33

Table 23 shows the relative frequency of the English pronouns used in the three corpora combined, in the AmE06 reference corpus, and in each of the three separate corpora: city, desktop, and toilet. The pronoun *I* is the most used pronoun in each of the five corpora. The desktop corpus has more examples of pronouns in total. The pronouns *you*, *he*, *she*, *it* and *we* are all used more in the desktop corpus. The pronoun *it* is used more in the city corpus, whilst the pronouns *I* and *they* are used more in the toilet corpus. The pronoun *they* is only used once in the toilet corpus, however due to its small size of only 295 tokens it is the corpus with the highest relative frequency for that pronoun. The AmE06 has a higher relative frequency than the combined corpora for the pronouns in the third person, both singular and plural. This could be an indication that graffiti inscriptions are mainly about the writer (*I*), about the community the writer belongs to (*WE*), and the intended reader(s) (*YOU*). The use of the pronoun *I* is higher in each individual corpus than the AmE06. This is an indication that the phrases used in graffiti inscriptions are focused more on the writer than the phrases in the reference corpus.

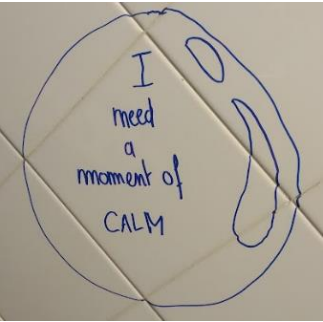
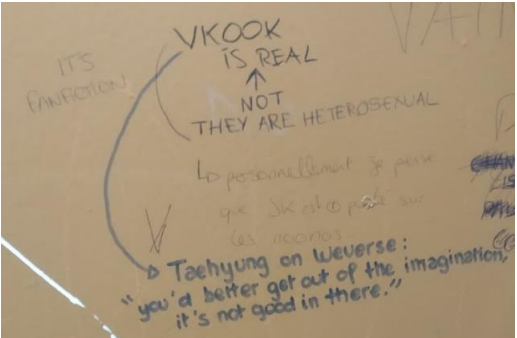
Use of Personal Pronouns		
Desktop	City	Desktop
Image 43 Graffiti D474 	Image 44 Graffiti C125 	Image 45 Graffiti D85 

The three photographs above are examples of pronoun use in the corpora. The three phrases are all in the present simple and are between two and six words long. The first inscription *I'M BATMAN* is a quote from the Batman films franchise. This is an example of manifest intertextuality, in this case, a quote from a film. The second inscription is a message to the readers and passers-by from the writer. The third photograph is also on a desktop and uses the pronoun *we*. The inscription could refer to the class or exam the student is sitting, or it could refer to the political or ecological climate at the time of writing. The student does not give any more information but from the use of *we*, it suggests that the student does not feel alone and is accompanied by others in their predicament. Unlike the pronouns *I*, *you*, *it* and *we*, the pronouns *he*, *she*, *it* and *they* are all used more in the AmE06 corpus. The pronouns *he* and *she* appear the same number of times in combined graffiti corpora, but *he* is used almost 20 times more in the AmE06 and *she* is used 11 times more. The pronoun *they* is seen twice as much in the AmE06 corpus than combined graffiti corpora. The pronoun *it* is also used more in the AmE06 but the difference is significantly less than the other pronouns.

The pronoun *I* is written significantly more in the combined and individual corpora than in the reference corpus. In the combined corpora, the pronoun *I* is followed directly by a verb 83 times. The most frequent verb was the verb *be* in the present simple: *am* and *'m* ( $n = 17$  and  $5$ ). There were a further 13 inscriptions that started with the words *I love...* There were 10 inscriptions that read *I ♥ ...* and there were two inscriptions that had the structure *I + adverb*: *just* and *never*. Finally, there were five inscriptions that were unclear: *I [?]* ( $n = 2$ ), *I C-V-D WAS HERE*, *I FUL* and *I way to Hell*. There were no instances of the word *I* being followed by an adjective.

The high frequency of use of the pronoun *I* could be due to the solitary nature of graffiti. Morva (2016) noted that the use of the first person singular pronoun is evidence of the writer's affinity to the action or state they are describing. The writers decide to

write on their own, and write something that is personal to them, for example, *I love Paris*. The use of the pronoun *I* in the toilets could be due to the intimate nature of the space.

Occurrences from the Toilet Corpus	
<p>Image 46 Graffiti T26</p> 	<p>Image 47 Graffiti T10-T14</p> 

The two inscriptions above are, in a sense, opposites. The first: *I need a moment of CALM* is one person expressing a personal need, whereas the second is a conversation between five participants. The conversation probably took place asynchronously when the five writers visited the toilet cubicle at different moments. The graffiti conversation is about two members of a Korean pop group, this example will be explored in more detail in section 4.8.1.1: Music.

Desktop Inscriptions		
<p>Image 48 Graffiti D749</p> 	<p>Image 49 Graffiti D571</p> 	<p>Image 50 Graffiti D450</p> 
<p>Image 51 Graffiti D135</p> 		
<p>Image 52 Graffiti D98</p> 		

As shown in Table 23, the desktop corpus has a higher frequency of the personal pronouns: *you, he, she, it, and we* than the other corpora. Images 48 to 52 contains an example of pronoun use on the desktops. The first engraved inscription *ARE YOU READY* could be lyrics from a song, a quote from a film, or a student asking themselves or a future student if they are ready for a test. The second example contains one of the few uses of the pronoun *he*. It appears to be a quote from somebody named J. Welch, but I have been unable to find any such quote or person. This is testament to the variety of content found in the inscriptions and in particular on the desktops.

The third inscription *she sucks the dog*, is written in a heart shape; this use of drawings and shapes will be explored in more detail in section 4.8: Images and Drawings. The content of the inscription suggests a sexual theme, which is slightly softened by the presence of the heart shape. The fourth inscription *it's beyond my control*, is an example that shows the different states of the inscriptions. The phrase has been engraved into the desktop and most of the pen has been cleaned away leaving just the indentation of the words. The final example *WE KNOW*, is an example of a two-word inscription found in an amphitheatre. Being in an amphitheatre suggests that the inscription is in response to a lecture, this could be the work of a student who has heard a piece of information one time too many and has taken out their frustration on the desktop.

#### 4.5.4 Errors

Demska (2019) writes that 'errors are a natural occurrence in any linguistic landscape' (p. 6). Mora et al. (2016) explain that the randomness of graffiti writing can hinder comprehension, they question whether the occurrences of misspelling are deliberate or accidental giving the examples: '*good sens*' and '*madafacka*' (p. 19). They posit that the first writer left off the *e* to emphasise the message and that the second writer was writing out *motherfucker* phonetically.

In this study, I have identified three types of errors: grammatical, spelling, and punctuation. The occurrences containing an error can be seen in Table 24, the errors are in bold so that they can be identified easily, where the error is a missing word, nothing is in bold.



Table 24 Errors in the Corpora

	Occurrences	Source
Grammar (n = 21)	<i>We never worlds apart, <b>DRUGS LiFES!</b>, Too [?] <b>too</b> Die, <b>DRONE</b> FOR ALL, ALL <b>Clitoris</b> Are Beautiful, CRY BOY <b>KNOW</b> LISTENING HER AND SHUT UP AFTER THIN, (F) Benji-djasé <b>want</b> to die ! I love U <b>FUCK OFF !</b>, <b>Punk'</b>not DeaD !!!, ALL COPS ARE <b>BASTARD</b> EUFO 75, WE'LL BE LESS FEMiNIST WHEN YOU'LL <b>BE</b> LESS SHiT, SEX iS COOL BUT HAVE U EVER <b>TRY</b> VANDALiSM?, I <b>shitted</b> here <b>U're</b> welcome !, <b>THE</b> ROCK 'N' ROLL ISN'T DEAD, <b>every body want</b> to rule the world, Love of my life you've [?] me you've broken my heart and now you have me love of my life don't you see? bring it back bring it back Don't take it away <b>for</b> me, Love every time <b>every one every where, HUGS MORE, WHO LET'S THE DOG OUTT</b> Momo, EVERYbody <b>LiE</b>, ALL <b>THE LEADER</b> HIDE BEHIND LIES, <b>FUCKY</b> ME!!</i>	City = 11 Desktop = 7 Toilet = 3
Spelling (n = 18)	<i>Free PARTY <b>FUCK</b> <b>AUTORiTY</b>, CORONA THE <b>RYTHM</b> OF THE NiGHT, <b>Rilax</b>, <b>BœoRiNG</b>, <b>SLYThERiNE</b> AS <b>FUCK</b>, we can plant a house we can <b>buill</b> a tree she said, Mister would you please help my <b>ponny</b>?, <b>Seiz</b> the day, <b>CONFORTABLY</b> NUMB, Forever <b>Tonig t</b>, <b>FUCK OFF ! bithes</b>, I'M MUSLIM DON'T <b>PANICK</b>, WHO LET'S THE DOG <b>OUTT</b> Momo, OY LOOSER AN WINNER, LOOSER [x2], SVTE LOOSERS, <b>BERGE</b> BORN TO LOOSER,</i>	City = 3 Desktop = 15
Punctuation (n = 3)	<i>CIDER'S, <b>IM</b> A BIG :) FAN, Sea sex &amp; Sun !</i>	City = 2 Desktop = 1
Word Order (n = 1)	<i>I will leave <b>soon</b> this beautiful city Bdx Montaigne III</i>	Toilet = 1
Total = 38	<i>n - City = 16 Desktop = 18 Toilet = 4 rf - City = 141 Desktop = 59 Toilet = 135</i>	

In the combined corpus, most of the errors are grammatical. There were four inscriptions that contained a word where the incorrect noun was used: singular or plural. For example, *DRUGS LiFES!* should read *drug life*, *drone for all* should read *drones for all*, the plural of *clitoris* is *clitorises* or *clitorides* (Butterfield, 2015), and the word *bastard* should be plural to agree with *all cops*, the word *leader* in the sentence: *all the leader hide behind lies* should be *leaders*.

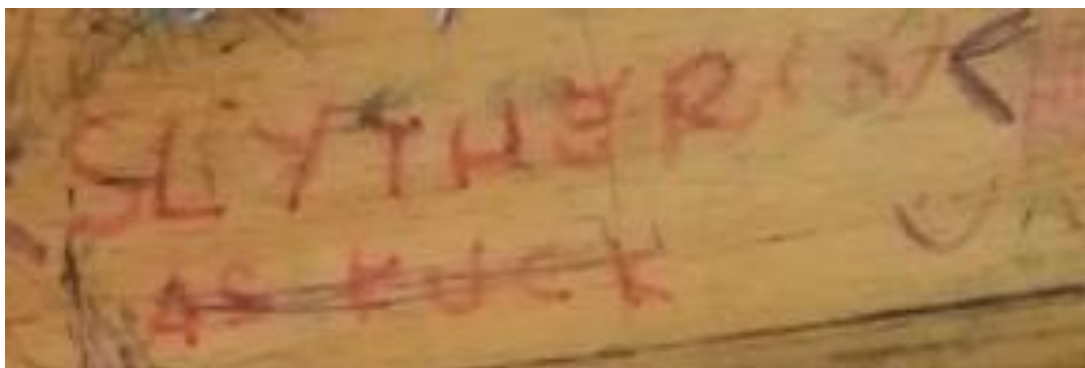
In the sentence *we never worlds apart*, there should be a verb, for example: *we are never worlds apart*. The phrase *punk'not DeaD* should have a verb: *punk's not dead*, and as corrected by another writer, the inscription *the rock 'n' roll isn't dead* does not require a definite article. There are four sentences where the verb tense does not agree with the subject: *Benji-djasé wants to die*, *WE'LL BE LESS FEMINIST WHEN YOU ARE LESS SHIT*, *SEX IS COOL BUT HAVE YOU EVER TRIED VANDALISM?*, *HUGS MORE*, *WHO LET'S THE DOGS OUT*, *EVERYbody LiES*, and *FUCKY ME*. It is debatable as to whether the inscription *I shitted here* is grammatically incorrect or not. The past tense of *shit* could be *shit*, *shat*, or *shitted* depending on the person's preference or after which verb it was modelled: *quit* and *fit*. There were two inscriptions where the writer should have written one of the pronouns *everybody*, *everywhere*, and

everyone as a single word and not as two words. The inscription *don't take it away for me* should have the preposition *from me*. In the inscription *too [?] too Die* should read *too [?] to Die* as the second *to* is part of the verb as an infinitive rather than an adverb. The final inscription: *CRY BOY KNOW LISTENING HER AND SHUT UP AFTER THIN* is unclear as to what the message should be.

One of the spelling errors reflects pronunciation in French. For example, in French, the word *autorité* [authority] is pronounced /ɔːˈθɔʁɛti/ and therefore the spelling is closer to the French pronunciation. In the inscription, *I'M MUSLIM DON'T PANICK* it is possible that the writer wrote *panick* in accordance with words such as *snack* and *bifteck*. The inscription *rilax* was written by the graffiti artist M. Liberté, and he explained that he did not remember if it was an *E* or an *I*. The original inscription *booring* could be an example of elongation (AbuJaber et al., 2012), as seen in the word *looser* which appears in five phrases. I do not consider the use of *U* instead of *you* as an error, as it is a common feature of English chatspeak or netspeak (Squires, 2010), and is used in texting, shorthand, instant messaging, and other netspeak (cf. Crystal, 2006 for a list of abbreviations used in Netspeak). Section 6.2.4 explores the linguistic resemblance between graffiti inscriptions, script tattoos, and netspeak.

There are three errors involving punctuation, one is an omitted apostrophe: *IM instead of I'm*, one is an unnecessary apostrophe: *CIDER'S* should be written without the apostrophe, and the phrase *Sea sex & Sun !* is missing a comma after the word *sea*, and potentially after the word *sex* depending on whether the writer subscribes to the use of the Oxford comma or not.

Image 53 Graffiti D12



In the case of the inscription *SLYTHERINE AS FUCK*, the original phrase was spelt correctly: *SLYTHERIN* and a second writer added the *E* making the phrase incorrect, other examples of modification can be seen in section 4.9.2: Modification. The

inscription *I will leave soon this beautiful city Bdx Montaigne III* contains two errors. Generally, in English, the adverb *soon* is placed in front of the main verb after the auxiliary *will*. The word *Montaigne* is also spelt incorrectly, the name of the university is *Montaigne*. Despite being an error, I have not included it in that section as it was a mistake in French, not English.

**4.6 Most Common Words and Phrases**

In order to analyse the words on an individual and phrasal level the website: <https://www.webtools.services/text-analyzer> and the software Antconc were used. The results were then verified by using the search and find feature in the spreadsheet. The most common words used in the corpus can be found in Table 25.

*Table 25 Most Frequent English Words in the Corpus*

Word	Frequency	Relative Frequency	Word Family	Frequency	Total Frequency	AmE06
<i>The</i>	134	317	/	/	134	590
<i>Fuck</i>	108	255	<i>Fucking, fucked, fucker, motherfucker</i>	2, 1, 1, 1	113	0.2
<i>I</i>	104	246	<i>Im, I'm, i'M</i>	3, 10, 1	107	85
<i>Here</i>	83	196	<i>Heres</i>	1	84	6
<i>Was</i>	77	182	<i>Were</i>	1	78	82
<i>You</i>	70	165	<i>Your, u, yourself</i>	21, 11, 2	94	46
<i>Love</i>	62	146	<i>Loves, Love's, Lover</i>	2, 1, 1	66	3
<i>Is</i>	60	141	<i>Am, are</i>	1, 12	73	82
<i>A</i>	56	132	<i>An</i>	3	59	235
<i>To</i>	43	101	/	/	43	255

The above table shows the 10 most frequently used words in the three corpora combined. Six of the words: *the, I, you, is, a* and *to*, are expected to be used frequently in the English language, as they are functional. The remaining four words: *fuck, here, was,* and *love* merit further discussion and will be analysed below in relation to the three separate corpora.

One of the arguments for leaving the functional words, such as *the*, in the analysis is that although they are expected to be numerous in the corpus, the relative frequency in comparison to the AmE06 suggests that it does not always reflect general English language use. For example, the word *the* appears significantly more in the AmE06 corpus than in the graffiti inscription corpus (rf = 590 vs 317).

One reason that there are less articles in the combined graffiti corpora is because of the hybrid phrases whereby the writer prefers to use the French translations *le, la,* and *les*. If we include the 37 times that a French definite article was used, the relative

frequency is raised to 406, which is closer to the reference corpus AmE06 but still suggests that the use of articles is not as frequent in graffitiing than in other written texts.

Table 26 Inscriptions with a French Article

Structure	Occurrences
verb <i>le/la/les</i> noun	Nik <b>LE</b> STREET ART; FUCK <b>LE</b> 17; SNIFF <b>les</b> ETOILES; OCO <b>LE</b> BEST; FUCK <b>LE</b> 17 MORT AU PORCS; Fuck <b>la</b> Vie; FUCK <b>LES</b> COCO???? Mitch <b>Le</b> Playboy; Inter marcher Gradignan 11h-17h 7j/7 [?] 6€ <b>le</b> gramme IMBATTABLE Fuck <b>les</b> staps; FUCK <b>LE</b> 17; FUCK <b>LA</b> FAC ; FUCK <b>LE</b> CISTEME; ViVE <b>LE</b> HARDCORE
Mainly French	il FAUT QUAND MEME AVOUER QUE <b>LE</b> "CORONA VIRUS" EST BiEN <b>LE</b> PREMIER TRUC MADE iN CHiNA QUI TiENT AUSSi LONGTEMPS ; EN ART COMME EN AMOUR, L'INSTiNCT SUFFIT ! Fred Rush Collins; TU VEUX DE <b>LA</b> Weed ? SNAP: EASYWeed33; JE M'EN BATS <b>LES</b> BOOBS; UNIVERSiTiE EN LUTTE / ON NE DiT PAS : D'ACCORD MR. <b>LE</b> PROFESSEUR MAIS: OK BOOMER; <b>LES</b> POSSIBILITES SONT PRODIGIEUSE - WWOOFiNG - VOLONTARIAT INTERNATIONAL - HELP X - WORK AWAY; REDUIRE <b>LE</b> VOULOIR D'ACHAT YOUTH FOR CLIMATE . ORG; RECETTE POUR SAUVER <b>LA</b> PLANETE !!! TUER DES HUMAINS OU SE STERILSER DEVENIR DES ROBOTS ECOLOGIQUES WTF?; Thomas <b>le</b> Thug du 40; AIS Si <b>LE</b> MONEY; Hello papagena tu es bella comme <b>la</b> papaya !; CALL OF DUTY JE SUIS <b>LE</b> MASTODONTE;
Mainly English	PLAiDOiRiE CONTRE <b>le</b> RACiSME IT ALWAYS SEEMS iMPOSSiBLE UNTIL iT'S DONE; "Leave your oFFiCES ANd GO AlONe INTO THE WiLD" <b>le</b> 5/05/90: EtieNNE et [?]
Miscellaneous	<b>LE</b> BOOZER; <b>la</b> queen

The inscriptions containing an article in French can be divided into three groups. In the first group, all the inscriptions follow the same structure: verb + *le/la/les* + noun. Eight of the inscriptions use the swear word *fuck*, this is explored further section 4.4.1: The 'F' Word. In the second group, the inscriptions are predominantly written in French and therefore the use of a French article is not surprising. In the third group, the inscriptions are predominantly in English but the writer has chosen to keep the definite article *the* in French [*le, la, les*]. The last group includes the two two-word inscriptions. The first writer assigns the male definite article *le* to the word *boozier*, whilst the second writer assigns the female definite article *la* to the word *queen*. This suggests that loan words can be either male or female in French. There are no examples where the article is omitted.

Table 27 shows the most frequently written words in the individual corpora. Due to the difference in corpus size, 295 tokens to 3,016 tokens, the results are written in relative frequency over 10,000 tokens.

Table 27 The Seven Most Used Words in the Three Corpora

City		Desktop		Toilet	
<i>Fuck</i>	328	<i>Here</i>	592	<i>I</i>	406
<i>Deal</i>	204	<i>Was</i>	251	<i>Stan</i>	169
<i>I</i>	106	<i>I</i>	192	<i>ACAB</i>	101
<i>Away</i>	97	<i>Fuck</i>	218	<i>Beautiful</i>	101
<i>Art</i>	97	<i>You</i>	172	<i>Here</i>	101
<i>Love</i>	97	<i>Love</i>	152	<i>Know</i>	101
<i>You</i>	79	♥	86	<i>What</i>	101
<i>Relative Frequency over 10,000</i>					

Table 27 shows the seven most frequently used words in each corpus, outside of prepositions and conjunctions. I chose to stop at seven because this gave me five words that appeared in two or more corpora to analyse, as well as a natural place to stop in each corpus (several words were tied for 8<sup>th</sup> place in the corpora). As they are the most used words, they could be analysed in more than one section. See Table 28 for the section where they are explored.

Table 28 Words Analysed by Section

Section	Words Analysed
4.5.1 Nouns and 6.3.5 Art within Art	<i>Art</i>
4.5.3 Pronouns	<i>I, You</i>
4.6.1 The 'F' Word	<i>Fuck</i>
4.6.2 Love	<i>Love</i>
4.6.3 'X was here'	<i>Was, here</i>
4.7.4 Symbol Hybridity	♥
4.8.1.1 Music	<i>Stan</i>
4.8.3.1 ACAB	<i>ACAB</i>
4..5 Tags	<i>Deal, Away</i>

#### 4.6.1 The 'F' Word

The presence of the word *fuck* in the corpora is to be expected, both in L1 graffiti (Moehkardhi, 2022), and in LX graffiti. Fjeld et al., (2019, p. 86) write that the word *fuck* is 'one of the most prominent modern and global curses [...] as a pure citation of English as a kind of code shift, or [...] integrated into the local language'. The use of swear words from a 'foreign language, or in another variety of the first language, adds another layer of complex interactions between sociobiographical, psychological and linguistic variables' (Dewaele, 2016, p. 109). Sociobiographical variables include age, gender, and level of education (Dewaele, 2016). This section supports the findings of Fjeld et al., (2019) and shows the use of the word *fuck* in both English only and hybrid phrases in this corpus. Ireland and Mehl (2014), however, find that swearing has a low

overall incidence and 'that agreeable people are unlikely to swear even once in a given sample, whereas a highly disagreeable person might swear only a few times' (p. 207). As the inscriptions are anonymous, we cannot determine the frequency that each graffiti writer uses swear words in their inscriptions.

The word *fuck* originally started as a sexual reference (Kristiano & Priyatno, 2018); it can be seen in a variety of contexts in this study. The presence and regular use of the word *fuck* has been documented in Nordic languages: (Fjeld, 2002) studies the use in Norway, (Rathje, 2014) the use in Denmark, (Beers Fägersten, 2014) the use in Sweden, and (Zenner et al., 2017) have found that *fuck* has become the tenth most popular swear word in the Netherlands, it is surpassed by *shit* which is the most popular swear word according to their study.


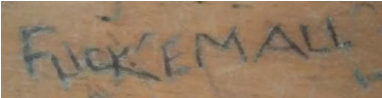
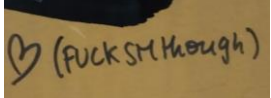
One of the findings of the use of English swear words in other languages is that the words are perceived to be less offensive, this can be seen in the interview with Henri section 5.9.4. Dewaele (2016) finds that L2 users of some English swear words assigned a lower rate of offensiveness than L1 speakers. Lantto (2014) also concludes that L2 speakers use swear words from other languages in part due to their function as a pragmatic marker in discourse and their peripherality. This suggests that strict rules concerning taboo words provide motivation for L2 speakers to borrow swear words to avoid swearing in their L1.

The word *fuck* can be seen 108 times in the corpus, totalling 111 occurrences if the variants *fucking* and *fucked* are added. Although this is an insignificant portion of the corpus, only 2.49%, *fuck* outnumbers all but one word: *the* (n = 135). The relative frequency of the word *fuck* in this corpus is 255 which is the same as the relative frequency of the word *to* and higher than the word *A* (rf = 235) in the AmE06. This is testament to how often this word is repeated in the corpus and the variety of words within the corpus. The sheer quantity of repetition is also testament to the flexibility of the word *fuck*. Ireland and Mehl (2014) write that the use of the word '*fucking*' is a sign of high neuroticism.

Furthermore, the word *fuck* appears mainly as a verb (n = 87) and almost exclusively as an imperative: *fuck life* and *fuck off*. It is used 12 times as a one-word inscription sometimes accompanied by punctuation, often an exclamation mark which provides prosodic emphasis: *FUCK!*. It is also used seven times as a noun: *Slytherine as fuck*, and three times that could not be identified due to the lack of context.

On top of the 85 times the word *fuck* is seen as a four-letter word, it is also used a further seven times in varying forms. It is used twice as an adjective: *these fucking humans* and *it's so fucking real*, twice as the noun: *mother fucker*, once as a hybrid word *fuckastic* (a combination of *fuck* and *fantastic*), once as the word *fucky* in *fucky me* and once as a verb in the past tense: *fucked up*. The variety of usage of the word *fuck* suggests that it is integrated into the French language.

Moreover, the word *fuck* is present in all three corpora, but is particularly present in the city corpus with a relative frequency of 328 versus 218 in the desktop corpus and 67 in the toilets. The word *fuck* is often used to show discontent, this suggests that the content of the graffiti inscriptions in the street is angrier and is about criticising the status quo. The full list of examples is given in section 4.4.1: F Who?

Examples of the word 'fuck' in each corpus		
City	Desktop	Toilet
Image 54 Graffiti C124	Image 55 Graffiti D633	Image 56 Graffiti T19
		






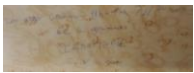


In the above examples, all three uses of the word *fuck* are as a verb in the imperative. The first example combines a smiley face with the words *FUCK YOU MOMO!* This could be an indication that it is a joke between the writer and another person, Momo. The use of emoticons is often used to soften messages (Ernst & Huschens, 2018). In the second example, the writer (or writers) has combined the word *fuck* with *'em* as an abbreviation for the word *them* and the word *all*. This could be argued to be a display of discontent for the university establishment or the people around the graffiti writer in general. The final example also combines a drawing of a heart with the phrase: *FUCK SM though*. SM could be used to refer to SM Entertainment as the surrounding graffiti inscriptions refer to K-pop bands Exo-Tempo and Day 6. See section 4.8.1.1 for more examples on Korean Pop music.

**4.6.1.1 F Who?**

The word *fuck* is generally used to express discontent with someone or something. This subsection will explore the object of this discontent through an analysis of the word *fuck* as a verb aimed at a person, entity, or concept. The phrase *fuck you* has been associated mainly with sex as punishment and or rape (Berkowitz, 2013). The New Oxford English Dictionary ('Fuck, v.', n.d.) provides four definitions for the word *fuck*, the first 'to have sex', the second 'to destroy', the third 'to cheat', and the fourth

'to express annoyance'. Table 29 presents all the occurrences of the word *fuck* found in this corpus. The majority of the phrases appear to use the latter meaning of the word *fuck*.

Table 29 Inscriptions Using the Word Fuck

Theme	Inscriptions	Photograph
Society	<b>Fuck</b> the people, <b>fuck</b> the rest, <b>fuck</b> the world [x2], <b>fuck</b> society [x4], <b>fuck</b> humans, <b>fuck</b> haters, <b>fuck</b> everybody, <b>fuck</b> 'em, <b>fuck</b> 'em all, <b>fuck</b> Bordocons, <b>fuck</b> authority, <b>fuck</b> all, <b>fuck</b> the system, <b>fuck</b> le cisteme [x2]	Image 57 Graffiti C248 
Police	<b>Fuck</b> [?] 17, <b>Fuck</b> the police, <b>Fuck</b> le 17 mort aux porcs, <sup>40</sup> <b>fuck</b> le 17 [x2]	Image 58 Graffiti C14 
Duck	If you want to see the sky <b>fuck</b> the /a duck and try to fly [x6]	Image 59 Graffiti D790 
Personal	<b>Fuck</b> life, <b>fuck</b> la vie, <b>fuck</b> it, <b>fuck</b> my pipou doll, <b>fuck</b> my asshole	Image 60 Graffiti D163 
Politics	<b>Fuck</b> Macron, <b>fuck</b> the ED Fascism, <b>fuck</b> Donald Trump [x2], <b>fuck</b> France [x2], <b>fuck</b> Bush Trump, <b>fuck</b> Bush [x2], <b>fuck</b> UE/AF, <b>fuck</b> Nazis, <b>fuck</b> Syria	Image 61 Graffiti C210 
Education	<b>Fuck</b> les staps, <b>fuck</b> les cours, <b>fuck</b> lettre et com !, <b>Fuck</b> la fac, <b>fuck</b> this lesson,	Image 62 Graffiti D7 
You	<b>Fuck</b> you [x6], <b>fuck</b> Off [x4], <b>fuck</b> Off! Bithes, <b>fuck</b> you guys, <b>fuck</b> your ass up	Image 63 Graffiti D210 
Miscellaneous <sup>41</sup>	<b>Fuck</b> the speed, <b>fuck</b> les coco, <b>fuck</b> Terp, <b>fuck</b> Sraff, <b>fuck</b> shit, <b>fuck</b> sexism, <b>fuck</b> Playa club, <b>fuck</b> P[?]C, <b>fuck</b> Star system, <b>fuck</b> G7!, <b>fuck</b> Da style, <b>fuck</b> Casamayoo, <b>fuck</b> Busar, <b>fuck</b> Ancule, <b>fuck</b> TPO, <b>fuck</b> busa, <b>fuck</b> the [?], <b>fuck</b> this [?], <b>fuck</b> sm	Image 64 Graffiti C97 

<sup>40</sup> See section 4.8.2.1.1 for further analysis.

<sup>41</sup> For the analysis of Fuck Kotei see section 4.8.1.1: Music.



In this study, the word *fuck* has been used in relation to seven distinct groups: society, the police, a duck, the writer and their life, politicians and political groups, education, and 'you'. A further 21 inscriptions were categorised as miscellaneous. The inscriptions against society were predominantly found in the city and desktop corpora ( $n = 11$  and  $8$  and  $rf = 0.009$  and  $0.002$  respectively). This is in keeping with the review of previous literature that suggested that people write graffiti in the street to voice their discontent about the current status quo and the desktop corpus suggests that this behaviour and need to express oneself is also present in the classroom setting. Similarly, the inscriptions aimed at the police were also found predominantly in the city corpus, which could be argued is the main place of conflict between the public and the police – as opposed to on desktops and in toilets. The repetition of the structure *fuck le/la/les* suggests that these phrases are occurrences of systematic code-switching as an established hybrid grammatical structure is used and applied in a variety of socially meaningful contexts Woolard (2006).

Mora et al. (2016) find examples of profanity in graffiti which were often messages of social protest against society, the system, or war: '*fuck you war*' (p. 18). The writer in that phrase speaks directly to the war itself rather than in general. In this study, the majority of occurrences using *fuck* are about an entity such as society or the police; they read *fuck society* and *fuck the police* rather than *fuck you society* and *fuck you police*. This wording suggests that the phrases could be more lethargic for the writers rather than an affront with an intangible entity such as war.

Unlike the findings in previous studies focusing on Nordic countries (c.f. Fjeld et al., 2019), the occurrences of the word *fuck* have not been altered in spelling to follow French pronunciation rules. *Fuck* is seen as a noun, a verb, and in the conjugations: *fucking* and *fucked* but the spelling is consistent with English conjugations throughout. There are words in French that finish in 'ck' and are pronounced as /k/ in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) such as: *yack*, *bifteck*, and *arack*. All three are examples of loan words, from Tibetan (*gyak*), English (*beefsteak*), and Arabic/Lebanese (*araq – Palm liquor*) respectively. The /k/ sound in French is generally indicated by 'que' as seen in words such as: *coque*, *brique* and *caractéristique* (*case*, *brick*, and *characteristic*). Fjeld et al., (2019) explain that loan words are normally used in the form of a citation at the beginning of the loan word's history, 'naturalization comes when the word has become part of the normal vocabulary' (p. 105). This reasoning would suggest that the word *fuck* could change spelling over time to adapt to French

pronunciation rules, however, the previous examples of other loan words that have retained the 'ck' spelling would suggest otherwise.

#### 4.6.2 Love

The word *love* is one of the most used words in the combined graffiti corpora, as well as being in the top seven words for both the city and desktop corpora. It has an overall relative frequency of 146, 152 in the desktop corpus, 97 in the city corpus and 33 in the toilet corpus. In the AmE06 corpus *love* has a relative frequency of three, and it only increases to six when adding variants of the word *love* such as *loves* and *lovely*. The word *love* is used significantly more in the combined graffiti corpora compared to the AmE06 corpus.

Furthermore, in the combined graffiti corpora, the word *love* is predominantly used as a verb in the present tense ( $n = 39$ ), for example: *CHARLES I LOVE YOU*, *love* is used 14 times as a noun: *Everybody's love's CLIPPER*, and nine times where it is could be either a noun or a verb: *LOVE REVOLUTION* – this could be an imperative order to love the revolution or the name of a revolution focused on love and relationships.

The word *love* is most frequently seen in the phrase *I love you* ( $n = 7$ ); all the occurrences were found on desktops; this increases to nine if we include the two inscriptions with *U* instead of *you*. One declaration of love is for the Star Wars character Anakin, another is for someone named Oriane. Three are direct declarations of love: *(I) love you*. One phrase is *all the better to love you with* which could be a modification of the structure *all the better to see you with* from the story *Little Red Riding Hood*, or a reference to the book of the same name by Eryn Grace.

The final occurrence is an example of conversational graffiti, whereby four people have added to the original phrase one after the other. The first writer starts the 'conversation' with the words *I LOVE YOU* and someone replies with *I HATE YOU*. The next writer adds *I FUCK YOU*, and this is followed by *I EAT YOU 😊*. The last legible inscription is *I RAPE YOU*, and there is possibly *I KILL YOU* after that. More examples of conversational graffiti will be explored in depth in section 4.9: Conversational Graffiti.

Image 65 Graffiti D664



I LOVE YOU  
I HATE YOU  
I FUCK YOU  
I EAT YOU  
I RAPE YOU  
I KILL YOU

This occurrence of conversational graffiti starts off innocently and then quickly becomes violent and sexual in nature. The use of the smiley face in the *I EAT YOU* sentence could be an attempt to soften the previous messages by the previous writers. That said, the phrase *I EAT YOU* can have sexual connotations. The element of swarming: graffiti attracts graffiti, is also present in this example of conversational graffiti, as well as an increase in intensity with each additional phrase.

The word *hate* appears in five other inscriptions on the desktops: *I hate chemistry*, “*HATE IS TRUE LOVE*”, *HATE PAIN LOVE LIFE*, *I HATE PEOPLE*, and *HATE <>< XIII Ange AoRis*. The word *kill* appears in four inscriptions: *KILL*, *JUST KILL ME NOW LOL BELETTE*, *ZOB PENT(1) Kill me!*, and *KILL THE PRESIDENT*. The word *rape* does not feature in any other inscriptions.

Whilst the intensity of the word increases, the frequency in the corpus decreases, apart from the word *kill*. There is less aggression in the phrase *JUST KILL ME NOW LOL BELETTE* than in *I KILL YOU*. The same can be said of the phrase *HATE IS TRUE LOVE*, it could be argued that it is not as aggressive as the other phrases or indeed aggressive at all. The decreasing frequency could be an indication that without the previous phrases the fifth student writer would not have written *I RAPE YOU*. The evidence for this claim is that I did not find the word *rape* on any of the other desktops.

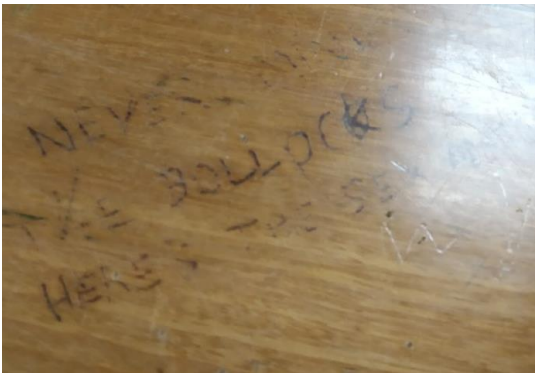
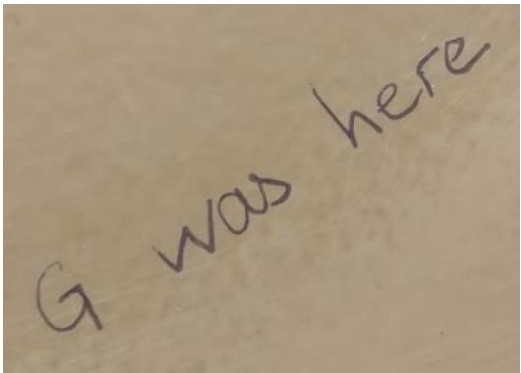
#### 4.6.3 ‘X was here’

There was very little full phrase repetition in the combined graffiti corpora. The most repeated combination of two words was found in the inscription “*X was here*” (n = 76), which can be defined as ego-affirming acts of agency (Duranti, 2004). The phrase was repeated by two students: Kef and Momo. Two of the *Kef was here* phrases were modified by other writers. Seventy-five of the 76 inscriptions were found on desktops, the inscription *G was here* was found in a toilet cubicle at a university and therefore still within a student context.

Table 30 Phrases Containing 'was here'

Phrase	Frequency	Total
<i>Kef was here, Kef(ta) was here, Kef(uo) was here</i>	19, 2, 1	22
<i>Momo was here, El Momo was here, Momo was Momo is and Momo will be</i>	6, 1, 1	8
<i>[?] was here</i>	3	3
<i>Methos was here, I was here 2005 G, Dimitri was here, Dark Vador was here, Duen aussi was here, Crouch was here, BD was here [?]/12/07, DJ Noise was here, Fiav was here, Bendit was here, I was here, Chico was here, I was here I was not, Greg was here, Was here, <b>G was here</b>, Charu was here !, Didie was here, L was here with me, A. was here, Amy was here, [?] was here ♥ FORCE, Babylon was here 21/03/18, I-C-V-D was here, Vincent was here, IP was here, Ben B was here 2014/19/011 Bustan, Diale was here, Vince was here, Was here me too great, Voodoo Child was here, Simon was here, Paul was here, N was here, Napoleon was here 5/3/18, 27 11 08 Kyrua was here (ultim day), Was here bitch, Kaan was here, EC was here, I was here 6.5.14 14.5.19, Cretin was here, Noé was here, Jef was here</i>	1	1

I will briefly present *here* on its own. *Here* is present in both the desktop and toilet corpora (n = 80 and 3, rf = 0.02 and 0.01 respectively). The word *here* is not used in the city corpus. The use of the word *here* in the desktop corpus was primarily as a means of leaving one's mark on the desktop for example: *I'M HERE, A. WAS HERE*. Only three examples do not follow the *was here* trend: *Here I ful, NEVER [?] THE BOLLOCKS HERESTHE SEX [?]*, and *What are we doing here? Sleeping*. This tendency to write one's name or initials on a desktop with *was here* is not seen as often in toilet graffiti. There is one example using this structure: *G was here*. The other two examples are more philosophical or an example of toilet humour: *I don't know why I'm here I don't know what I feel but I know what I need and I'm ready to love the things that I need and I shitted here, U're welcome !* The phrase *I don't know why I'm here...* could be considered an example of introspection and self-reflection, Islam (2011) suggests that this is evidence of the toilet cubicle being a 'mirror for personal and intimate concerns' (p. 252).

Examples of 'was here' in the Corpora	
<p>Image 66 Graffiti D372</p>  <p>NEVER [?] THE BOLLOCKS HERES THE SEX [?]</p>	<p>Image 67 Graffiti T43</p> 

The use of the word *here* to convey the idea of belonging and being in the present is much more present in the desktop corpus. This could be because the tags, such as *Deal* and *away* used in the city, are a tagger's way of saying "I was here" therefore the *was here* is omitted and not written.

The origins of the use of the inscription *was here* in graffiti is unknown. Some historians believe that the phrase *Kilroy was here* was first used by a North American shipyard worker James J. Kilroy to indicate that he had inspected the bottom of the warships. North American soldiers took comfort in seeing this phrase and would write it wherever they were stationed during World War II in order to reassure one another (P. Dickson, 1994). Deiulio (1978) writes that graffiti inscriptions can be considered a means of saying 'I am here, I exist, I have something to say' (p. 517), this is supported by Beyaert-Geslin (2019) who posits that 'the hand [of the graffiti writer] imposes a stop, as if to say 'I'm here' [*la main impose un arrêt comme pour dire « je suis là »*] (p. 121). Peteet (1996) notes the use of graffiti such as 'Fatah passed by here' in Palestine as a means of proclaiming a place as a person's own and asserting the people's power (p. 148). 'Fatah' is significant as it is the acronym for the Palestinian political movement focused on liberating Palestine during the period of conflict.

It could be argued that this need to say 'I was here' with or without the writer's name, could echo the fight against the depersonalisation seen in prison graffiti (García-Arenal Rodríguez, 2018). None of the inscriptions containing 'X was here' were seen on desktops within a classroom where the number of seats for students is around 24. The inscriptions were predominantly found on the desktops in amphitheatres which can hold 100 or more students. In an amphitheatre context the teacher is less likely to know the names of the students, and this could be depersonalising. Amphitheatres are also used for exams which are often anonymous – the students mark their papers with a number rather than their name. The graffiti inscriptions could be considered a sign of rebellion to the depersonalisation felt from being reduced to just a number.

However, this returns to Hammersley's (2018) argument of what is a 'natural' setting (p. 8). It could be argued that being sat at a desktop is not a natural setting in the scheme of a person's life, however, it is a reality faced by students on a regular basis. I would also suggest that even if it is decided that the setting is not natural, the use of language is still unhindered by a researcher or outside influence, and was of the

writer's own volition and therefore, to some degree, is 'natural' expression on the part of the writers.

**4.6.4 The World**

The next most used phrase in the inscriptions was *the world*. The words *the world* appear in the desktop corpus seven times and once in the city corpus. However, the inscription found in the city corpus was also found within the university setting but outside on the ground.

Occurrences of the phrase 'the world' in graffiti inscriptions		
<p>Image 68 Graffiti D641</p>  <p>FUCK THE WORLD</p>	<p>Image 69 Graffiti D636</p>  <p>THE WORLD IS A VAMPIRE</p>	<p>Image 70 Graffiti D193</p>  <p>FUCK THE WORLD FUCK PEOPLE THE PEOPLE FUCK [?]</p>
<p>Image 71 Graffiti D451</p>  <p>[?] RULES THE WORLD</p>	<p>Image 72 Graffiti T41</p>  <p>every body want to rule the world</p>	<p>Image 73 Graffiti D86</p>  <p>WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!</p>
<p>Image 74 Graffiti C106</p>  <p>YOU MAKE THE WORLD</p>		<p>Image 75 Graffiti D102</p>  <p>THE WORLD IS OUR FISH BOWL a AVARI M. LAM. J.TM WLH</p>

The phrase *the world* featured in eight inscriptions; the context of each inscription varied from one inscription to the next. It could be argued that the inscriptions using *the world* reflect the writers' view of the world. Two of the writers appear to be angry and express this anger through their graffiti: *fuck the world* and *fuck the world fuck the people fuck [?]*. Two inscriptions were concerned with power: *every body want to rule*

*the world* and *[?] rules the world*. There was also one potential quote: *The word is our fish bowl a Avari. J. TM WLH*, however I was unable to find the origin or inspiration for this inscription.

One inscription was a message of positivity: *you make the world*. As the inscription of positivity was found outside it could be possible that the writer's intention was to spread the message of positivity to as many people as possible; this could also be the reason for the large size of the inscription. Lynn and Lea (2005) posit that the graffiti inscriptions that are big are written that way to cause the reader to physically 'stand back' and that the bigger the size of the inscription the bigger the act of defiance demonstrated by the writer (p. 55). The inscription was found in between two buildings at the university, there could have been cameras in that area, and despite the risk the writer chose to spray their message over two thirds of the width of the road. The writer of the inscription, *you make the world*, could have chosen the size and placement for this reason and also to further emphasise the use of the word *world* and its size.

The other frequent combinations of words have been analysed in the appropriate section. For example, the combinations: *I love* and *love you* (n = 13 and 8) have been analysed in section 4.6.2: Love. The use of the word *fuck* in the combinations *fuck the* and *fuck you* can be seen in section 4.6.1: The 'F' Word. The phrase *fuck a duck* was written in six inscriptions was presented in section 4.8.1.2: Television and Films. The phrase *youth for climate* featured in five inscriptions and was presented in section 4.8.3.3: Anarchy and Community.

## **4.7 Hybridity**

In the past, graffiti writing was associated with people who are intellectually challenged (Mangeya, 2014), while code-switching was associated with 'lapses in language ability' (Woolard 2006, p. 74), rather than linguistic creativity. However, these notions are contested by this thesis and its graffiti inscription data. Firstly, as many inscriptions were found within a higher education environment, namely French universities, this suggests that they were written by people studying for a degree. Secondly, the presence of English in the inscriptions is an indication of linguistic intelligence on the part of the writers. AbuJaber et al. (2012) describe the use of hybrid phrases as linguistic creativity rather than a lack of ability. MacGillivray and Curwen (2007) also find that the graffiti artists that they interview 'dispel the common assumptions that taggers are male youths, unmotivated academically' and explain that 'three of the youths [in their research] were articulate in identifying the limitations of the school setting on their academic learning' (p. 360). The hybrid phrases in this

subsection can be seen as proof that the association between low intelligence and graffiti writers is not always justified, and through the language use present in the combined corpora it also demonstrates specific acts of translanguaging. It could be argued that every inscription in English by an L1 French speaker is an act of translanguaging, but the hybrid phrases are proof of the blurred lines between the languages (Auer 2007).

The combined corpus contains 1,237 inscriptions. I counted each language used in each inscription and noted whether the inscription contained English, French, another language, or a hybrid word such as *bikette*.<sup>42</sup> I also counted how many phrases contained a symbol such as a heart, asterisk, euro sign, dollar sign, hash, plus sign, equals sign, and the anarchy symbol. Acronyms and abbreviations were counted together (the acronym *ACAB* (*All Cops Are Bastards*) is not counted as an English word but only as an acronym). There were 83 inscriptions that contain numbers, including the use of Roman numerals (n = 2). Finally, the words that I was unable to identify were marked as unclear.

Table 31 Languages Present in the Combined Corpus

	City	Desktop	Toilet	Total Inscriptions
English	384	773	44	1,201
French	36	49	6	91
Hybrid Words	8	14	0	22
Other Languages	3	9	0	12
Symbols	35	52	11	98
Acronyms or Abbreviation	23	54	7	86
Numbers	35	45	3	83
Unclear	38	61	5	104

Table 31 shows that English is present in 1,201 of the inscriptions. The 36 inscriptions that do not have English contained either an acronym (*ACAB*), an abbreviation (*WTF*), or a hybrid word (*Halloween*). There are two inscriptions that contain the numerical form of *ACAB*: 1312. The other six examples are classified as hybrid words: *looser*, *rilax* and *bikette*. These words are discussed in more detail in section 4.7.2: Hybrid Words.

Hybridity is present in the combined corpora in four forms: hybrid phrases, hybrid words, number hybridity, and symbol hybridity. In this study I define hybrid phrases as

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<sup>42</sup> *Bikette* is understood as being a hybrid word the English word *bike* plus the French suffix *ette* for small or little.



inscriptions that contain two or more languages. I define hybrid words as words that are a combination of two or more words. It could be argued that number hybridity and symbol hybridity are subcategories of hybrid words. Due to the quantity of examples in the corpora, I have chosen to focus on them separately.

Table 32 Examples of Hybrid Inscriptions

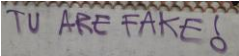


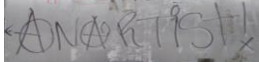
Hybrid Phrase	Hybrid Word	Number Hybridity	Symbol Hybridity
Image 76 Graffiti C172 	Image 77 Graffiti C146 <sup>43</sup> 	Image 78 Graffiti D241 	Image 79 Graffiti C20 

Table 32 shows an example of the four types of hybridity found in the combined corpora. Each of the four forms will be explored and analysed in the four following subsections.

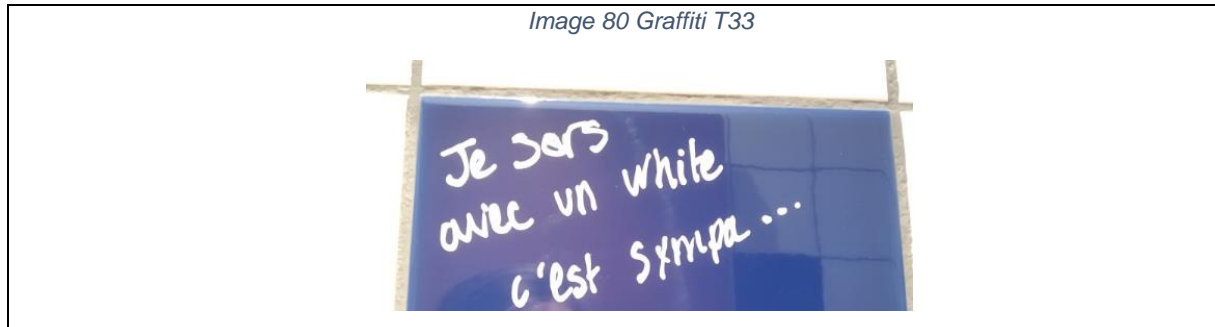
**4.7.1 Hybrid Phrases**

Hybrid phrases are classed as having more than one word in more than one language (Demska 2019). The informal nature of graffiti allows for a written record of hybrid phrases. Occurrences of hybrid phrases are often found in countries that are bilingual or have more than one national language, for example, Jaffe et al. (2012) find occurrences of graffiti containing English and the national Jamaican dialect: *XXX fi a use him hood ana use him tongue [XXX should use his penis instead of using his tongue]* (p. 12). Demska (2019) finds examples of hybrid phrases in public texts in Kiev, Ukraine including: Ukrainian-Russian: ‘Мир Пола и Декора / ПАРКЕТ / ШПАПЕРИ / ШТОРИ’ [*World of Flooring and Decor / PARQUET / WALLPAPERS / CURTAINS*], Ukrainian-English: ‘кавовий дім; #BLINSTORY . . . твоя історія смаку’ [*coffee house; #BLINSTORY...your taste story*], and Russian-English: ‘DECORATION CLUB / ОБОИ, ТКАНИ, МЕБЕЛЬ, КОВРЫ, СВЕТ’ [*WALLPAPER, FABRICS, FURNITURE, CARPETS, LIGHTING*] (p. 5). Lazarez (2017) writes that ‘t’es off’ is a hybrid phrase and that hybridity is a means for anglicisms to enter French (p. 189).

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<sup>43</sup> This photograph featured in an article by the researcher with other examples of graffiti found in the city of Bordeaux (Peake, 2020).

There are 98 hybrid phrases in the combined corpora. Fifty-one were found in the desktop corpus, 43 hybrid phrases were in the city corpus, and five hybrid phrases were found in the toilets.

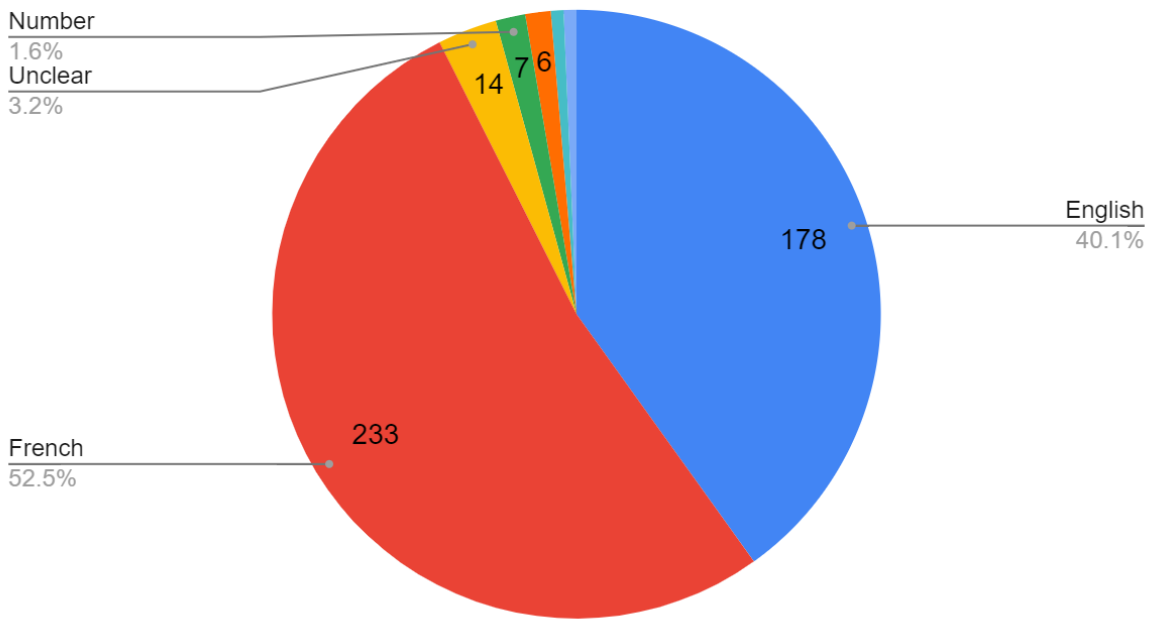


Graffiti T33 shows a French phrase whereby the writer uses the English adjective *white* as a noun in French. In French, *un noir* ou *un blanc* can be translated as: *a black person* or *a white person*. It is common for some French speakers to use *black* instead of *noir* to refer to a person's skin colour (Goudaillier, 1998; Mevel, 2014). Therefore, an adjective in English can be used as a noun in French. In this corpus, graffiti T33 is the only example of this type of hybridity.<sup>44</sup> Graph 3 shows that 52.5% of the words in hybrid phrases are in French, closely followed by 40.1% of the remaining words in English.

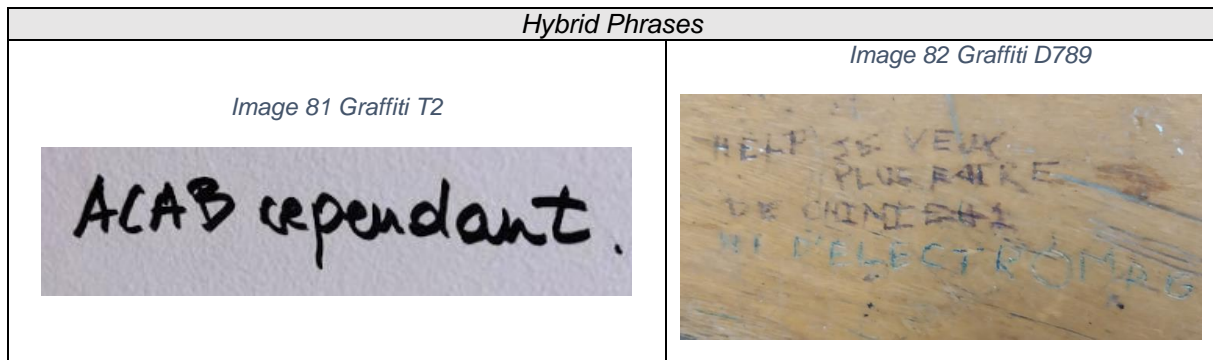
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<sup>44</sup> English words are often modified through *verlan*, French slang, whereby the syllables of a word are inverted (Mevel, 2014). For example, the word *black* becomes *kebla*. Mevel (2014) shows that French street culture and African American culture have strong links, he argues that French speakers are familiar with African American culture through media exposure and the proximity of their street cultures. This grammatical hybridity is also an example of cultural hybridity whereby an element of African American culture is incorporated and used by French street culture.

### Constitution of Hybrid Phrases








There are 98 inscriptions that contain both English and French, there are two inscriptions that contain French and an acronym: **ACAB** *cependant* and *recette pour sauver la planete !!! Tuer des humains devenir des robots ecologiques WTF ?*



In certain inscriptions, such as: **Help** *je veux plus faire de chimie H1 ni d'electromag*, all the words bar the first word are in French. There are inscriptions which have the opposite structure: *Just kill me now lol* **belette** is predominantly written in English with one acronym and one French word.

The hybrid phrases in the combined graffiti corpora are not restricted to only English and French. There are thirteen phrases containing other languages, and the languages are Spanish (n = 5), Italian (n = 1), Portuguese Creole (n = 1), Korean (n = 1), and Tahitian (n = 1).

Table 33 Other Languages Present in the Combined Corpora

Spanish	Italian	Portuguese Creole	Korean	Tahitian
1 trip <b>grafico</b> <b>Fumo</b> crew <b>El</b> sharko <b>El</b> momo was here Fist fuck <b>playa</b> club Kaoutar <b>y nico</b> were here	<b>Forza</b> England	Big up na bendo	@Pain of Minerva: <b>OPPA</b>	<b>Maohi</b> surf school
Image 83 Graffiti D211 	Image 84 Graffiti D471 	Image 85 Graffiti C284 	Image 86 Graffiti D19 and D20 	Image 87 Graffiti D261 

The inscription *Hello papagena tu es **bella** comme la papaya* includes the word *bella* which could be Spanish or Italian. Hybrid phrases containing English and French are the most common in this study, this is in part due to the researcher's focus on English.

Table 34 presents the data using percentages. This allows for the corpora to be analysed equally despite their varying sizes. The city corpus contains the highest percentage of inscriptions containing English, hybrid words, and inscriptions with numbers in digits. The desktop corpus has the highest level of other languages out of the three corpora. The toilet corpus has the highest level of inscriptions with French words, symbols, acronyms or abbreviations, and inscriptions that are unclear.

Table 34 Languages Present in the Corpora in Percentages

	English	French	Hybrid Words	Other Language	Symbol	Acronym or Abbreviation	Number	Unclear
Combined Corpora	97.1%	7.7%	1.8%	1.1%	7.9%	7.0%	6.8%	8.4%
City	98.0%	11.0%	2.0%	0.8%	8.9%	8.9%	9.2%	9.7%
Desktop	97.0%	6.4%	1.8%	1.3%	6.5%	6.5%	5.6%	7.7%
Toilet	91.7%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%	22.9%	14.6%	6.3%	10.4%

The table above demonstrates that, in this study, most phrases in the combined and individual corpora contain English. Despite the fact that the University Bordeaux Montaigne is the institution that teaches languages, only two of the 12 inscriptions containing another language were found there. Four of the inscriptions were found in the Science and Technology campus, two were found at the Law and Politics campus,

one at the Human Sciences campus, and the other three in the city. As the researcher intentionally photographed graffiti inscriptions containing English phrases, the high level of English is to be expected, however, the presence of other languages symbols and numbers was not targeted by the researcher and therefore adds an extra dimension to the study of hybrid phrases.

Table 35 Most Frequent French Words in the Corpus

Word	Frequency	Word Family	Frequency	Total Frequency
<i>Le</i>	21	<i>La, Les, L'</i>	8,6,2	37
<i>Est</i>	5	<i>Suis, Es, Sommes, Etes, Sont</i>	1,2,0,0,1	8
<i>En</i>	5	/	/	5
<i>Tu</i>	4	<i>Toi, Ton, Toi-même</i>	0,0,0	4
<i>De</i>	4	<i>Des, Du</i>	2, 3	6
<i>Je</i>	4	<i>Moi, Mon, Moi-même</i>	1,0,0	5

Table 35 presents the most used French words in the hybrid graffiti inscriptions. The English translations of the French words also appear in the top 20 words in the reference corpus, the AmE06. The word *the* is the first most used word, *of* is second, *and* is third, *in* is sixth, *I* is tenth, and *you* is twentieth. Therefore, their frequency is to be expected, but their hybrid usage merits further exploration.

Table 36 French Words and English Translations

French Words	Total Frequency	English Translations	Total Frequency
<i>Le, La, Les, L'</i>	37	<i>The</i>	134
<i>Est, Suis, Es, Sommes, Etes, Sont</i>	8	<i>Am, are, is</i>	79
<i>En</i>	5	<i>On</i>	12
<i>Tu, Toi, Ton, Toi-même</i>	4	<i>You, your, yourself</i>	93
<i>De, Des, Du</i>	6	<i>Of</i>	31
<i>Je, Moi, Mon, Moi-même</i>	5	<i>I, me, my, myself</i>	163

Table 36 shows the frequency of the French words and the frequency of their English translations. The table shows that in comparison, the use of French words is significantly lower than the English translations. French articles are often seen with a mixture of phrases in English and French. For example, it is used as the only French word in a sentence that is predominantly English such as: “*Leave your offices and go alone into the wilde*” *le 5/05/90 Etienne et [?]* and it is also seen as part of a sentence that is mainly in French such as *université en lutte / on ne dit pas : d'accord Mr. Le professeur mais : ok boomer*. The most common hybrid phrase is *fuck le/la/les*. The construction is analysed in section 4.6.1.1: F Who?

Image 88 Graffiti D760



The verb *être* is used as part of a sentence mainly with other French words: *c'est agacant !* or *Star wars VIII Lelia meurt non c'est Han Solo*. The same can be said for the French preposition *en*, as in the four inscriptions in which it is used, most of the words are in French not English, for example: *en art comme en amour, l'instinct suffit ! Fred Rush Collins*.

Image 89 Graffiti D352



The personal pronoun *tu* appears in four inscriptions. The use of *tu* implies informality in French and that the writer is addressing one specific person, or it can have a generic meaning. One inscription is positive in nature: *tu es bella [you are beautiful]*, two are mildly insulting: *tu are fake! [you are fake]* and one is proposing access to recreational drugs: *tu veux de la weed ? [do you want some weed?]* It is unlikely that the writers are addressing one specific person with the intention that they will read the phrase, it could be a means of expressing familiarity with the potential readers.

Image 90 Graffiti C78



The use of *de* is once again enveloped by other French words and is part of fixed grammatical structures such as *faire de* [to do something] and *X de merde* [shitty x] as it is a relational, functional word. The pronoun *je* is also followed by verbs and entire phrases in French for example: **Je m'en bats les boobs**. The pronoun *je* is never used alone, it is also seen in the inscription: CALL OF DUTY **JE SUIS LE MASTODONTE**.

Image 91 Graffiti C88



The inscription *je m'en bats les boobs* is an adaptation of the French expression *je m'en bats les couilles* which is a vulgar expression that means *I do not care*. The literal translation is *I beat my testicles*, in this version, the word for testicles is replaced

with the English slang word for breasts which suggests it could be an alternative for females.

The hybrid sentences all appear to follow an unwritten rule of how to mix languages. The unwritten rules, are for example, that the use of the word *fuck* is favoured over French swear words in hybrid phrases. Certain words are favoured in English such as *team* and *crews* due to the historical link to North American graffiti and hip-hop culture. The repetition of these structures suggests that the graffiti writers code-switch in a similar way - this could be instinctively or from reading examples of hybrid phrases and then repeating the phrases and structures in their own inscriptions.

#### 4.7.2 Hybrid Words

In this study, hybrid words are defined as being words that contain two or more languages, in this case namely French and English. AbuJaber et al. (2012) have also noted hybrid words such as '6ex' which they believe combines 'six' and 'sex' through the use of the integer '6' (p. 61). The 22 hybrid words are mainly present on the desktops (n = 14), the other eight inscriptions are found in the city corpus.

Image 92 Graffiti C83, C84, C85

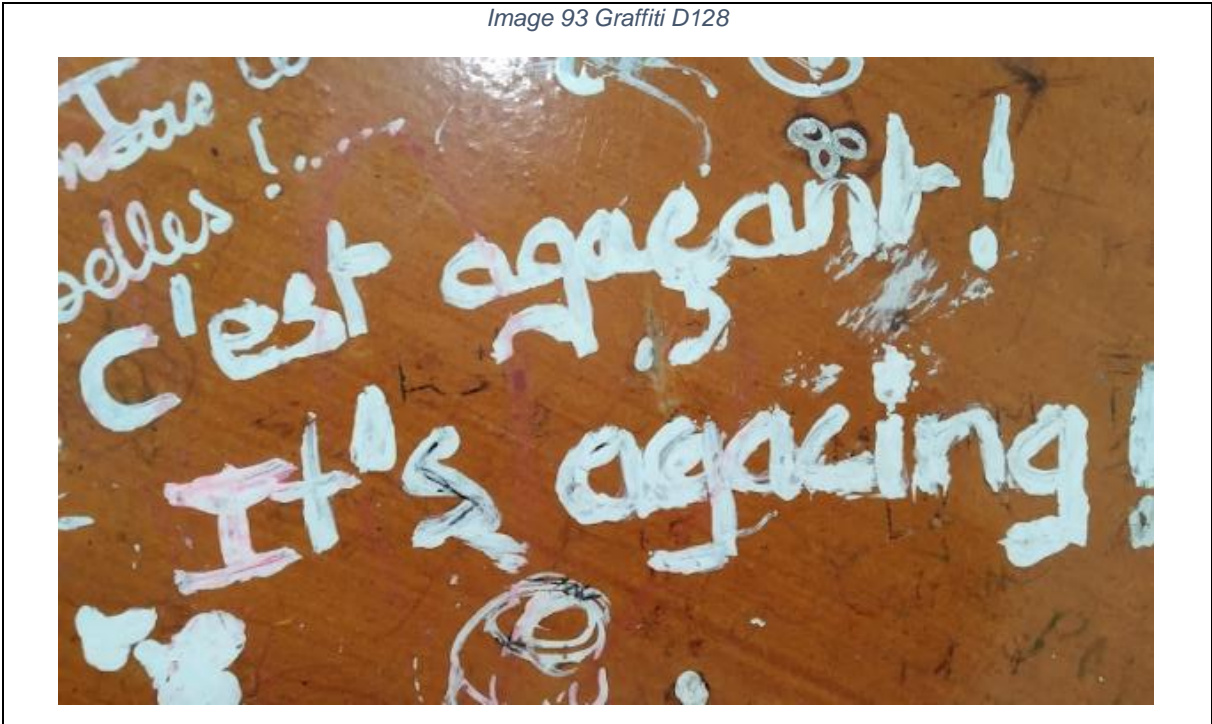


Graffiti C83: reads *fuck le cisteme*, it is both an example of a hybrid phrase and a hybrid word. *Fuck* is English, *le* is French for *the*, and *cisteme* is a combination of the words *cis* and *système* [*system*]. *Cis* is an abbreviation for the word *cisgender* which refers to people whose gender identity corresponds with the biological sex that was identified at the person's birth (Merriam-Webster, 2020). In order to understand this inscription, the reader has to have some knowledge of both French and English as well as the term *cis*. The first known use of the word *cisgender* was in 1994 and therefore

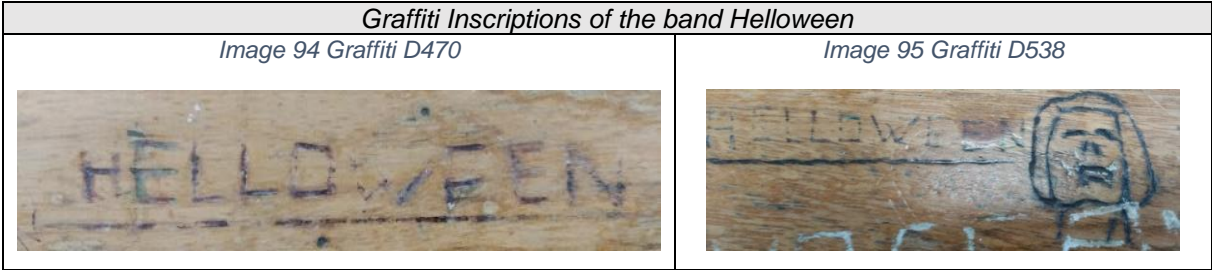


it may not be easily understood by everyone. One of the reasons for seeing this graffiti is the cultural hostility, violence, and delegitimising that trans-gender people face in current society (Zimman, 2019).

This phrase could also be argued to be an example of polysemy where the writer intentionally chooses a phrase that is polysemous in order to convey more than one message: anger against transphobia and the establishment itself. Polysemy was also seen by Petet (1996) where some graffiti inscriptions were polysemic in that they ‘elicited multiple readings and galvanized readers for different actions’ during the Palestinian occupation and mass uprising (p. 143).



In graffiti D128, the writer has written *c'est agaçant* which translates to *it's irritating* or *annoying*. The writer has then offered *it's agacing* as the English translation. The anglicisation of French words into hybrid words with the addition of *ing* is a common feature of the previously studied *franglais* phenomenon (Bondrea, 2007).



Graffiti D470 and D538 both read *Helloween* which is the name of a German metal band which was founded in 1984. The assumption is that the name of the band is a combination of the word *hell* and the word *Halloween* and this is supported by the images of the band in internet searches and on their website.

Figure 17 Screenshot from the Helloween Website



The band *Helloween* is an example of the use of hybrid words by L2 English speakers from Germany. It also reveals the musical preference of the student(s) who wrote the inscription.

Graffiti Inscriptions of the word 'looser'	
<p>Image 96 Graffiti D392</p>	<p>Image 97 Graffiti D536</p>
<p>Image 98 Graffiti D545</p>	<p>Image 99 Graffiti D735</p>

In graffiti D536, D545, and D735, the focus of analysis is the word *looser*. This is an example of French pronunciation influencing the spelling of an English word. The word *loser* becomes *looser* when the French writers apply their pronunciation rules. The presence of the word *winner* in graffiti D392 further supports the argument that the word *looser* is meant as *loser*. AbuJaber et al. (2012) also find occurrences of vowel elongation in graffiti writing, their study took place in Jordan suggesting that some elements of language modification are common to graffiti writing in general and are not country specific.

Image 100 Graffiti D297



The word *fuckastic* is a combination of *fuck* and *fantastic*. It could be argued that *fuckastic* is the work of a non L1 English speaker as it does not appear in a Google Ngram Viewer search or Google Trends. The hybrid word *fucktastic* is used more in L1 speech and is more visible in both Google Ngram Viewer and Google Trends.

Image 101 Graffiti C12



There is one example of hybridity of a word that contains two French words: *Bordeaux* and *cons*. The word *Bordeaux* is pronounced /bɔʁdo/ and *cons* is pronounced /kon/ and therefore the writer takes advantage of the overlap to create *Bordocons*. *Con* is a French insult to insinuate that someone is unintelligent. This inscription suggests that the writer is unhappy with the local Bordelais population.

Image 102 Graffiti T17



The graffiti inscription T17 reveals the musical preferences of the writers and is also an example of one form of hybridity that can be seen in mainstream media: *Larry Stylinson*. This is the hybrid name given to the alleged relationship between Harry Styles and Louis Tomlinson ('Larry Stylinson Meaning & Origin | Slang by Dictionary.Com', n.d.). This inscription is also an example of conversational graffiti whereby one graffiti writer replies to another. This phenomenon will be discussed in more detail in section 4.9: Conversational Graffiti.

#### 4.7.3 Number Hybridity

There were 81 inscriptions containing numbers and are therefore classed as examples of number hybridity. Forty-four of those inscriptions are from the desktop corpus, 34 were from the city corpus, and three were from the toilet corpus.

#### Graffiti Inscriptions that use numbers

Image 103 Graffiti C46



Image 104 Graffiti C25

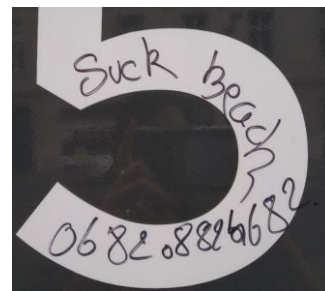
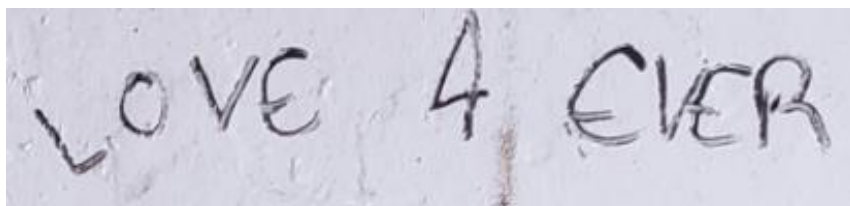


Image 105 Graffiti C181









The numbers were mostly used as dates, the oldest inscription was written in December 2007 and the most recent one was dated 29/11/21. The number 4 was used to replace the word *for* a total of eight times in the corpora. Additionally, there were six inscriptions that contained a phone number. Apart from the use of the number 4 as the word *for*, the numbers are mainly used as extra information in the inscription rather than more complex hybridity.

#### **4.7.4 Symbol Hybridity**



There were 98 inscriptions containing a symbol. I am separating punctuation from symbols as punctuation does not replace a word and therefore does not make a phrase hybrid. In the combined corpus, a heart was drawn 38 times and seen in inscriptions such as *I ♥ Yannick*. In previous studies, the use of the 'heart' symbol has been observed in Japanese inscriptions (Hoffer, 2002). AbuJaber et al. (2012) have also noted the use of symbols to replace letters in hybrid words, for example, '\$chool \$uck\$' (p. 61).

The anarchy symbol, Ⓐ, was included in 14 inscriptions. An asterisk or star was written in seven inscriptions. Six inscriptions contained a smiley face, four an ampersand, three the dollar sign, and two inscriptions contained an equals sign. The euro sign (D7), circumflex accent (D579), a lightning bolt (D788), the square root sign, and the communist symbol (D86) all appeared in one inscription each. The remainder of this subsection will present some of those examples, the others can be found in other sections or in the separate graffiti appendices.

In the following examples, the anarchy symbol is used either to form a hybrid word, replacing the letter *A*, or to replace the word *anarchy* itself. Anarchy is often represented by a circled A: Ⓐ (Ferrell, 1993).

Graffiti Inscriptions with the Anarchy Symbol		
Image 106 Graffiti C30 	Image 107 Graffiti C312 	Image 108 Graffiti C113 <sup>45</sup> 
Image 109 Graffiti C19 	Image 110 Graffiti C211 	Image 111 Graffiti C216 

In the first inscription, *@narchy fuck society*, the anarchy symbol is part of the word anarchy itself, this could be for emphasis. In the second inscription, *Love @!*, the anarchy symbol replaces the word anarchy. This could be an example of a time constraint, however, the artist has drawn some hearts alongside their inscription. Therefore, this suggests that the use of the symbol was probably a preference rather than a means to save time. There are three inscriptions containing the acronym *ACAB* and the anarchy symbol. As the anarchy symbol includes an *A* the writers were able to write the word with one or two anarchy symbols. Examples of both are seen in the images above. The final inscription, *Once again chap once @again*, contains one anarchy symbol. The phrase can be considered neutral in nature with no allusion to anarchy. Therefore, the use of the anarchy symbol could be either stylistic or a private reference for the writer and select community.

Graffiti Inscriptions using stars / asterisks	
Image 112 Graffiti D299 	Image 113 Graffiti D149 

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<sup>45</sup> This photograph featured in an article by the researcher with other examples of graffiti found in the city of Bordeaux (Peake, 2020).

The use of asterisks and stars varies between the inscriptions. The most common usage can be seen in graffiti D299 and D149. The asterisks are used to envelope the words/concepts. *\*Califorever\** is a hybrid word combining *California* and *forever*. In these examples the asterisk is decorative, whereas, in the example *GREEN GUERRiER\*ES* it is used to distinguish between the French words for ‘warriors’ which can be written ‘*guerriers*’ to mean male or male and female warriors, and ‘*guerrières*’ which means female only. The use of the asterisk, or in some texts a dot, is a means to make the language more inclusive (Charaudeau, 2018).

Image 114 Graffiti D68



The inscription D68 contains both English, French, and a hybrid word using the mathematical symbol: the square root sign. It is therefore categorised as a hybrid phrase which contains a hybrid word. The shape, colour, and style of all of the letters suggest that this was the work of one writer and that all the forms of hybridity were intended from the start. This inscription was found at the Humanities university, and therefore is unlikely to be a criticism of a Mathematical lesson.

*Graffiti Inscriptions with a dollar sign*

Image 115 Graffiti D360

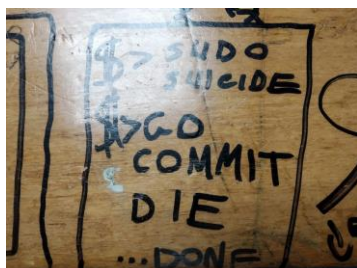
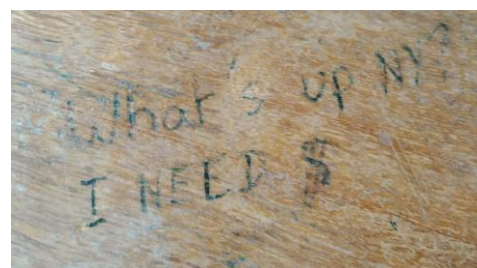


Image 116 Graffiti D512



The dollar sign is used twice in inscription D360 and once in inscription D512. It is accompanied by the more than sign and this would suggest that the writer is trying to

compare money to suicide and dying. The fact that the writer has chosen to use the dollar sign rather than euro could suggest that this writer is potentially emulating North American culture, or that this graffiti was inspired by a North American source. The full message remains unclear without further context. The second inscription shows two writers connecting with North American culture. The phrase *'What's up X?'* is often used by comedians at the beginning of a show. The first writer has written *NY* which is commonly used as an abbreviation for New York. The second writer replies: *I NEED \$* showing that they have understood the message and refers to the local currency.

#### **4.8 Content**

The following sections will focus on the content present in the graffiti inscription corpus. The categories were created from the data themselves, in keeping with the GT approach and TA. I originally identified 69 categories of content; I was then able to group certain categories together, and analyse the patterns that emerged from the data into the subsections that follow. As there is no means to contact the writers to understand the content of the graffiti inscriptions – as is the case with many illegal activities (Jaffe et al., 2012), the categories are purely from the readers', rather than the writers' perspective. There is a possibility that the original content intended by the writer was not how I understood the content. Therefore, this study is mainly focused on the readers' interpretation, rather than the writer's intention. To avoid assumptions on the part of the researcher, 93 inscriptions are categorised as *unclear*. There is also an element of overlap in the content of the graffiti inscriptions. If the inscriptions were related to more than one category, they were placed in more than one category. For example, the graffiti inscription: *we never worlds apart* is categorised as having content relating to both geography and song lyrics. Table 37 presents all the content categories.



Table 37 Content of the Graffiti Inscriptions

<i>Content</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
<i>Music</i>	138
<i>Swearing</i>	135
<i>Name</i>	125
<i>Order/Request/Advice</i>	104
<i>Love</i>	94
<i>Unclear</i>	93
<i>'was here'</i>	79
<i>Tag</i>	75
<i>Negativity</i>	71
<i>Sexual Nature</i>	65
<i>Insulting/Aggression</i>	59
<i>Politics</i>	56
<i>Song Lyrics</i>	52
<i>Television/Film</i>	51
<i>Nature</i>	50
<i>Opinion/Feeling</i>	40
<i>Positivity</i>	39
<i>Time/Date</i>	38
<i>Rebellion</i>	36
<i>Drugs/Alcohol</i>	33
<i>Abbreviation, Number, Word Play</i>	30
<i>Mantra/Philosophical</i>	29
<i>Death, Object</i>	28
<i>Community, Religion/Spirituality</i>	26
<i>Education, Violence</i>	25
<i>Internet Culture, Police</i>	24
<i>Geography</i>	23
<i>Food/Drink</i>	20
<i>Question</i>	18
<i>Verb</i>	16
<i>Sport</i>	14
<i>Graffiti, Sexuality</i>	13
<i>Book/play/poem, Greetings/Salutations, Quote, Society</i>	12
<i>Gaming</i>	11
<i>Freedom, Natural Elements</i>	9
<i>Art, Capitalism/Money, Feminism, Racism/Race</i>	8
<i>Space</i>	7
<i>Agreement, Criminality, Friendship</i>	6
<i>Anime/Manga/Comic, COVID-19, Family, Holidays, Travel, Vegetarianism/Veganism</i>	4
<i>Rebellion</i>	3
<i>Commercialism, Foreign Language, Technology, Toilet humour, Technology</i>	2
<i>Apology, Nuclear Energy, Tattooing</i>	1

In the following sections, I will present and analyse the data relating to negativity. Then I will present the inscriptions that refer to popular culture including music, television and films. There will also be a section on inscriptions that have a socio-economic focus and I will contrast the themes of anarchy and community that are present in the corpora. The topic of sex and sexuality in the inscriptions will be also presented as previous research has identified it as a main theme in graffiti (cf. Green 2003). The presence of tags in the corpus will be also explored. Finally, the inscriptions aimed at the universities will be considered as the writers can be presumed to be students, unlike the city corpus which could be written by anyone. The above themes merit exploration and analysis from a qualitative perspective.

For clarification, the use of names in graffiti inscriptions has several forms. Band names have been classed as music rather than names, this is to distinguish them from inscriptions which contained people's first names. Tags could also be identified as names as they are the artists' *name* or *signature*. As the tags in this corpus are words such as *five*, *deal* and *away* I have classed them as tags so that they can be explored as tags rather than names. There are 125 inscriptions including a first name, for example: *Charu was here !*



Graffiti D5 has three words, a name, a verb, and an adverb. All three words are the same colour and appear to be in the same pen. This suggests it was written by one writer.

#### **4.8.1 Popular Culture**

This subsection explores the inscriptions that are examples of manifest intertextuality. The inscriptions in this category were probably taken from songs, television shows, films, or books as an internet search revealed that the phrases existed in those forms. Graffiti containing references to popular culture have been

identified in previous research. For example, Islam (2011) posits that the graffiti inscription: *this is what it sounds like when doves cry* is potentially a line from the Prince song *When Doves Cry* (p. 252). As graffiti inscriptions are anonymous, these links are based on internet research, the date of the inscription, and context.

Table 38 Popular Culture References

Music	Television and Films	Internet Culture	Literature	Manga/Anime
190	51	24	12	4

There are a total of 282 graffiti inscriptions that potentially reference popular culture. Most references are of music, which can be divided into the categories of music in general and extracts from song lyrics (n = 139 and 51 respectively). The presence of English-speaking music in graffiti inscriptions is not unique to this study, Krawiec (2007) finds phrases from English-speaking hip-hop musicians in Polish graffiti inscriptions. The first two categories, music, television and films, are all found in the sound landscape; these aural stimuli are taken by graffiti writers and converted into visual representations.

#### 4.8.1.1 Music

One of the most recurrent themes present on the desktops is music. The category of music contains: band/artist names, song lyrics, and references to music in general. The bands and artists found in the combined graffiti corpora can be seen in Table 39.

Table 39 The Bands in the Combined graffiti corpora

Band	Frequency
<i>The Who, Iron Maiden</i>	6
<i>Pink Floyd, Day 6</i>	4
<i>Smashing Pumpkins, The Doors</i>	3
<i>Sonic Youth, Mamamoo, Stray Kids, Pixies, Helloween, Guns N Roses,</i> <i>Red Velvet, Exo-Tempo, Seventeen, Imotep Crew, Slayer, All Batard, Cradle of Filth,</i> <i>Slipknot, Lords of the New Church, Notorious B.I.G., Metallica, Nightwish,</i> <i>DragonForce, The Cramps, Barenaked Ladies, No Use for a Name, Dog eat dog, The</i> <i>Cure, The Beatles, Burning Heads, Rolling Stones, Ten Years After, Napalm Death,</i> <i>Every Mother's Nightmare, Hurtful Matter, Pantera, Type O Negative, Slade, In</i> <i>Flames, The Beach Boys, Radiohead, The Offspring, Godspeed you! Black Emperor,</i> <i>Bullet 4 My Valentine, Tsunami, Phuture, Soulfly, Mongo's HiFi, Daddy Freddie,</i> <i>Ragamuffin, Pig Destroyer, Burning Spear, Pearl Jam, Notorious Bitch, Deeds of</i> <i>Flesh, AC/DC, Kiss</i>	1

Almost all the bands written on the desktops at the Peixotto campus are part of the heavy metal and rock genre. There is also a heavy metal festival name engraved into the desktop: *HellFest*. Due to the anonymity of the graffiti inscriptions, it is unclear

whether there is one person who wrote all of the inscriptions, or whether the quantity of inscriptions reflects the musical tastes of more than one graffiti writer at the University of Bordeaux. However, whether it is one student or many, the fact remains that most bands and lyrics that are engraved into the desktops are from this genre.

Image 118 Graffiti D573-D756



In Image 118, there appear to be seven inscriptions, five of which are legible and appear to be band names. This is an example of desktop swarming. The first student has written a band name and other students have responded by adding other band names. The lack of insults next to the band names could be a sign that the students are writing the names of bands that they like rather than bands that they dislike. Further examples of swarming will be discussed in section 4.9.3: Swarming.

One inscription reads *FUCK KOTEI*, which is potentially the name of a French music producer (Narkuss et al., 2019). Without research it could appear that *fuck Kotei* is one writer cursing another person, however, the internet search reveals that the word *fuck* is part of the producer's name.

Focus on Font

Image 119 Graffiti D280



Figure 18 Album Cover for the band Slayer



Image 120 Graffiti D281



Figure 19 Album Cover for the band Kiss



46

In some inscriptions, the way the letters are written can be the key to understanding the meaning behind the inscription. This is one reason that graffiti should be analysed from the photographs themselves and not just from the typed records. Graffiti D280 reads *SLAYER*. The results from a search engine reveal that the slanted style of the letters is like that of the band *Slayer*. This is evidence that when studying graffiti, the form and aesthetics of the letters themselves can be linked to meaning.

The same can be seen in graffiti D281 *KISS!*, which can be found in the same amphitheatre as graffiti D280 *Slayer*. It is possible that both graffiti inscriptions were made by the same student who has an interest in heavy metal bands. In the *KISS!* inscription there is an example of conversational graffiti whereby a second writer has modified the phrase and the overall meaning of the graffiti by adding 'me'. The inscription which started out as a band name has now become a message of a sexual or flirtatious nature.

Both mainstream and alternative cultural references can be found in the corpora. I consider these inscriptions to be a part of alternative/niche culture due to the lack of information available online. I have had to rely on websites that are created by users to access the information.

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<sup>46</sup>[https://www.amazon.fr/Love-GunKiss/dp/B000001EL7/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?\\_\\_mk\\_fr\\_FR=%C3%85M%C3%85%C5%BD%C3%95%C3%91&crd=1H4SNZR8H510T&keywords=kiss+album&qid=1669113867&qu=eyJxc2MiOilxLjUwliwicXNhIjoiMS45NyIsInFzcCI6IjluMDAifQ%3D%3D&srefix=kiss+album%2Caps%2C199&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.fr/Love-GunKiss/dp/B000001EL7/ref=sr_1_1?__mk_fr_FR=%C3%85M%C3%85%C5%BD%C3%95%C3%91&crd=1H4SNZR8H510T&keywords=kiss+album&qid=1669113867&qu=eyJxc2MiOilxLjUwliwicXNhIjoiMS45NyIsInFzcCI6IjluMDAifQ%3D%3D&srefix=kiss+album%2Caps%2C199&sr=8-1)

Image 121 Graffiti D258



Graffiti D258 could refer to an underage rapper who was part of a group and not able to perform until he came of age. Fans would shout “Free Earl” in protest to this (Greatness, 2012; Niichi, 2011). The websites used to find the information in this case were urbandictionary.com and knowyourmeme.com. The presence of both popular culture and niche culture suggests that graffiti as a form of communication is at the same time a counterculture expression for both popular culture fans and niche culture fans.

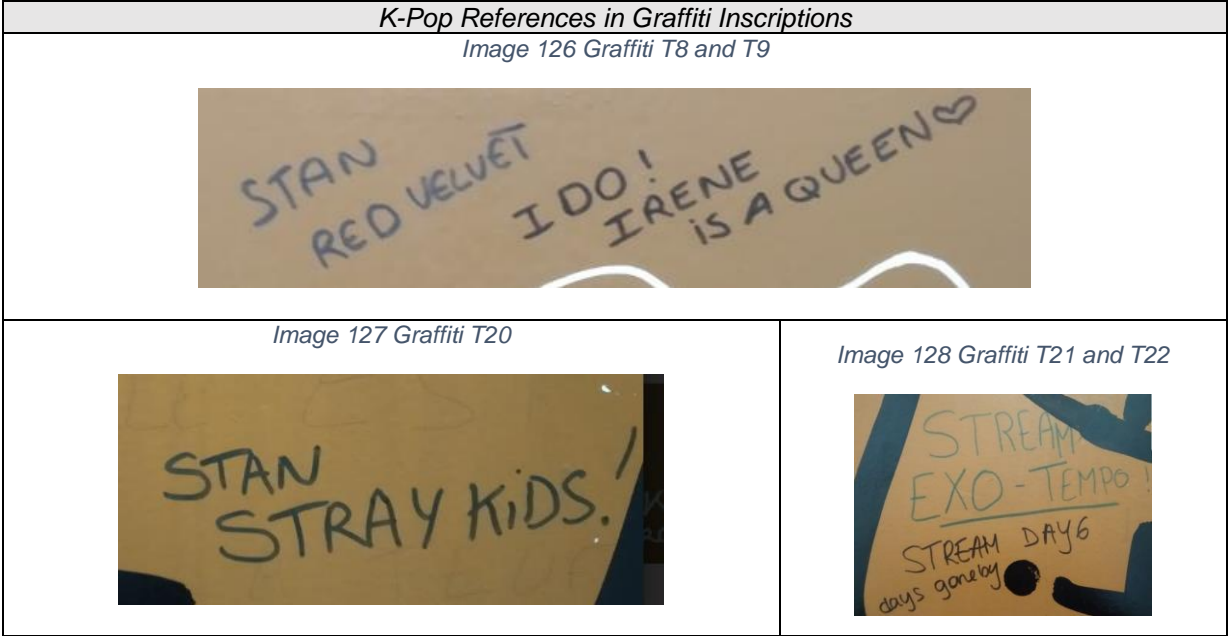
*Bands that have an English Language Name*

The use of English-speaking names is not restricted to bands from the English-speaking world. The groups *Helloween*, *Hurtful Matter*, and *Burning Heads* are from Germany and France respectively, all the groups sing predominantly in English and their band names were found on the desktops. The inscription *Helloween* is analysed in more detail in section 4.7.1: Hybrid Words.

<i>English Speaking Bands</i>			
<i>Hurtful Matter Burning Heads</i>	<i>In Flames</i>	<i>Moonspell</i>	<i>Nightwish</i>
Image 122 Graffiti D533 	Image 123 Graffiti D576 	Image 124 Graffiti D198 	Image 125 Graffiti D418 
<i>France</i>	<i>Sweden</i>	<i>Portugal</i>	<i>Finland</i>

A feature that is present only in the toilet corpus is that of K-Pop (Korean Popular Music) related inscriptions. These inscriptions were found in a toilet in the University Bordeaux Montaigne which is the humanities faculty in Bordeaux. The inscriptions are

written in English about Korean K-Pop bands: *Exo* and *Day 6*. The first writer encourages the readers to stream an *Exo* song, the second writer suggests a *Day 6* song. Both K-Pop groups have chosen an English name for their bands: *Exo* from *exo-planet* and *Day 6* (Genius English Translations – DAY6 - 행복했던 알들이었다 (Days Gone By) (English Translation), n.d.; Soh, 2018).



In all three graffiti inscriptions, the writers use the slang term *Stan* to express their love for the K-Pop bands. *Stan* is the name of an *Eminem* song written about a fan that became obsessed with the rapper and committed suicide (Urban Dictionary, n.d.). In graffiti T8, the writer has expressed their love for the band *Red Velvet* and this is supported by another writer who thinks that the band member *Irene* is a queen (T9). The second comment helps to give context to the first, confirming that the graffiti is about the musical group and not the cake (Kpop Profiles, 2016). In addition to the above groups, the K-Pop group named *Seventeen* was also written in a graffiti inscription at the University Bordeaux Montaigne.

Image 129 Graffiti D19 and D20



In Image 129 the two graffiti inscriptions *@Pain Of Minerva : Oppa* and *Korea boo* can be seen. The inscription *@Pain of Minerva* is the name of a student's Instagram account which features videos of young people dancing to K-Pop music in the city of Bordeaux. *Oppa* is a Korean word which means older brother but can be used affectionately for older males (Minjung, 2022). The inscription *korea boo* could be a variation of the word *Koreaboo* which refers to a non-Korean person who is obsessed with Korean culture: in particular K-Pop and competitive games (J.Wang21, 2017). It is likely that the person who wrote *Korea boo* knows the student or the Instagram account Pain of Minerva.

K-Pop graffiti will also be covered in section 4.9: Conversational Graffiti. The inscriptions about K-Pop will be discussed from a conversational graffiti standpoint analysing the interaction between two or more writers.

### *Song Lyrics*

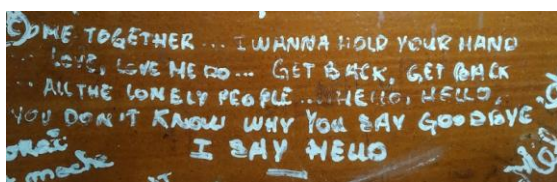

In the combined graffiti corpora, there were 51 inscriptions that are potentially lyrics from songs. The full list can be seen in Table 40.




Table 40 Graffiti Inscriptions from Song Lyrics

Inscriptions from Song Lyrics	
<p>we never worlds apart  <b>I BELIEVE I CAN FLY</b> FRED RUSH COLLINS                  ..in The COLD NOVEMBER RAIN...                  CORONA THE RYTHM OF THE NIGHT                  CONCRETE JUNGLE                  STREET LOBOTOMY                  yeah. I'm gonna take my horse                  to the old town road                  ride! till can't [?]                  I wanna Be a Billionaire...                  Just like the seed I don't know where to go through                  dirt and shadows [?] I grow I am reaching light                  through the struggle                  Love of my life you've [?] me you've broken my heart                  and now you have me love of my life don't you see?                  bring it back bring it back Don't take it away for me                  we can plant a house we can buill a tree she said                  hello really wanna know you, but I don't want you to                  go yet I am just talkin about doing our bodies right.                  what we'll do is keep it simple. Don't have worry                  about a label I'm not talking about a life time just                  tonight I don't wanna know you like that just wanna                  watch you be bad                  WHO KILLED DAVEY MO WHY AND WHAT'S THE                  REASON FOR                  DON'T BE ANOTHER [?] IN THE WALL                  WHO KILLED BAMBY ? YOUR MOTHER OR ME                  OR LEA ♥                  I REMEMBER THAT FREAK Bitch                  TOUCH the SKY                  BANG BANG BANGITY BANG I SAID A BANG                  BANG [?]                  THE WORLD IS A VAMPIRE                  WHO KILLE BAMBY ? IT'S WHITE SNOW!                  CONFORTABLY NUMB                  I like my weapons how I like my music heavy and                  meTat !                  TAKE A LOOK TO THE SKY JUST BEFORE YOU                  DIE                  Scared to be lonely                  THE DOORS Light my fire</p>	<p>ThanK u Next                  Tale as old as time                  miss me with that bullshit                  CRY ME A RIVER, BITCH !                  the love we left behind Watching the                  flashbacks intertwine Memories I will never                  find So I'll whatever you become ? the                  reckless things we've done think our lives                  have just begun                  MY GOD SITS IN THE BACK OF THE                  LIMIOUSINE WE CALL HIM RAIN MAN                  COME TOGETHER ... I WANNA HOLD                  YOUR HAND ... LOVE, LOVE ME DO ...                  GET BACK, GET BACK ... ALL THE                  LONELY PEOPLE ... HELLO, HELLO, YOU                  DON'T KNOW WHY YOU SAY GOODBYE                  I SAY HELLO                  GET YOUR SHINE ON !                  Mister would you please help my pony?                  I NEED SOMEBODY HELP NOT JUST                  ANYBODY HELP YOU KNOW I NEED                  SOMEBODY BEATLES                  I need a Dollar                  WOMANIZER                  LITTLE WING                  STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN                  WHO LET'S THE DOG OUTT Momo                  Welcome to the Good life Jungle! HELLO                  VooDoo CHILD WAS HERE !                  This girl is on Fire                  The End my only friend                  O' brother I'm a man of a constant sorrow.                  I've seen trouble all m                  WHO KILLED BAMBY ? [x2]                  MUSTARD ON THE BEAT HOE                  DON'T BELIEVE WHAT YOU HEAR DON'T                  BELIEVE WHAT YOU SEE IF YOU JUST                  CLOSE YOUR EYE YOU WILL FEEL THE                  ENNEMY</p>

The songs are from a total of 38 groups or artists, with a further six songs that could be from one or more artist. There are six Beatles' songs cited in one inscription and there is a second inscription with lyrics from the Beatles' song *Help*. Both inscriptions are found at the Victoire campus of the University of Bordeaux.

Beatles songs found at the Victoire Campus	
<p>Image 130 Graffiti D134</p> 	<p>Image 131 Graffiti D194</p> 

Although both inscriptions were found at the same campus, it is unclear when comparing the photographs of the two inscriptions whether they are from the same person, but the difference in pen choice and handwriting would suggest otherwise. Another song that was repeated in the corpus is The Sex Pistol's song *Who Killed Bambi* which is written four times in the desktop corpus, and all four were found on the desktops at the University of Bordeaux, Peixotto campus.

<i>Inscriptions with 'who killed Bambi'</i>	
<p>Image 132 Graffiti D507</p> 	<p>Image 133 Graffiti D433 and D434</p> 
<p>Image 134 Graffiti D535</p> 	<p>Image 135 Graffiti D637</p> 

The words that appear in each of the four inscriptions is the question: *who killed bamby?* The phrase comes from the song *Who Killed Bambi* by The Sex Pistols, and that song was inspired by the Disney film *Bambi* which was loosely based on a 1928 translation of a book by Austrian writer Felix Salten. Over time various students have replied to the original four messages by suggesting possible culprits.

In the inscriptions, the handwriting of the initial phrase *who killed bamby?* appears to be the same in each photograph, this suggests that the same writer is responsible for the four inscriptions. If the same person is responsible, we can infer more about the writer: they are probably a fan of the group in question and know the songs well enough to write out some of the lyrics. The repetition of inscriptions by the same writer would suggest that some people have a tendency to write on desktops, and write the same

phrase more than once.<sup>47</sup> If each inscription is from a different writer, more information can be inferred about the students in general. In this case: students at the Science and Technology campus.

Table 41 References to Music

<i>Music Related</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
<i>Smoke Week Every Day</i>	4
<i>Funk</i>	5
<i>In Trance We Trust</i>	4

The inscription *In Trance We Trust* is an example of both manifest intertextuality and constitutive intertextuality. The phrase *In Trance We Trust* is the name of Dutch record label which was established in 1998, which is an adaptation of the phrase *In God We Trust* which was first minted onto coins in the United States in 1863 and later adopted as the official motto of the country in 1956 (Hudson Jr. & Berggren, 2017). As seen in the literature review, the phrase '*In XX we trust*' has also been seen in Turkish graffiti, where it was modified to read '*In Taksim we trust !*' (Morva 2016, 32). This supports both the idea that graffiti and North American culture are linked, as well as the dominance of North American culture around the world.

#### 4.8.1.2 Television and Films

In the combined corpora, there were 51 inscriptions that referred to television series or films (n = 18 and 33 respectively, one could be both). The combined corpora contain references to a total of 26 films or television series, and one graffiti inscription that reads: *Movie theatre* which is a reference to the physical cinema. The most referenced film franchise was Star Wars (n = 10), followed by a quote from the film *Filth and Wisdom* (n = 6), and *Bambi* (n = 4) which is analysed in section 4.8.1.1: Music. In this subsection I will present the data and analysis for some of the inscriptions in the category of television series and films.

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<sup>47</sup> This behaviour was also seen in the inscriptions by the students Momo and Kef who both wrote *x was here* 8 and 22 times respectively.

**Star Wars Graffiti**

Image 136 Graffiti D136-D138



Image 137 Graffiti D189



Image 138 Graffiti D137



Image 139 Graffiti D230 and D231



JEDI MIND TRICKS BUS-A-BUS

Image 140 Graffiti D267



JEDI MIND TRICKS

Image 141 Graffiti D664



Image 142 Graffiti D621 and D622



The first film in the *Star Wars* franchise was released in 1977. Therefore, it is possible that some of the inscriptions have been on the desktops since the first film was released.

Image 143 Graffiti D352

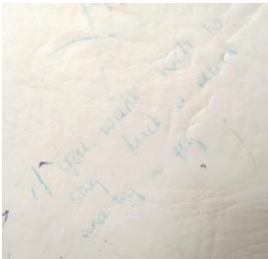

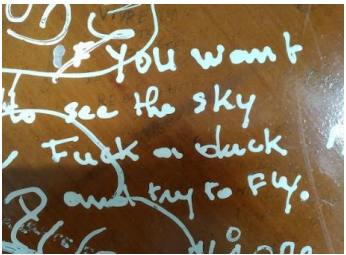



One of the inscriptions, graffiti D352, refers to the eighth film which was released in 2017 and therefore this indicates that *Star Wars* is popular with the students who wrote that inscription in or after 2017. There appear to be five writers who have

contributed to the inscription, one person has added the *S* to *Star War*; another person has potentially coloured in the roman numerals indicating the number of the film. The word *MEURT* appears to be a different colour pen and writing style to the previous text implying a fourth writer. Finally, the fifth writer who replies to the inscriptions.

In general, the presence of a popular culture reference is an indication of interest on the part of the writer. In the above inscription there could be five *Star Wars* fans, however, the first writer forgot the *S*, this could be due to a lack of time or the French pronunciation of the film's title. The third writer wrote *Leïla*, yet the name of one of the main characters is *Leia*. This suggests that the desktop writers engage in writing about subjects that are not just their passions.

In graffiti D664, one writer has written *Darth Vador* and a second writer has added *Dark Vador was here*. This inscription suggests that the writer watched the film in French, as *Dark Vador* is the French translation for *Darth Vader* but has chosen to write *was here* in English. The combination of a French name and common graffiti inscription in English is an example of language flux through two forms of popular culture: cinema and graffiti. The order the phrases were written in is unknown, nonetheless, the placement of the phrases would suggest that one writer was replying to the other with the alternative name for the character.

Graffiti Inscriptions of the phrase 'fuck a duck and try to fly'	
<p>Image 144 Graffiti D125</p>  <p>If you want [?] [?], fuck a duck and try to fly</p>	<p>Image 145 Graffiti D177</p>  <p>If you want to see the sky Fuck a duck and try to fly</p>
<p>Image 146 Graffiti D133</p>  <p>If you want to see the sky Fuck a duck and try to Fly</p>	<p>Image 147 Graffiti D294 and D295</p>  <p>FUCK A DUCK AND TRY TO FLY SUIT UP</p>

In the combined corpora, there were six variations of the phrase: *if you want to reach the sky fuck a duck and try to fly*.<sup>48</sup> According to internet research, the original phrase comes from the film *Filth and Wisdom*. All the variations have *fuck a/the duck and try to fly*, and this is my justification for grouping these inscriptions together. In the variations found on the desktops and classroom walls, the verb *reach* is replaced with the verb *see* (n = 3), in one inscription the verb is not legible, and in two inscriptions the inscription starts at the core phrase: *fuck a duck*.

One of the inscriptions has been added to by a second writer: *if you die then stop gettin' high!!!* The additional phrase is demonstrative of the level of English of the second writer. The writer understands the first sentence and carries on the theme and successfully rhymes *fly* with *high* which requires the speaker to know how to pronounce those words as they are spelt differently. Furthermore, the writer correctly uses an apostrophe to shorten the word *getting* to *gettin'*.

Three of the inscriptions were found at the Victoire campus, one at the Pessac campus, and two at the Peixotto campus of the University of Bordeaux. The organisational structure of the university is so that if a student attends one course from start to finish they would generally stay at the same campus for all their classes, however, if they change courses or do several degrees, they could attend all three campuses. However, given the style of writing in each inscription, this further suggests they were not written by the same person. Therefore, this phrase is representative of the English language use of the students writing graffiti at the University of Bordeaux.

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<sup>48</sup> The remaining two images are featured in section The 'F' Word: D790 and Drug Related Inscriptions: D643.

Stay Gold Pony Boy in various forms

Image 148 Graffiti C215



Figure 20 Stay Gold Pony Boy Meme



Miss Riddle

Figure 21 Stay Gold Pony Boy Meme

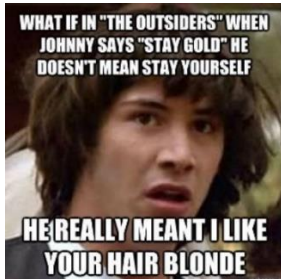


Figure 22 Stay Gold Pony Boy Meme



Figure 23 Stay Gold Pony Boy Meme



Another example of manifest intertextuality can be seen in graffiti C215, the original quote is from a 1967 book entitled: *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton; the novel was made into a film in 1983. The line in the book and the film: 'stay gold ponyboy. Stay gold' refers to a poem written by Robert Frost called: *Nothing Gold Can Stay*. The phrase 'stay gold, ponyboy' is not spoken verbatim in either Stevie Wonder's song *Stay Gold* that accompanied the film or the original poem. In 2019, an Estonian band called the *Dead Furies* released a song entitled, *Stay Gold, Ponyboy*. The phrase has also been seen in various memes on the internet. The phrase could have been taken from the book, film, or internet culture. The relationship between internet culture and graffiti writing is explored further in section 6.2.4.

See You Space Cowboy

Image 149 Graffiti C219



Figure 24 Screenshot from the Anime Series Cowboy Bepop



A further example of manifest intertextuality is that of graffiti C219: *See you space cowboy*. This expression was first used on a Japanese sci-fi anime entitled *Cowboy Bebop*. Episodes were often ended with the phrase *SEE YOU SPACE COWBOY*, see Figure 17. *See You Space Cowboy* was also the name of a song used on the show (*See You Space Cowboy*, n.d.). Another possible origin of this phrase could be the song *Space Cowboy* by North American rock group Steve Miller Band in 1969 (*The Steve Miller Band - Space Cowboy Lyrics | AZLyrics.Com*, n.d.). In 2016, a North American punk band based their name on the anime *Cowboy Bebop* (Genius Holdings, 2022). The term *space cowboy* dates back to the 1960s and was used as slang for somebody who is easily distracted or uses drugs (*Urban Dictionary*, n.d.-c). The term has also been used in two songs, one by ZillaKami in his song *Space Cowboy*, whereby *see you in space cowboy* is repeated as part of the chorus (Definder.net, n.d.)<sup>49</sup> and also in the song *Space Cowboy* by Jamiroquai, which was featured on their 1994 album *The Return of the Space Cowboy* (*Jamiroquai – Space Cowboy*, 1994). The inspiration for this particular graffiti inscription could be any of the above.

#### 4.8.2 Negativity

Negativity and graffiti are intertwined: graffiti serves as a voice for the voiceless (Jaffe et al., 2012; Ouaras, 2018; Peteet, 1996; Sage, 2016; Toenjes, 2015), it is a means for them to air their thoughts and particularly their dissatisfaction (Boldt & Paul, 2010; Brown, 1995). There are 319 occurrences of negativity in the combined corpora. This could be because of the use of lexicon associated with negativity such as swear words, the verbs *kill* and *die*, grammatical negation, and implicit negativity. Table 42 presents the overview of inscriptions. Each category and the examples are detailed in the following subsections.

Table 42 Overview of Negative Phrases

Lexicon		Grammatical Negation	Implicit Negativity
Swearing	Violence and Death	No / not / n't / never / non	Impossible etc...
(n = 148)	(n = 44)	(n = 59)	(n = 68)

---

<sup>49</sup> Manga and Anime are very popular in France. France is the second-largest manga market outside Japan (Statista.com, n.d.), and the largest anime consumer in Europe (*Anime Market Size, Share & Growth Report, 2022-2030*, n.d.).



#### 4.8.2.1 Swearing

The definition of swearing used in this study is based on the works of Zenner et al. (2017), Ljung (2011), Andersson and Trudgill (1990) whereby the concept of swearing is defined by being about a stigma or taboo, that is not used literally, and is used to express a strong emotion. Hughes (2006) defines the term taboo, as referring to ‘any indiscretion that ought to be avoided’ (p. 151; 462).

Gumperz (1982) presented examples of code-switching in what he calls ‘personalization versus objectivization’ whereby the speakers change language to express feelings or objective opinions (p. 80). Lantto (2014) asks if speakers use code-switching to show more or less personal involvement in the message. The use of code-switching may therefore be a means for the writers to distance themselves from the negative message or content of the inscription.

L2 speakers of English often acquire swear words through conversations or media such as films in English (Kristiano & Priyatno, 2018). The swear words, and their derivatives, present in the corpora can be divided into the denotative categories of sexual, excretory, blasphemous, and animal names (Beers Fägersten, 2007; Kristiano & Priyatno, 2018). Moehkardi (2022) writes that swearing is the ‘language of protest upon repression’ and that their usage is to express antiauthoritarian malcontent (p. 130). Abel and Buckley (1977) suggested that swearing in graffiti can be representative of the writer’s anger and frustration in a non-physically violent way. Fjeld et al. (2019) write that ‘cursing is an intimate part of a language and culture, and usually shows few neologisms over the centuries’ (p. 104). The data in this study would suggest that the word *fuck* has become an integral part of French language and culture.

The swear words can be analysed either through the function of the swear word or by swear word. The next section analyses the swear words by function and the following section analyses the swearing by word.

##### 4.8.2.1.1 Swear Words by Function

The biggest use of swear words is in the structure ‘*fuck X*’ (n = 73). The second most used function of swear words is as an *interjection* (n = 19), whereas the first category only contained example of the word *fuck*, this category has occurrences using *fuck* and *shit*. The third category contains the occurrences of swear words being used as an insult or in an insulting manner (n = 16). The fourth category has inscriptions where the swear word is an active verb (n = 11). The fifth category uses swear words to express pessimism (n = 9). The sixth category contains swear words that are names,

such as *hell* as a form of blasphemy. The seventh category contains examples that are not clear (n = 4, the eighth group involves swear words that are used descriptively (n = 4), and the last category has swear words of a sexual nature (n = 4).

Table 43 Use of Swear Words

Use	Examples
'Fuck...' (n = 73)	<b>Fuck</b> you [x6], <b>fuck</b> Off [x4], <b>fuck</b> society [x4], <b>fuck</b> France [x2], <b>fuck</b> Bush [x2], <b>fuck</b> le cisteme [x2], <b>fuck</b> le 17 [x2], <b>fuck</b> Donald Trump [x2], <b>fuck</b> the world [x2], <b>Fuck</b> the people, <b>fuck</b> the rest, <b>fuck</b> humans, <b>fuck</b> haters, <b>fuck</b> everybody, <b>fuck</b> 'em, <b>fuck</b> 'em all, <b>fuck</b> Bordocons, <b>fuck</b> authority, <b>fuck</b> all, <b>fuck</b> the system, <b>Fuck</b> ? 17, <b>Fuck</b> the police, <b>Fuck</b> le 17 mort aux porcs, <sup>50</sup> <b>Fuck</b> Macron, <b>fuck</b> the ED Fascism, <b>fuck</b> Bush Trump, <b>fuck</b> UE/AF, <b>fuck</b> Nazis, <b>fuck</b> Syria, <b>fuck</b> my pipou doll, <b>Fuck</b> les staps, <b>fuck</b> les cours, <b>fuck</b> lettre et com !, <b>Fuck</b> la fac, <b>fuck</b> this lesson, <b>fuck</b> Off! Bithes, <b>fuck</b> you guys, <b>fuck</b> your ass up, <b>Fuck</b> the speed, <b>fuck</b> les coco, <b>fuck</b> Terp, <b>fuck</b> Sraff, <b>fuck</b> sexism, <b>fuck</b> Playa club, <b>fuck</b> P[?]C, <b>fuck</b> Star system, <b>fuck</b> G7!, <b>fuck</b> Da style, <b>fuck</b> Casamayoo, <b>fuck</b> Busar, <b>fuck</b> TPO, <b>fuck</b> busa, <b>fuck</b> the [?], <b>fuck</b> this [?], <b>fuck</b> sm; <b>FUCK</b> [?]
Interjection (n = 19)	<b>fuck</b> [x11], <b>SHIT</b> [x2], <b>FUCK SHIT</b> , WTF RU Doing?, <b>fuck</b> Ancule, <b>Fuck</b> it, <b>Hell</b> yeah...; <b>TO HELL NO</b> ?
Insulting (n = 16)	<b>YELLOW</b> S ARE <b>ASSHOLES</b> ; <b>bitch</b> ; <b>CHANBAEK</b> IS REAL <b>PALESTINE CONASSE</b> !; <b>BiTch</b> ; <b>CRY</b> ME RIVER, <b>BITCH</b> !; <b>Dark Vador j'T'encule</b> ; it is true mother <b>fucker</b> ; <b>bitch</b> ; <b>To block bb bitch</b> ; <b>NiCO ASSHOLE</b> ; <b>Mother Fock</b> !!; <b>WAS</b> HERE <b>Bitch</b> ; <b>I</b> REMEMBER THAT <b>FREAK Bitch</b> ; <b>PEOPLE = SHIT</b> ; <b>BiTCH</b> ; <b>NOTORIOUS BITCH</b>
Active (n = 11)	If you want to see the sky <b>fuck</b> the /a duck and try to fly [x6]; <b>Nik</b> LE STREET ART; <b>I SHIT</b> ON YOUR STREET ART; <b>WE'LL</b> BE LESS <b>FEMiNiST</b> WHEN YOU'LL BE LESS <b>SHIT</b> ; miss me with that <b>bullshit</b> ; <b>STOP</b> YOUR <b>BITCHIN</b> '; "THIS GUY IS SO FAR GONE THAT HE WOULDN'T KNOW IF A COW <b>PISSED</b> IN HIS EYE." J. WELCH
Pessimistic (n = 9)	<b>Fuck</b> life, <b>fuck</b> shit, <b>fuck</b> la vie, This is just <b>shit</b> ; We are all in deep <b>shit</b> ; These <b>fucking</b> Humans; <b>WHY? BECAUSE BULLSHIT</b> ; <b>LOVE</b> is a <b>bullshit</b> & note Ben !!; <b>NEVERMIND THE BOLLOCKS</b>
Name (n = 7)	Highway to <b>Hell</b> = University or Stairway to Heaven?, <b>Wint Hell</b> ; <b>Halloween</b> [x2]; <b>HELL</b> FEST ^ IS FOR <b>PUSSIES</b> ; <b>I</b> WAY TO <b>HELL</b> , <b>HELLL</b>
Unclear (n = 5)	Plan <b>Shit</b> Srop.xxmorados63xx; 17/05/17 CS <b>FUCK</b> ; <b>FUCT</b> UP; <b>DEAD FOCK</b> ; <b>HELLP</b> , <b>BEAT-O-CULT</b> YOU WILL <b>BURN</b> IN <b>HELL</b>
Descriptive (n = 4)	<b>LARRY</b> STYLINSON ♥ <b>IT'S</b> SO <b>FUCKING</b> REAL!!!; <b>HiPPiES</b> DE <b>MERDE</b> ; <b>FUCKASTIC BITCH</b> ; <b>C21</b> is <b>shit</b> oui <b>AGREE</b> !;
Sexual (n = 4)	<b>NiGAZ</b> HOT <b>DiCK</b> HARD AS A <b>ROCK</b> , <b>DICK</b> MASTER, <b>SUCK</b> MY <b>DICK</b> , <b>fuck</b> my <b>asshole</b> ,

As the word *fuck* is explored in section 4.6.1, I choose to explore the other categories in detail here. Interjections are defined as 'a category of words that do not combine with words in integrated syntactic constructions, and have expressive rather than propositional meaning' (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 1361). Huddleston and Pullum (2002) explain that overtime the verbs *fuck* and *shit* lost their verbal meaning

<sup>50</sup> See 4.8.2.1.1 for further analysis.



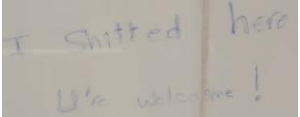
and are reanalysed as interjections. The interjections in these occurrences primarily used the word *fuck*. Norrick (2009) writes that interjections are generally characteristic of spoken language. I consider the inscriptions as written interjections, as they resemble spoken interjections.

The third group contains the 16 inscriptions that use a swear word to insult someone or something. The use of the word *bitch* and the French swear word *connasse* (the female version of *connard* –[*bastard*]) suggest that these inscriptions, in particular, were written about or by female graffiti writers. Gauthier (2021) finds that *bitch* is the only swear word used significantly more by women than men on Twitter, and is used to refer to other women more than men.




The total number of inscriptions containing swearing is in 48 the city corpus, four in the desktop corpus and four in the corpus toilet. These subsections have shown that the most inscriptions containing swear words are found on desktops, apart from the word *fuck* which is more prevalent in the city corpus. The frequency of swear words in the desktop corpus is a written snapshot of the language being used by the students who write graffiti in Bordeaux. As the desktop graffiti is probably the work of students, we can estimate their ages to be 17 to 22, this in keeping with previous studies which show that swear words are most frequently used by 18 to 23 year olds (Beers Fägersten, 2012).

**4.8.2.1.2 Swear Words as Words**

The sexual swear words found in the combined corpora include *fuck* and its derivatives, *fuck* (n = 108, n = 113 with derivatives), followed by the excretory *shit* (n = 10, n = 12 with derivatives), *bitch* which refers to a female dog (n = 9), *hell* which is considered blasphemous (n = 9), and *ass* and *dick* which refer to the human body (n = 3 respectively). The corpora contain four French swear words: *connasse* [*bitch*], *merde* [*shit*], *nik* [*fuck* (*niquer* – *alternative spelling*)], and *ancule* [*bastard/sodomise* (*enculé/enculer* – *alternative spelling*)] which all appear once in the combined corpora. The analysis of the word *fuck* can be found in section 4.6.1: The ‘F’ Word. The other swear words will be presented in the following paragraphs.

Graffiti Inscriptions of the word 'shit'		
Image 150 Graffiti D673 	Image 151 Graffiti 598  PEOPLE = SHIT	Image 152 Graffiti T23 

The word *shit* refers denotatively to excretion and connotatively to negativity. Ljung (2011) wrote that ‘*shit* is a very useful word as an expletive interjection ..., and as an expletive epithet in utterances ..., and also in other expressions ...’ (p. 38). *Shit* is used both as a verb: *I shit on your street art, we’ll be less feminist when you’ll be less shit*, and as a noun: *we are all in deep shit, this is just shit*, as part of a compound noun: *miss me with that bullshit*, it is also used as an exclamation on its own: *SHIT* and in an unclear context: *plan shit srop.xxmorados63.xx*. Despite the denotation of the word *shit*, the word was only used once in a toilet and explicitly to mean excrement, most phrases containing *shit* use the word as an adjective.

Graffiti Inscriptions containing the word ‘bitch		
Image 153 Graffiti C370 	Image 154 Graffiti D279 	Image 155 Graffiti D653 
Image 156 Graffiti D327 		Image 157 Graffiti D755 

The word *bitch* appears nine times in the corpora and once in the -ing form: *bitching*. Of the nine inscriptions, eight were found on desktops, one was found in the city corpus. The word *bitch*, as mentioned earlier, denotes a female dog but is negatively associated with women, and in some cases non-conventional men (Kleinman et al., 2009), however, it is rarely used as an insult for men (Gauthier 2021). The word *bitch* appears in three one-word inscriptions, which I consider to be ‘neutral’ as there is no direct recipient of the potential insult. The inscription *NOTORiOUS BITCH* could be referring to the song *Notorious Bitch* by Exclusive Visionz or a play on words referring to the rapper Notorious Big. In the inscription: *CRY ME A RIVER, BITCH!* the writer is directing their aggression at a fellow writer. It is a reply to the phrase *How ARE You?* The second writer has created the word *FINE* out of the words: *confused, betrayed, broken, useless, never good enough, fragile, anxious, I’m falling apart and you don’t notice it, pathetic, annoying, rejected, lonely, defeated*. A third and fourth writer have also replied with: *depravity* and *T[?!] CommuNISTE !*

*Inscription and possible internet source*

Image 158 Graffiti C394, C395, C396 and C397

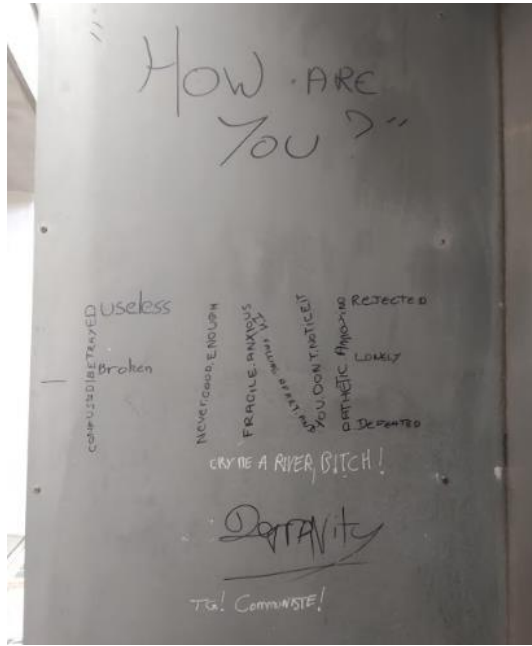
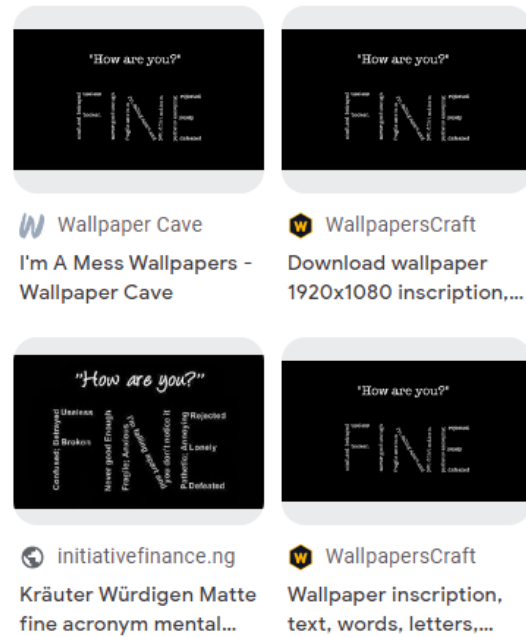


Figure 25 Screenshot of Internet Search



In addition to being an example of conversational graffiti, graffiti C394 and C395 are also examples of manifest intertextuality. An internet search reveals that the phrase has been used since 2012 on the website [wiittyprofiles.com](http://wiittyprofiles.com) (Belladixie17, 2012). There were five other people using the phrase on sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter. A reverse image search via Google reveals images that have the same layout as seen in the graffiti inscriptions.

The third writer, rather than seeing the first message as a plea for help, responds unsympathetically, potentially quoting either the Justin Timberlake or Julie London song which are both called *Cry me a river*, therefore the phrase could also be an example of manifest intertextuality. The addition of the insult *bitch* suggests that the third writer infers that the second writer is female or an unconventional male, and/or that the third writer herself is female.

Image 159 Graffiti D223



In the inscription: *stop your bitchin'*, the word *bitchin'* is used as a synonym for whining or complaining. Once again, the verb *bitch* is mainly used to describe the actions of women. The inscription was found on a desktop so it could refer to the member of staff that was giving a class at the time, or it could be related to another moment in the writer's life.

<i>The word 'bitch' in Conversational Graffiti</i>	
<i>Image 160 Graffiti D546</i>	<i>Image 161 Graffiti D403</i>
	
<i>I REMEMBER THAT FREAK Bitch</i>	<i>WAS HERE Bitch !</i>


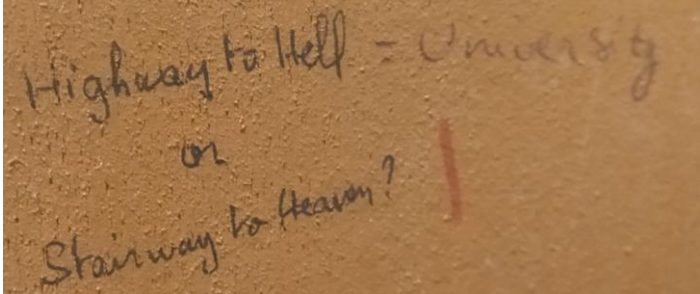
Two of the inscriptions could be additional examples of conversational graffiti. Both inscriptions are mainly written in capitalised letters with only the word *bitch* in lowercase. This change in the lettering is an indication of a change in writer. The first inscription: *I remember that freak bitch* could be referring to a song by Cypress Hill and a second writer could be finishing the title. Yet, in the second inscription there is no continuity, it appears that the second writer is referring to the first writer as a *bitch*.

*Graffiti Inscriptions with the Word Hell*

The word *hell* is an example of blasphemous swearing. It appears seven times in the combined graffiti corpora: six times as a place, and once emphatically to intensify the writer's agreement. Six inscriptions with the word *hell* were written on desktops, one was written in a toilet. One inscription refers to a popular heavy metal festival: Hellfest.



One writer, possibly a fan of Hellfest, wrote the first inscription on the desktop. A second writer added *is for pussies* to belittle the original writer. The word *pussy* as an insult is often used for men rather than women as a stronger version of wimp (Gesselman & Webster, 2012).

Graffiti Inscriptions with 'Highway to Hell'	
Image 163 Graffiti D699 	Image 164 Graffiti T18 

It is probable that two of the inscriptions, D699 and T18, refer to the AC/DC song *Highway to Hell*. The first contains a play on words changing the *high* to *I* which could be the writer trying to suggest they have a devilish side. This is accompanied by the forked tail detail added to the word *hell* and the red colouring of the letters. The second inscription is in the form of a question; it references both the AC/DC song, *Highway to Hell* and the Led Zeppelin song, *Stairway to Heaven*. A second writer has added the word *University* next to *hell* which suggests that the second writer considers their current time at the university to be negative. Due to a lack of context, we cannot know the intention of the first writer. For example, they could have been asking fellow students about their time at university or about their song preferences.

Graffiti Inscriptions including the word 'Hell'		
Image 165 Graffiti D705 	Image 166 Graffiti D756 	Image 167 Graffiti D235 and D236 
HELLP	BEAT-O-CULT YOU WILL BURN IN HELL	WEST SIDE HELL

Graffiti D705 and D756 are also potential examples of conversational graffiti. It appears that in the first inscription the original text was *HELL* and a second writer added a *p* to create *HELLp*. The second inscription contains two phrases: *BEAT-O-*

*CULT* and *YOU WILL BURN IN HELL*. The second phrase could be a response to the first one, or it could be an example of swarming whereby graffiti attracts graffiti. The third inscription has the phrase *WEST SIDE* and *HELL* there does not appear to be a connection therefore this is more likely to be an example of swarming. See section 4.9.3 for more examples of swarming.

Image 168 Graffiti D159



Graffiti inscription D159 is a stick man with a speech bubble saying *Hell yeah..* the word *hell* in this sentence is used to support and intensify the *yeah*. This is emphasised by the face given to the stick man. Despite being classified as negative to the use of a swear word, it could be argued that this inscription is positive. Norrick (2009) explains that when the word *hell* precedes *yeah* it functions as an intensifier rather than a pragmatic marker.

**Graffiti Inscriptions with the word 'dick'**

Image 169 Graffiti D510



Image 170 Graffiti D677



The word *dick* appears in three graffiti inscriptions, the first two are analysed here and the third is included with the inscriptions containing the word *asshole*, all three



inscriptions were found on desktops. The first inscription includes a variation of a racial slur for black people, which is commonly referred to as the 'n' word. The inscription appears to be using the word *dick* to refer to the male sex organ. The second inscription, *dick master*, uses the word *dick* as an adjective. The phrase *dick master* suggests that the writer is a self-proclaimed master of penises or is attributing the title to someone else.

Image 171 Graffiti D298



[?] THE OLD UNCLE AND FUCK YOUR ASS UP!

#### *Graffiti Inscriptions with the word Asshole*

The word *ass* appears in three inscriptions, all found on desktops, two are analysed in section 4.9: Conversational Graffiti, (*Where is Brian? In your ass And I'm gonna eat yo ass*). The inscription *the old uncle and fuck your ass up!* is hard to read, therefore the complete phrase is unknown. The inscription uses the word *ass* in reference to anal intercourse and appears to be talking to the potential readers at that desktop.

It is noteworthy that the word *ass* is used in the combined corpora rather than the word *arse*. Both words mean *buttocks*, but *arse* is favoured in British English, *arse*, and *ass* is used more in Northern American English. This is another reason why the AmE06 corpus was chosen as a reference corpus rather than the British National Corpus.

### Graffiti Inscription with the word 'asshole'

Image 172 Graffiti C110<sup>51</sup>

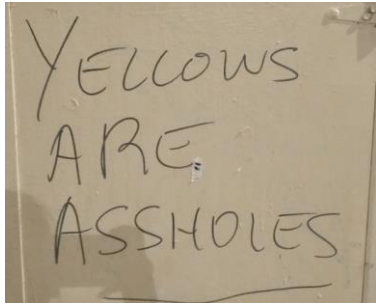


Image 173 Graffiti D371



Image 174 Graffiti D764 and D765



SUCK MY DICK; FUCK MY ASSHOLE

The word *asshole* appears the three times in the corpora, twice on desktops, and once in the city corpus. The first two inscriptions use the word *asshole* as an insult. The first inscription refers to the gilets jaunes [*yellow vests*] demonstrations that took place in France starting in November 2018 (The Local, 2019). The third inscription uses the word *asshole* in a sexual manner, using its denotative meaning. The inscription appears to be written by two people, the first demanding oral sex, the second demanding sodomy. This is an example of conversational graffiti whereby one writer follows and continues the style of the original inscription, see section 4.9: for more examples.

#### 4.8.2.2 Violence and Death Related Inscriptions

The 44 inscriptions which refer to death and violence can be seen in Table 43. The inscriptions are divided into three groups: violence only, death only, and both. The inscriptions that refer to violence only contain words relating to weapons (*parabellum*),

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<sup>51</sup> This photograph featured in an article by the researcher with other examples of graffiti found in the city of Bordeaux (Peake, 2020).

war (*ARMY♥*), and acts of violence (*fight me*). Inscriptions containing the word *kill* are classed as both violence and related to death as the verb *kill* means to cause death and if the inscription is focused on the action of killing, for example: *kill the president* and *who killed Bamby?* Whilst, the phrases that are classed as being only related to death contain a wish to die (*for heavy metal we'll die*) or refer to the state of death (*dead fuck*).

Table 44 Graffiti Inscriptions that are violent or are related to death

	<i>Inscriptions</i>	<i>Source</i>
<i>Violence (n = 17)</i>	<i>MAKE ART NOT WAR DO THE WRONG THING [x3], look APACHe, look APACHe, PARABELLUM, SToP BOMBiNG, Fight me, ARMY ♥, Army, Help oR Fight Babybae ?, Peace WAR, WITHOUT NO [?] MERCY, FIGHT PowAAAA, LOVE IS A BATTLEFIELD, I LOVE YOU I HATE YOU, I FUCK YOU I EAT YOU =&gt; I RAPE YOU, I like my weapons how I like my music heavy and meTat !, BAD INJURIES</i>	<i>City = 6 Desktop = 11</i>
<i>Both (n = 14)</i>	<i>FUCK LE 17 MORT AU PORCS, KILL, ZOB PENT (1) Kill me!, JUST KILL ME NOW LOL BELETTE, YOU HAVE BEEN JUDGED SENTENCE IS DEATH, One death is a tragedy a million deaths is a statistic STALIN, THE IMMORTAL SOLDIERS OF DEATH THE [?], KILL The PRESIDENT, WHO KILLED BAMBY ? [x2], WHO KILLED BAMBY ? YOUR MOTHER OR ME OR LEA ♥, WHO KILLED BAMBY? IT'S WHITE SNOW, BLOOD FOR THE BLOOD GOD ALYSSY KILLED FOR [?] SOULFLY, BEAT-O-CULT YOU WILL BURN IN HELL</i>	<i>City = 3 Desktop = 11</i>
<i>Death (n = 13)</i>	<i>Too [?] too die, (F) Benji-djasé want to die ! I love U FUCK OFF !, RiP ELLY WON-&gt;, DEAD iNSix, \$ &gt; SUDO SUICIDE \$&gt; GO COMMIT DIE...DONE, SUICIDE IN PINK, DEAD FUCK, FOR HEAVY METAL WE'LL DiE!, Fuck a duck and Try to Fly If YOU DIE THEN STOP GETTN' HIGH!!!!, I'm better of dead, TAKE A LOOK TO THE SKY JUST BEFORE YOU DIE, NO WAR NO PEACE JUST THE DEATH, NAPALM DEATH</i>	<i>City = 2 Desktop = 11</i>

The 44 graffiti inscriptions referring to death and violence are found in the city and desktop corpora (n = 11 and 33). Despite there being three times more inscriptions in the desktop corpus, when comparing the relative frequency, the level of violence and death related inscriptions is fairly equal (rf = 106 and 116 respectively). There were no examples found in the toilets. In this section, I will focus on the most interesting examples, all the inscriptions can be found in photographic form in the supplementary appendices.

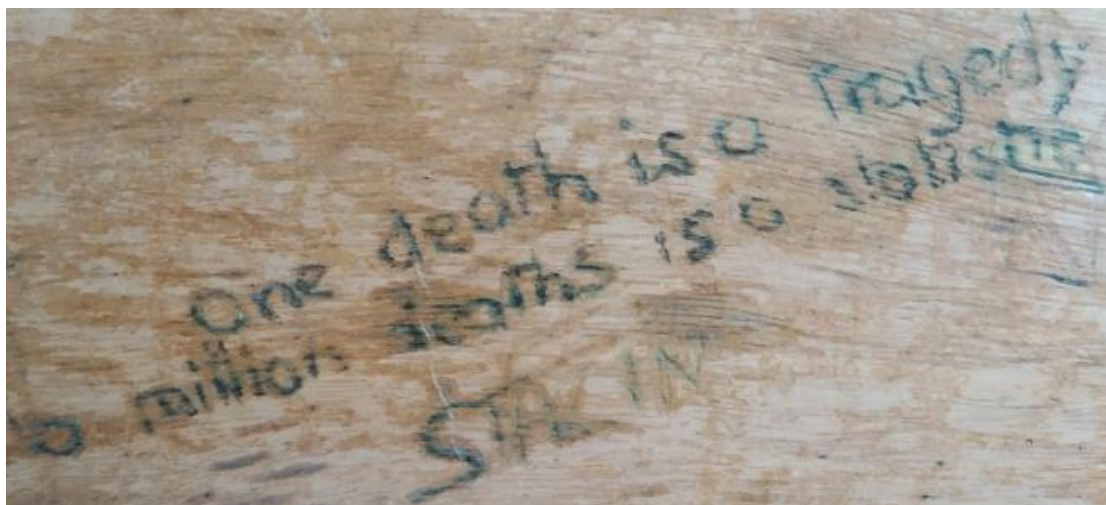
Image 175 Graffiti C258, C259, and C260



Graffiti C258 is an example of 'semiotic guerilla' which they define as the use of graffiti in the public space to represent socio-critical ideology (Skulte & Kozlovs, 2020, p. 75). The inscriptions were made using a spray can and a stencil which allows the graffiti writer to quickly and efficiently repeat their message in several locations. The inscription is a criticism of war and at the same time an endorsement of art. There were 22 graffiti inscriptions created with a stencil, 13 can be considered semiotic guerrilla (cf. C8, C46, C85, C88, C134, C135, C175, C196, C200, C258, C259, C260, C251).

The frequency of inscriptions with violent or morbid imagery is significant in the desktop corpus as it reflects the mindset of the students who write graffiti at the higher education facilities (Ball, 2019). Olusoji (2013) published a research paper studying graffiti found exclusively on two university campuses as a means of student communication; he finds that the act of graffiti writing is therapeutic and yet the most frequently expressed topics were controversial and/or concerning for the students.

Image 176 Graffiti D580



The quotation in graffiti D580 is attributed to Joseph Stalin,<sup>52</sup> it was found on a desktop at the Science and Technology campus. First, it is unlikely that this quote was being used in a class at the campus as neither History nor Politics are taught at that site. Secondly, the difference in writing and ink between the quote and *Stalin* suggests that there were two writers, one of whom made the connection between the quote and Stalin.

Image 177 Graffiti D700



Graffiti D700 is potentially a reflection of the mindset of the student who wrote the message. This inscription: *I'm better of dead* could be about the student's mental health at the time of writing. University is known to be a stressful time, and in 2016 a national survey of French students found that 37% of the participants had experienced depression and 8% had felt suicidal (Wathelet et al., 2020), this inscription and the other negative inscriptions in the desktop corpus support their findings.

An example of an inscription that is both violent and about death can be seen in graffiti C365. The writer has written '*fuck le 17 mort aux porcs*' to refer to the police. In French, the traditional insult for police officers would be *poulet [chicken]*,<sup>53</sup> the use of

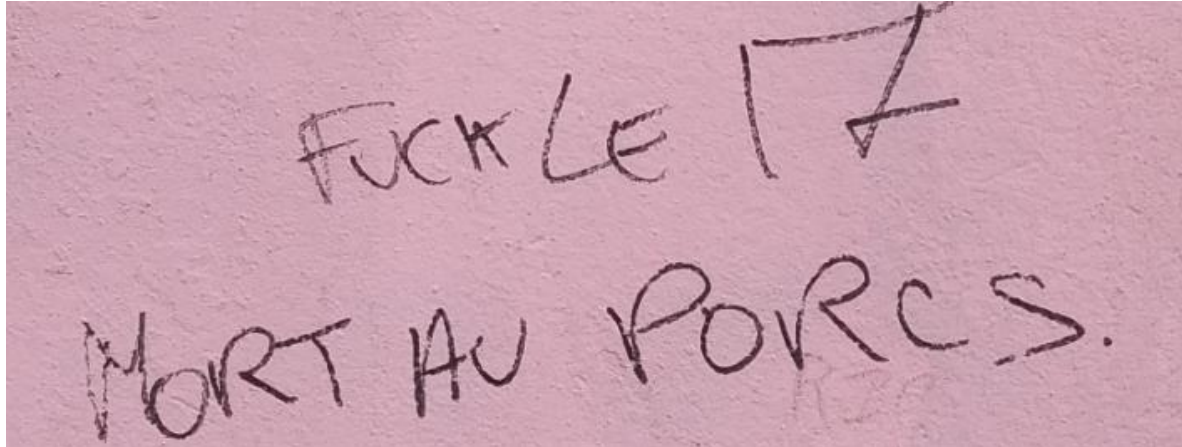
---

<sup>52</sup> There is some debate as to whether this quotation came from Stalin or not, the majority of sources point to Stalin or suggest that at minimum he believed in the phrase (Exenberger, 2009; Knowles, 1999; 'Oxford Essential Quotations', 2016).

<sup>53</sup> The name *poulet* comes from 1871 when a police brigade was attacked in Paris. The squad was moved to a new location which was an old fowl market and this is one of the explanations behind the name (France Info, 2016).

the word *pig* as an insult for police officers used in the United Kingdom and the United States of America.<sup>54</sup>

Image 178 Graffiti C365



This is an example of what Hoffer (2002) calls 'loan translations', which is also called calques, where one language translates directly from another, in this case from English to French (p. 4). Görlach (2002) notes that 'patterns of word formation greatly diverge between English and most European languages and there is a noticeable impact on the structure of most borrowing languages of calquing' (p. 7). For example, Krawiec (2007) describes 'throw-up/wrutka' as a loan translation used by Polish graffiti writers (p. 60).

#### **4.8.2.3 Grammatical Negation**

The occurrences of grammatical negation in this study can be divided into six categories. As graffiti is often associated with negativity it is noteworthy to examine what is being written about negatively and how negation is used by the graffiti writers. Table 45 gives all the occurrences and further analysis follows.

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<sup>54</sup> The use of the word *pig* to insult police officers dates back to the 1800s where police officers and informants were compared to pigs for sniffing out clues and crimes (Hiskey, 2014; Ortega, 2022).

Table 45 Occurrences of Grammatical Negation

Number of inscriptions	Inscriptions	Source
Not (n = 20)	<p>this is <b>not</b> art, too many painters <b>not</b> enough walls..., MAK[?] LOVE <b>NOT</b> MIRAE[?]S, I NEED SOMEBODY HELP <b>NOT</b> JUST ANYBODY HELP YOU KNOW I NEED SOMEBODY BEATLES, THE SPACE CAKE IS <b>NOT</b> A LIE, Knowledge is <b>not</b> power it's an escape, [?] WE KNOW IS <b>NOT</b> WHAT THEY TELL US AND WE ARE <b>NOT</b> IGNORANT CAUSE THE Y JUST CAN <b>NOT</b> TOUCH US, ELViS IS <b>NOT</b> DEAD, EVIL <b>NOT</b> D [?], I WAS HERE I WAS <b>NOT</b>, Punk'<b>not</b> DeaD !!!, TU PiGES RiEN STUPiDE CHIEN! THE WAvER'S SALMA LEWOZ LENEN DO <b>NOT</b> CROSS; EAT PUSSY <b>NOT</b> ANIMALS!, <b>NOT</b> THEY ARE HETEROSEXUAL, Taehyung on weverse : "you'd better get out of the imagination, it's <b>not</b> good in there." , <b>NOT</b> HUMAN, <b>NOT</b> TODAY SATAN, MAKE ART <b>NOT</b> WAR [x3]</p>	<p>City = 9 Toilet = 2 Desktop = 9</p>
N't/Nt (n = 17)	<p>don't touch, "I don't know why I'm here I don't know what I feel but I know what I need And I'm ready to love things that I need ", THE ROCK 'N' ROLL ISN'T DEAD, ride ! till I can't [?], Just like the seed I don't know where to go through dirt and shadows [?] I grow I am reaching light through the struggle, Love of my life you've [?] me you've broken my heart and now you have me love of my life don't you see? bring it back bring it back Don't take it away for me, hello really wanna know you, but I don't want you to go yet I am just talkin about doing our bodies right. what we'll do is keep it simple. Don't have worry about a label I'm not talking about a life time just tonight I don't wanna know you like that just wanna watch you be bad, FINE CONFUSED BETRAYED useless BROKEN Never.GooD. ENOUGH. FRAGILE. ANXIOUS I'M. FALLING. APART. AND. YOU. DON'T. NOTICE. iT. PATHETIC. AnnoyiNG. ReJECTED. LONELY DEFEATED, COME TOGETHER ..., I WANNA HOLD YOUR HAND ... LOVE, LOVE ME DO ... GET BACK, GET BACK ... ALL THE LONELY PEOPLE ... HELLO, HELLO, YOU DON'T KNOW WHY YOU SAY GOODBYE I SAY HELLO, "THIS GUY IS SO FAR GONE THAT HE WOULDNT KNOW IF A COW PISSED IN HIS EYE." J . WELCH, CAN'T STUMP THE TRUM[?], [?] with me I don't want you to IEavE, DON'T BELIEVE WHAT YOU HEAR DON'T BELIEVE WHAT YOU SEE IF YOU JUST CLOSE YOUR EYE YOU WILL FEEL THE ENNEMY, DON'T BE ANOTHER [?] iN THE WALL, DON'T FORGET THE JOiNT !!, I'M MUSLIM DON'T PANICK, DONT CALL ME WITHE[?]</p>	<p>City = 3 Toilet = 3 Desktop = 11</p>
No (n = 16)	<p><b>No No + GT</b>, STREET ART <b>NO</b> STREET <b>NO</b> ART, <b>No</b> Me Worry., <b>NO</b> TIME! 2h04, You HAVE <b>NO</b> CLUE..., <b>NO</b> BORDERS <b>NO</b> NATIONS, U got <b>no</b> other place to go, "Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's <b>no</b> matter. Tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther and one fine morning so we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past." Great Gatsby Fitzgerald, on the [?] <b>No</b> evil [?] exact To Dy [?] to these [?], <b>No</b> NATIONS <b>No</b> BORDERS JUST PEOPLE, TO HELL <b>NO</b> [?], WITHOUT <b>NO</b> [?] MERCY, <b>No</b> USE FO r a NAME, <b>NO</b> WAR <b>NO</b> PEACE JUST THE DEATH, FAiTH <b>NO</b> MORDE, MEAT <b>NO</b> MEAT</p>	<p>City = 5 Desktop = 11</p>
Never (n = 7)	<p>we <b>never</b> worlds apart, "My words fly up My thoughts remain below Words without thoughts <b>never</b> to heaven go" Shakespeare, I <b>never</b> MEANT to HURT you SLSH, FINE CONFUSED BETRAYED useless BROKEN <b>Never</b>.GooD. ENOUGH. FRAGILE. ANXIOUS I'M. FALLING. APART. AND. YOU. DON'T. NOTICE. iT. PATHETIC. AnnoyiNG. ReJECTED. LONELY DEFEATED, the love we left behind Watching the flashbacks intertwine Memories I will <b>never</b> find So I'll whatever you become [?] the reckless things we've done think our lives have just begun, Love <b>never</b> dies, <b>Never</b> Give up</p>	<p>City = 2 Toilet = 2 Desktop = 3</p>
Negation in French (n = 3)	<p>UNIVERSITIE EN LUTTE / ON <b>NE</b> DiT <b>PAS</b> : D'ACCORD MR. LE PROFESSEUR MAIS: OK BOOMER, STAR WARS VIII LELIA</p>	<p>City = 1 Desktop = 2</p>

	MEURT <b>NON</b> C'EST HAN SOLO, HELP JE VEUX <b>PLUS</b> FAIRE DE CHIMIE H1 NI D'ELECTROMAG	
Non (n = 1) Nothing (n = 1)	People assume that <i>TIME</i> is a strict progression of cause to effect But actually from a <b>non</b> linear <b>non</b> subjective viewpoint it's more like a <i>BIG BALL</i> of wibbly-wobbly Time wime STUFF, GRIFFITH DID <b>NOTHING</b> WRONG	City = 1 Desktop = 1
Total = 65	City = 21, Toilet = 7, Desktop = 37	

There was a total of 37 inscriptions containing a negation of the verb (using *not* or the contraction *n't*). The word *not* was used slightly more than the contraction, in some inscriptions this could be because the writer wishes to emphasise their message: *ELVIS IS NOT DEAD*. However, in other inscriptions the use of a contraction is not possible because the inscription is an extract from a song (*I NEED SOMEBODY HELP NOT JUST ANYBODY*) or a quote from a television show that became a prolific internet meme (*Not today, Satan*) (*Urban Dictionary*, n.d.-b). In these examples, the writer is copying pre-existing texts and does not make a decision about the language.



Graffiti C196 and D185 are examples of grammatical negation which has a positive and inclusive message. The two inscriptions were written in different areas (city and desktop), using different techniques (stencil and pens), and written in different orders. This suggests that they were not written by the same person, but by two people who shared the same view. The two phrases contain the negation *no*, but use it to criticise the non-inclusive view and behaviour of others surrounding immigration issues.

#### 4.8.2.4 Implicit Negativity

The occurrences of implicit negativity can be divided into the following categories: use of negative adjectives, nouns, verbs, and concepts.



Table 46 Occurrences of Implicit Negativity

Category	Occurrences	Source
Adjectives (n = 32)	<b>BooRING</b> , ALL COPS ARE <b>BASTARD</b> EUFO 75, ACAB [x14], 1312 [x6] ALL MY EARTH <b>SAVAGE</b> , >..TU ARE <b>FAKE!</b> , <b>Scared</b> to be <b>lonely</b> , MEN ARE <b>TRASH</b> , <b>INFAMOUS</b> , <b>UNCOOL</b> , I'm a <b>bad</b> guy, <b>HOBOPHOBIC</b> , C'est agacant ! It's <b>agacing</b> !, <b>FAKE N FAKE TAXI</b> , <b>BAD !</b> , <b>BAD HEART WESH !</b>	City = 13 Toilet = 4 Desktop = 15
Negative Nouns (n = 18)	<b>DEPRAVITY</b> , <b>BANDIT</b> [x2], <b>BRAIN DRAIN</b> , <b>LOBOTOMY</b> , <b>HATER</b> , <b>BURN-OUT</b> GÉNERAL, <b>DEVILS</b> ULTRAS CVS, <b>ERROR</b> , O' brother I'm a man of a constant <b>sorrow</b> . I've seen <b>trouble</b> all m, IM YOUR WORST <b>NIGHTMARE</b> , ALL THE LEADER HIDE BEHIND <b>LIES</b> , <b>ERROR</b> DRIN VAVA PACO, OY <b>LOOSER</b> AN WINNER, <b>LOOSER</b> [x2], SVTE FIRST <b>LOOSERS</b> , BERGE BORN TO <b>LOOSER</b>	City = 10 Desktop = 8
Negative Verbs (n = 11)	TAXATION IS <b>THEFT</b> , <b>BURN</b> "33", <b>BURN</b> 33, <b>BURN</b> , <b>burns</b> , I <b>FAILED</b> S[?]Y, LiFE iS <b>GONE</b> , <b>CRY</b> BOY KNOW LISTENING HER AND <b>SHUT UP</b> AFTEr THIN, , I <b>HATE</b> PEOPLE, <b>ERASE</b> ME, YOU <b>LIE</b> , I LOVE YOU I <b>HATE</b> YOU I <b>FUCK</b> YOU I EAT YOU =) I <b>RAPE</b> YOU	City = 7 Desktop = 4
Negative Concepts (n = 7)	<b>BLACK ROCK</b> , Google is watching You, <b>DOG EAT DOG</b> , - <b>THIS iS THE END</b> -, JE M'EN BATS LES BOOBS, <b>PLAIDOIRIE CONTRE le RACISME</b> IT ALWAYS SEEMS <b>imPOSSiBLE UNTIL iT'S DONE</b> , <b>BEAT-O-CULT YOU WILL BURN IN HELL</b>	City = 3 Desktop = 4
Total = 68	City = 33, Desktop = 31, Toilet = 4	

Table 46 shows that the majority of implicit negativity is marked by the use of an adjective: *boring*, *bad*, *bastard* etc. The adjectives are used to describe a person or concept, and also as an interjection of discontent. The negative nouns in this corpus range from the insult *losers* to images of the *devil*. Even as nouns, it could be argued that some inscriptions describe the state of the writers. For example, the term *burn-out* is used in France and can refer to many aspects of life including the pressures of studying.

There are 11 negative verbs used in the corpus. The verbs *cry*, *erase*, *shut up*, *fail* and *go* are less violent than *burn*, *thieve*, *hate*, *fuck* and *rape*. The verbs can also be divided by the direction of the anger. The phrases *LiFE iS GONE* and *ERASE ME* are introspective and suggest that the writer is unhappy about aspects of their personal life, whereas in the phrase *TAXATION IS THEFT* the writer is unhappy about the government. The writer in the phrase *I HATE PEOPLE* also appears to be unhappy about the world external to them.

The inscriptions in the final category are subjective, for example, there is an inscription which could be considered a criticism of the internet company *Google*: *Google is watching You*. The phrases *THIS iS THE END* and *DOG EAT DOG* are describing the social-context in France at this time or are referring to the eponymous films from 2013 and 2016. The phrase *PLAIDOIRIE CONTRE le RACISME IT ALWAYS SEEMS imPOSSiBLE UNTIL iT'S DONE* uses negative language: *impossible* to give

a positive message. However, the quantity of negative phrases suggest that graffiti writing is a means of expression when someone is unhappy or frustrated.

### 4.8.3 Socio-Economic Graffiti Inscriptions

Graffiti is often used as a means to spread messages concerned with the socio-economic issues at that time, Skulte and Kozlovs (2020) refer to this type of graffiti as ‘semiotic guerrilla’ (p. 75). Lynn and Lea (2005) explain that graffiti ‘makes special demands on the observer or passer-by as it prompts a more conscious awareness – for the briefest of moments at least – of the social and ideological processes that take place within everyday experience’ (p. 54). Mora et al. (2016) find examples of socio-economic English graffiti in Mexico, including the phrase: ‘*feeling green*’ referring to the environment (p. 17). They posit that in graffiti writing, English becomes a very powerful weapon in matters of social consciousness, the views expressed in graffiti often differ from the status quo (Blair, 2015; Cappelli, 2020). Feelings towards graffiti can depend on the message itself. According to Kuisel (1993), 40% of the people who saw the graffiti ‘*U.S. Go Home*’ disapproved and wanted it removed, whilst 13% of the people approved of it, 26% felt indifferent towards the graffiti, and 21% did not have an opinion (p. 33).<sup>55</sup> In addition to the messages being about the socio-economic and/or political climate, García and Kleifgen (2019) suggest that the act of translanguaging itself can also be political; in their research, they write that translanguaging is focused on ‘reinterpreting language as a decolonizing process and liberating the language practices of bilingual minoritized populations’ (p. 4). In this study, it can be argued that the aim of translanguaging is to project an international message and connect globally with the other communities worldwide involved in the same movements.

This section presents the examples of graffiti inscriptions that reference explicitly and implicitly the social and economic status of Bordeaux, France, and the world in general. Shohamy and Waksman (2008) suggest that linguistic landscapes can be viewed as ‘an arena through which various agendas are being battled, negotiated and dictated’ (p. 321), in this case, socio-economic and political issues. Alonso (1998) and Mangeya (2014) suggest that political graffiti is one of the most ubiquitous and open forms of graffiti. Menis (2002) also writes that graffiti inscriptions often feature the current events of the day. The inscriptions can be further divided into three groups:

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<sup>55</sup> The examples were taken from *L’institut de Sondages* 1953, 44.

ACAB, Politics, and Anarchy vs Community. It could be argued that all graffiti is political as it is a means of rebelling against an authority, the university, the city of Bordeaux, or the French government.

**4.8.3.1 ACAB**

The acronym *ACAB* has been counted as one word as it appears in the form of an abbreviation. *ACAB* appeared 13 times, whereas its numerical counterpart *1312* appeared 6 times. The numbers 1,2, and 3 represent the letters ABC and are another way of expressing malcontent for the police. One desktop inscription consisted of *1312* three times, another contained both *ACAB* and *1312*.

*Table 47 ACAB Inscriptions in the Corpora*

ACAB	1312	All Cops Are Bastards
13	6	1
<p>Image 181 Graffiti C147 and C148</p> 		<p>Image 182 Graffiti C307</p> 

The acronym *ACAB*, or rather the phrase it represents, can be seen in four forms in this corpus.<sup>56</sup> *ACAB* was first seen in the 1940s in the United Kingdom meaning: *All Cops Are Bastards* (Groundwater, 2020). The use of the *ACAB* acronym has been revived by the Black Lives Matter movement (Cappelli, 2020). From the late 2010s, variants have started emerging in both numerical and linguistic form; these linguistic variants can be referred to as examples of *linguistic appropriation*. Cultural appropriation is where symbols are taken from one culture and given new meanings in line with the appropriator’s view of the *other* which is generally the original culture (Chun, 2001). In this example of linguistic appropriation, the structure *All ... are ...* is modified to fit the intended message of the new group. In this study, I have found the following examples: *All Clitoris Are Beautiful* and *All Colours Are Beautiful*.<sup>57</sup> They could also be considered examples of constitutive intertextuality whereby the

<sup>56</sup> The acronym *ACAB* also appeared in the Bloomington corpus which is explored in detail in section 4.11.2: Bloomington City Corpus. The Bloomington corpus is a secondary corpus I created from online public records on graffiti in the city of Bloomington.

<sup>57</sup> In the Bloomington city comparative corpus there was also All Cops Are Darren Wilson.

configuration of the phrases *All Clitoris Are Beautiful* and *All Colours Are Beautiful* follow the structural configuration of the original phrase *All Cops Are Bastards*. It is noteworthy that the variations in the combined corpora also follow the structure of the initials: *ACAB* changing *cops* to *clitoris* and *color* and changing *bastards* to *beautiful*.

Table 48 Variants of ACAB

ACAB	1312	All Clitoris	All Colors
Image 183 Graffiti T1 	Image 184 Graffiti D127 	Image 185 Graffiti C102 <sup>58</sup> 	Image 186 Graffiti C55 <sup>59</sup> 
N = 14	N = 6	N = 3	N = 1 <sup>60</sup>

Table 48 contains an example of the four *ACAB* phrases seen in the combined corpora. As expected, the most frequent form of *ACAB* is the original structure. This is followed by the numerical version of the acronym. The variant: *all clitoris* appears three times and the variant *all colors* appears once. This suggests that the graffiti writers in Bordeaux associated more with the original *ACAB* movement and message than its feminist counterpart.



The phrase *All Clitoris Are Beautiful* is one of the (graffiti) slogans used by the feminist movement in France. It appears twice in the corpus in handwritten form and

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<sup>58</sup> This photograph featured in an article by the researcher with other examples of graffiti found in the city of Bordeaux (Peake, 2020).  
<sup>59</sup> This photograph featured in an article by the researcher with other examples of graffiti found in the city of Bordeaux (Peake, 2020).  
<sup>60</sup> A second occurrence of this phrase has been identified in the appendices, see graffiti C256 and C267

once as a sticker. Graffiti T4 is an example of stickering. Mendonça (2020) also notes the use of stickers in graffiti, and in particular graffiti that is about gender and sexuality. Mendonça (2020) explains that stickering, wheat pasting, and using a stencil, allow the writers reproduce and circulate their message of resistance in the city quickly and effectively.



As well as the feminist message in graffiti T4, there are a further four inscriptions in English that are associated with feminism and women: *MEN ARE TRASH*, *BiG UP A TOUTES MES SOEURS*, *WE'LL BE LESS FEMiNiST WHEN YOU'LL BE LESS SHIT* and *FUCK SEXISM*. The inscription *MEN ARE TRASH*, could be one individual's reaction to a recent interaction with a man rather than a feminist message.

Feminist graffiti was also seen in the protests following the Arab Spring movement in the form of a stencil of a blue bra (Hamzah & Letmiros, 2021). One incident of sexual harassment and humiliation of women to deter them from protesting left a woman's blue bra exposed to the public (Abaza, 2013; Khatib, 2013). A stencil of a bra was created and used to spray blue bras around the city by graffiti artists in support of women's rights (Abaza, 2013; Hamzah & Letmiros, 2021). The differences in these examples are the use of a piece of clothing in Egypt versus a body part in France as the symbol and the inspiration for the graffiti. The Egyptian blue bra symbol was inspired by one specific moment, whereas the use of the clitoris in France is not linked

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<sup>61</sup> This photograph featured in an article by the researcher with other examples of graffiti found in the city of Bordeaux (Peake, 2020).

to one specific event. The inscription *big up a toutes mes soeurs* is also an example of language hybridity as it contains both French and English words.<sup>62</sup>

As well as ACAB and its numerical equivalent 1312, there were four other inscriptions that referred to the police in the corpus. The inscription *fuck le 17* appeared in the corpus four times, it is both an example of a hybrid phrase as well as containing the most frequent word: *fuck*. In France, the number 117 to dial for the police and the number is often shortened to 17 to refer to the police. The phrases *fuck the police*, *all cops are bastards*, and *police stop da way* all appeared once in the combined corpora. The police were mentioned a total of 26 times in the combined corpora, which gives a relative frequency of 61. The relative frequency of the word *police* without variants in the AmE06 was 1, even including the words *policeman* and *cop(s)* the relative frequency does not reach 2. Therefore, this suggests that the theme of police is prominent in graffitiing compared to the reference corpus from the AmE06. The theme of police will also be compared to the Bloomington corpus in section 4.11.2.

#### 4.8.3.2 Political Graffiti

This section presents the data that reflects the political climate prior to the end of the data collection period in 2022. The presence of political themes is consistent with other research on graffiti (Mendonça, 2020). Skulte and Kozlovs (2020) suggest that political graffiti can be interpreted and understood in three ways:

*'...first, as a message sent in the public space for [a] wide audience by [a] social group representing countercultural ideology, second, as an act of civil disobedience, third, as the aestheticization of politics.'* (p. 77)

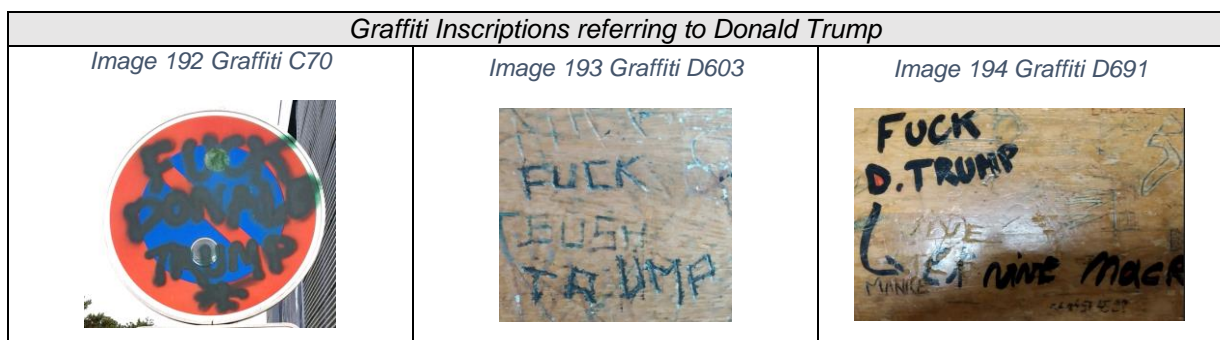
The tone of the political graffiti in the combined corpora is often overtly militant; the writers do not leave the possibility for dialogue with the people or entities their inscriptions are aimed at. In Lynn and Lea's (2005) study of graffiti in Scotland, they analyse the inscription: *BLACKS OUT NOW!*, they explain that the graffiti inscription does not contain a sophisticated argument, neither visually nor grammatically (p. 50). Lynn and Lea (2005) write that the phrase allows for 'no argumentative latitude, it is definitive and monological, very much a case of "the last word" (p. 51). 'The last word'

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<sup>62</sup> It should be noted that at the time of data collection there were more inscriptions about femicide and inequality but as they were only in French; they have not been included in this study.

is described by Billig (1996) as being ‘an unanswerable criticism or a failure to offer a justification’ (p. 137).

I would argue that most graffiti inscriptions, particularly slogans, are definitive and monological without argumentative latitude, few of them invite a true response from readers or the person or entity referenced in the inscription, for example the graffiti inscriptions aimed at Donald Trump found in Bordeaux in areas he is unlikely to go. The graffiti inscriptions rely on being ‘the last word’ until they are covered over or cleaned. Lynn and Lea (2005) explain this as being a ‘plea – a rhetorical edict or proclamation encouraging others to the same view’ (p. 51). Jaffe et al. (2012) study the political graffiti in Kingston, Jamaica. They note that the majority of inscriptions refer to the national parties of Jamaica and who to vote for. In this study, the majority of political inscriptions are about international politics, this could be due to the use of English which functions as a link to the international world.





The three inscriptions above express malcontent for the Trump administration. The middle inscription *FUCK FUCK BUSH TRUMP* suggests that the inscription dates from the Bush administration, 2001-2009, and that the inscription had been left untouched until the Trump administration 5 to 15 years later. Barak Obama was the president between the Bush and Trump administration, I did not find any graffiti criticising or mentioning the Obama administration.



The corpus also contains an example of political constitutive intertextuality: *MAKE EARTH GREEN AGAIN* which appears to be an adaptation of Donald ‘s campaign slogan during the 2016 North American Presidential election. The original phrase used

in the campaign was *Make America Great Again*. The writer's choice to use green spray paint adds to the ecological message they are trying to convey.

Graffiti referring to the European Union	
<p>Image 196 Graffiti C67 and C68<sup>63</sup></p> 	<p>Image 197 Graffiti C65 and C66</p> 

The North American presidential election is not the only political event that was referenced in the combined graffiti corpora. In 2016, the people of the United Kingdom narrowly voted in favour of leaving the European Union, which the media named: *Brexit* which is a compound noun of the two words *British* and *exit*. This led to other European countries debating the benefits of staying in the European Union. Graffiti C67 and C68 contain two opposing messages. One message is anti-European: *Frexit Fuck UE* with the European flag crossed out and two royalist symbols the Fleur-de-lys (In French European Union is written Union Européenne and therefore the abbreviation is UE). A second writer has then adapted the message by adding *ouin ouin* and changing the initials *UE* to *AF*. *Ouin ouin* is the onomatopoeic form of a baby's cry in the French language and *AF* could refer to *Action Française*, a far-right, French, monarchist political movement. *Frexit* is also a hybrid word combining *France/French/Français* and *exit*.

The second photograph also appears to show the work of two writers. The first has also sprayed the European Union flag and written *Occitanie independante* [*Occitania independent*] underneath. This suggests that the writer is a supporter of Occitania becoming independent from France. A second writer has added to the original message with the words *Fuck France*, the numerical form *1312* of the acronym *ACAB*, and the anarchy symbol.

The University Bordeaux Montaigne is the humanities university in Bordeaux; students at this facility study Languages, History, Geography, Archaeology, Advertising, the Arts, and so on. Many of the courses offered at this university have

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<sup>63</sup> This photograph featured in an article by the researcher with other examples of graffiti found in the city of Bordeaux (Peake, 2020).








the possibility of an international element where the students can study abroad at a partner university. Therefore, it could be considered unusual to see anti-EU graffiti in a place of study that teaches Languages and has various mobility programmes. However, Alonso (1998) and Gonos et al. (1976) have found in their own research that in places where the general consensus is that something is favourable, there is a need to express the converse view through graffiti. This would suggest that the university structure is favourable towards the European Union to some degree, and those that do not agree turn to their spray paints. If we follow this line of thinking, this would suggest that what is not written in the inscriptions is just as telling as what is written in the inscriptions.

There were two further inscriptions that were aimed at criticising France that read *France kno life fuck* and *Fuck France FR*. There were no images or extra context around these messages. They are simply expressions of discontent with the status quo in France at that time.



#### **4.8.3.3 Anarchy vs Community**

Two opposing themes, or rather calls to action, in the combined corpora are those of anarchy and community. The first call to action is one of rebellion. One of the ways in which rebellion is expressed is through the anarchy symbol. The anarchy symbol appears 14 times in 11 inscriptions. Ten of the inscriptions are found in the city corpus and one is found on a desktop. It is found in six hybrid examples that are further analysed in section 4.7: Symbol Hybridity. Non-hybrid examples using the anarchy symbol are shown in Table 49.

Table 49 Examples of Inscriptions about Anarchy

Anarchy Symbol	Use of fuck	Tags
<p>Ⓐ Fuck Off !</p> <p>Image 198 Graffiti C21</p> 	<p>Fuck le 17</p> <p>Image 199 Graffiti D227</p> 	<p>Riot</p> <p>Image 200 Graffiti C311</p> 
<p>Criminality</p> <p>Thomas le Thug du 40</p> <p>Image 201 Graffiti D328</p> 	<p>Miscellaneous</p> <p>They live obey we sleep</p> <p>Image 202 Graffiti C161</p> 	

In contrast to the call to anarchy and rejection of certain elements of society, the combined corpora, and particularly the city corpus, contain inscriptions that promote charities and social movements that can be deemed beneficial to the community. This is in contrast to the negativity associated with graffiti.

Water Life Community	
<p>Image 203 Graffiti C278 and C279</p> 	<p>Figure 26 Screenshot from Water Life community Facebook Page</p> 

The stencil graffiti of the words *Water Life community* was found twice in the city corpus. Water Life Community is a sports club that also has an organised charitable component that promotes the preservation of water. The charity is based in Bordeaux and one of the logos on the Facebook page is identical to the stencil graffiti seen in Image 203. This suggests that the graffiti inscription was either performed by a member of the charity or a supporter of the organisation.

*Graffiti Inscriptions containing 'Youth for Climate'*

Image 204 Graffiti C134<sup>64</sup>



Image 205 Graffiti C386

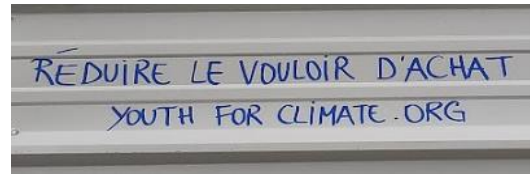


Image 206 Graffiti C135



Image 207 Graffiti C8



Image 208 Graffiti C351



Another repeated phrase seen in the corpus was: *Youth for Climate*. The inscription was found four times in the combined corpora using a stencil and once written in pen. The stencils were either in green or red, and the shades of these colours appear to be the same. This could suggest that the same writer(s) was/were behind each of the messages. The French branch of the Youth for Climate movement was founded in January 2019 and consists of 130 local groups throughout France (Youth For Climate France, 2020).

The messages of community and anarchy in the combined corpora are indications of the values of the graffiti writers as a group. The use of the inscription *ACAB* is evidence that these writer(s) do(es) not support the police, and the presence of the inscription *Youth for Climate* is evidence that those writer(s) support(s) this movement. Writing these messages in the street is the writers' means of spreading the messages of these movements to passers-by.

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<sup>64</sup> This photograph featured in an article by the researcher with other examples of graffiti found in the city of Bordeaux (Peake, 2020).

### Graffiti Inscriptions containing 'Global Warning'

Image 209 and Image 210 Graffiti C109



Image 211 Graffiti C287



The topic of climate change was also present in graffiti C109 and C287. The two images are connected by their mutual play on the words *global warning* instead of *global warming* and the use of a chimpanzee drawing. The size of both pieces suggests that the walls are in legal graffiti areas or that the murals were commissioned. It could be suggested that both pieces are examples of street art rather than graffiti if they were commissioned, as being commissioned suggests that the paying party believes that the piece will be acceptable to the public (Bloch 2016).

#### 4.8.3.4 Drug Related Inscriptions

I have chosen to include the 30 graffiti inscriptions related to drugs in the category of socio-economic inscriptions as the tolerance and legality of illegal drugs differs between countries and societies.<sup>65</sup> Skulte and Kozlovs (2020) also find drug related graffiti in Riga, Latvia, they find the phrases '*smoke green*' and '*drugs work*' in English (p. 81), one phrase advises readers to use marijuana, and the other (an unrelated inscription) confirms the effects of drugs. These exact phrases are not found in the combined graffiti corpora, but the encouragement to smoke is present.

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<sup>65</sup> In France there are currently around 200 drugs that are illegal. Official lists can be found on the websites of the Agence Nationale de Sécurité du Médicament and Health Minister (Passport Santé, 2017).

Table 50 Drug Related Inscriptions

Content	Occurrences	Location
Marijuana	EASY Weed, TU VEUX DE LA Weed ? SNAP: EASYWeed33, 1 HOUR DEELER, Inter marcher Gradignan 11h-17h 7j/7 [?] 6€ le gramme IMBATTABLE Fuck les staps, smoke weed every day, SMOKE ONLY GANJA, THE SPACE CAKE IS NOT A LIE, Why drink and drive when you can smoke and fly, SMOKE WEED EVERYDAY [x3], GANDJA [?], FUCK the SPEED SMOKE the Weed, SMOKE SOME WEED, DON'T FORGET THE JOINT !!, Fuck a duck and Try to Fly If YOU DIE THEN STOP GETTIN' HIGH!!!, ACID WEED, KUSH ALIENS ARE INVADiNG EARTH, WEEDSY	City = 4 Desktop = 16
Pharmaceutical	ZOB Dopamine power team! RitALiNe, B-A.FASE... O > 2019 "KeROZEN" RiTaLiNe * PoweR, RiTA-LiNe ! power!, ENERGY – FIX!, RitALiNe power ENERGY-FIX,	City = 5
Unspecified Drugs	SNiFF les ETOILES, I've got pills in my smoothie, DRUGS LiFES, SEX DRUGS & ROCK N' ROLL !!!! Macron! Demission !, I SELL DRUGS FOR A LIVING	City = 3 Desktop = 1
LSD	LSD Fuck society	City = 1

The majority of phrases in this corpus are about marijuana: encouraging its consumption, giving information as to where to buy it, or simply containing the word *weed*. This is followed by inscriptions referring to the pharmaceutical drug *Ritaline* [*Ritalin* in English-Speaking countries]. There are four references to unspecified drugs and drug use in general and one inscription that mentions LSD (Lysergic Acid Diethylamide: a common psychedelic drug).

Sixteen of the phrases can be considered 'positive' about drugs, they encourage the readers to consume drugs or provide information about where to buy them. One sentence discourages drug use: *Fuck a duck and Try to Fly If YOU DIE THEN STOP GETTIN' HIGH!!!*

Image 212 Graffiti D643



I posit that the original phrase refers to a film, see section: 4.8.1.2 Television and Films, but that the second part of this inscription was added by a second author. This demonstrates the second writer's knowledge of English pronunciation rules rhyming *fly* with *die* and *high*.

#### 4.8.4 Sex and Sexuality

Following politics, sex is one of the most common graffiti topics (Green, 2003). Graffiti often reflects the thoughts and feelings of the population; this is no different when it comes to graffiti that has a sexual content. Mangeya (2014) suggests that 'graffiti is constrained by the socio-cultural context in which it is practiced' (p. 8), the following occurrences are of the graffiti inscriptions found in this study with a sexual nature, and therefore the socio-cultural context of the time and place they were found in: France 2019-2022 – although the inscriptions could predate this time frame.

The inscriptions related to sex and sexuality in this study are not restricted to the toilets, in fact only four inscriptions of a sexual nature were found in the toilets. Fifty-seven were found on desktops and the remaining 16 were found in the city.

Table 51 Graffiti Inscriptions of a Sexual Nature

Category	Inscriptions	Frequency
Sex Act	<i>Suck beach 068208826682, SEX, EAT PUSSY NOT ANIMALS!, SEX IS COOL BUT HAVE U EVER TRY VANDALiSM?, I'm gonna ... eat yo ass, Send nudes, ma pote 06-38-68-67-85 est [?] ♥ Insta [?], Dark Vador j'Tencule, Sea sex &amp; Sun !, SEX machine, KiSS! Me, 06 98 46 54 08 I SEND GAY ONLY NUDES, [?] THE OLD UNCLE AND FUCK YOUR ASS UP!, SUCK IT HARD, KISS, SEX, FUCK ANCULE, SHE SUCKS THE DOG, BANG BANG BANGITY BANG I SAID A BANG BANG [?], SEX RULES LIFE, SEX(E), FIST FUCK PLAYA CLUB, I LOVE YOU I HATE YOU I FUCK YOU I EAT YOU =) I RAPE YOU, FUCKY ME!!, NEVER [?] THE BOLLOCKS HERES THE SEX [?], SEND NUDES, SUCK MY DICK, FUCK MY ASSHOLE, EAT MY COCK, FOR A GOOD SUCK BLOW JOB ! CALL 1 646 750 46, RWAN 2010, TKT SUCK A WOLF dog, FUCK MY PIPOU Doll</i>	29
Body Part	<i>TEAM CHIBRE, ZOB Dopamine power team! RitALiNe, ZOB PENT (1) I Kill me!, pussy, ANUS, Pussy squad, Slap mey Ball, PUSSY GANG, Key boob, TOY BOY, NEVERMIND THE BOLLOCKS, NiGAZ HOT DICK HARD AS ROCK, LOVE TIT! MOI AUSSI, WHERE IS BRIAN ? IN YOUR ASS,</i>	16
Manifest Intertextuality	<i>hello really wanna know you, but I don't want you to go yet I am just talkin about doing our bodies right. what we'll do is keep it simple. Don't have worry about a label I'm not talking about a life time just tonight I don't wanna know you like that just wanna watch you be bad, If you want to see the sky Fuck a duck and try to fly [x6]</i>	7
Sexuality	<i>Lobby LGBT+, LOVE GAY, Pride month, *QUEER EYES BABY !!*, YANIS NICO IS GAY, NORMAL FAG 30/112017, NOT THEY ARE HETEROSEXUAL</i>	7
Unclear	<i>FREE – BAISE !,SEX DRUGS &amp; ROCK N' ROLL !!! Macron! Démission, Arthur Fleck is my KinK, TOAD SLURP Fuck</i>	5
Description	<i>BARENAKED LADIES, Mitch Le Playboy, DICK MASTER</i>	3
Feminism	<i>JE M'EN BATS LES BOOBS, ALL Clitoris Are Beautiful, A.C.A.B ALL CLITORIS ARE BEAUTIFUL,</i>	3
Insult	<i>SLUT SLUG, I LOVE PUTE,</i>	2

The majority of the phrases that are of a sexual nature refer to a sex act. I include the sending of naked photographs, commonly referred to as *nudes* as a sex act. Seventeen of the sex acts do not refer to an intended recipient of the sex act, for example: *suck it hard*. Six of the sex acts ask for the act to be performed on the writer: *SUCK MY DICK*, five of the sex acts are directed at the reader: *I'm gonna ... eat yo ass*. One sex act refers to a female performing a sex act: *SHE SUCKS THE DOG* and one refers to an object: *FUCK MY PIPOU Doll*. The previous research, as stated above, suggests that sexual inscriptions represent the attitudes and values towards sex in that society. If this is true, then from the data in this corpus it would suggest that the French graffiti writers are open about sex and the sex acts they wish to receive and give. The data would also suggest that the writers are supportive of gay rights.

The use of body parts, namely *dick* and *asshole*, as insults, is seen in six phrases discussed in section 4.6.2.1.2: Swear Words as Words. *Dick* is a slang term for both the name Richard and the male sex organ. Sex organs and sexuality are often used as insults in the English language. Risch's (1987) study suggested that these terms, *dick(head)*, *asshole* and *bastard*, are mainly used towards males.

Graffiti Inscriptions containing the word 'gay'		
<p>Image 213 Graffiti D271</p>  <p><del>Yanis</del> Nico is gay</p>	<p>Image 214 Graffiti D282</p>  <p>06 98 46 54 08 I SEND GAY ONLY NUDES</p>	<p>Image 215 Graffiti D577</p> 

The word *gay* historically meant happy, then from the mid-1700s it began to have homosexual connotations (OED, n.d.; Robinson, 2012). In this study, the word *gay* is used three times: *Yanis Nico is gay*, *06 98 46 54 08 I SEND GAY ONLY NUDES*, and *Love Gay*. The first inscription is an example of modified graffiti, it originally read: *Yanis is gay* and a second writer crossed out *Yanis* and wrote *Nico*. The word *gay* in this inscription could be considered an insult because of the reaction of the second writer. In the second inscription, the word *gay* is used as an adjective to refer to the nude photographs that the writer offers to send, suggesting that the writer is homosexual. The writer has left a phone number, but it could be false or a friend's number. The third

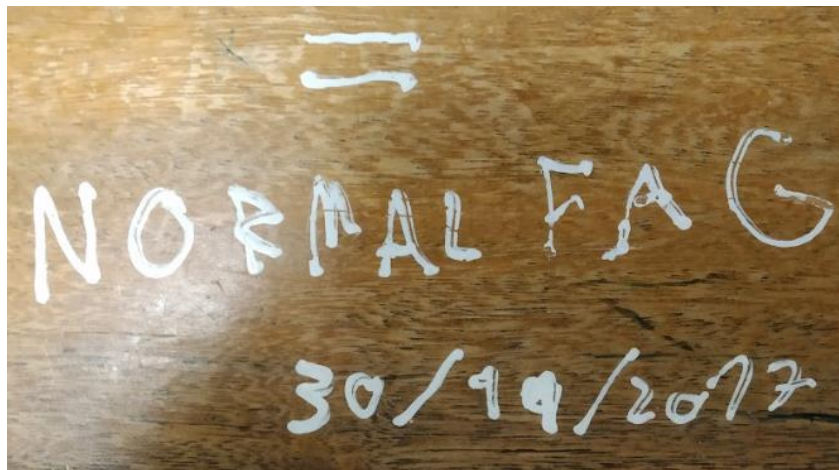
inscription uses the word *gay* as a noun. The inscription contains a peace sign and appears to be asking the readers to be tolerant of homosexuality.

Image 216 Graffiti D107



In addition to graffiti D577, there is another inscription that references the LGBT+ movement, it reads *lobby LGBT+*. The practice of lobbying can be considered as a negative means of influencing/changing society. Due to the lack of context the phrase could be a rallying cry to the LGBT+ to lobby or a call to others to lobby against the movement itself. The phrase could also be a compound noun referring to the LGBT+ lobby, but written according to French grammar structure rather than the English structure. The style of the letters, pen colour, and engraving are all consistent in the inscription therefore this suggests that it is one inscription by the same writer.

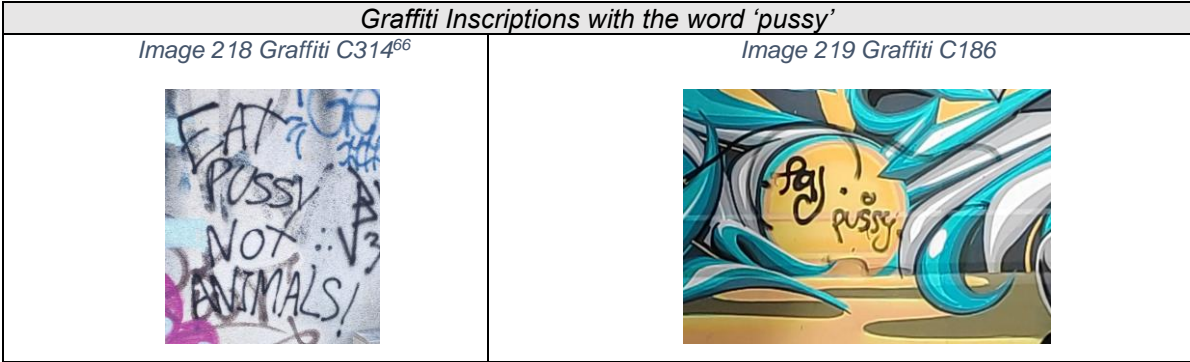
Image 217 Graffiti D370



There are no other inscriptions referring to sexuality in the corpus apart from *normal fag 30/11/2017*. However, the word *fag* can either refer informally to a cigarette or be used as an offensive slur for homosexuals.

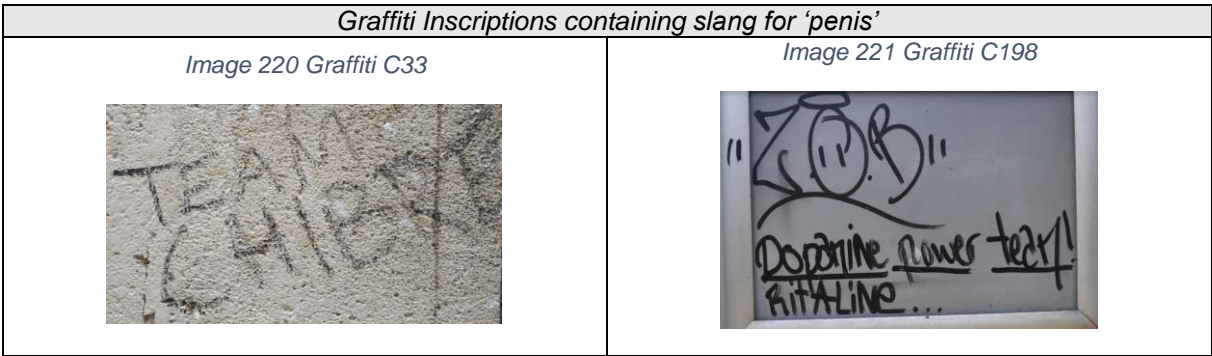


The word *pussy* is denotatively used as an affectionate term for a cat, but the sexual connotations refer to female genitalia. *Pussy* appears four times in the combined corpora, two were found in the city and the other two on desktops.



In graffiti C314, *eat pussy not animals!*, there is a play on two possible meanings. The phrase is both sexual and is supportive of the vegetarian movement. The second inscription, C186, contains the word *pussy* was found on a van and could be an example of a tag as it is one word with no context. The word *pussy* was also found in graffiti D196 and D103 which read: *pussy gang* and *pussy squad*. Gang and squad are words that denote a community and group therefore they will be presented and explored in more detail in section 6.2.7: Communities.

A part of this study involves knowing local slang words (Lynn and, Lea 2005). One piece of graffiti could easily be misunderstood without the input of local L1 speakers. For example, graffiti C33 reads: *TEAM CHIBRE*. *Chibre* is a French slang term for the male sex organ. Macdonald (2001) found that graffiti and tagging were male dominated, therefore it is not unsurprising to find tags containing vocabulary associated with male genitalia.




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<sup>66</sup> This photograph featured in an article by the researcher with other examples of graffiti found in the city of Bordeaux (Peake, 2020).

Graffiti C33: *team chibre* suggests that it could be the name of a crew. The inscription is an example of a hybrid phrase as it combines the English noun *team* with the French slang word *chibre*. Another French word for penis is *zob* which can be seen in graffiti C198: *Zob Dopamine power team! Ritaline*. This inscription is also an example of a hybrid phrase as it contains English and French. The word *zob* appears twice in the city corpus.

Image 222 Graffiti C145



Graffiti C145: *Zob pent (1) I kill me!* is the second inscription in the corpus to contain the word *zob*; it is also in the city corpus, it was written with a graffiti pen, and the style of letters and accompanying marks around the word itself suggests that this is the work of one writer and therefore their tag. Other tags found in the corpus will be explored in section 4.6.5: Tags.

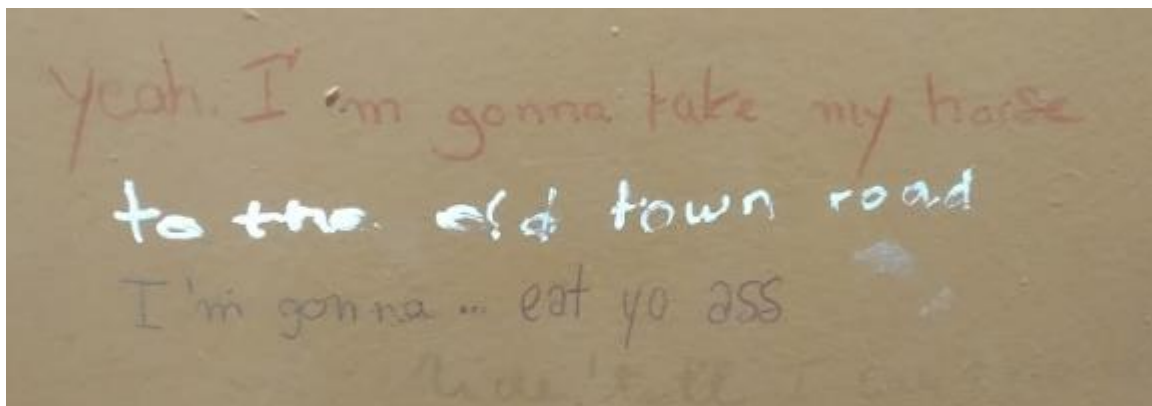
#### 4.8.4.1 Toilet Graffiti

In previous studies the graffiti inscriptions found in the toilets, particularly in establishments of education, were mainly focused on sex and sexuality. For example, Green (2003) finds that politics and sex were the two most common topics. In Mangeya's (2014) thesis, he explains that the sociocultural context and climate can have a significant impact on the content of the graffiti inscriptions, his data shows that in the female toilets of the higher education facilities there is substantial interest in the virginity status of the girls at that school. In Zimbabwe, and particularly in Shona culture, young girls are discouraged from interacting with members of the opposite sex, and virginity tests were still being carried out in the early 2000s (Kambarami, 2006); this explains why the interest in virginity is prevalent in Mangeya's data. Jaffe et al. (2012) find instances of graffiti of a sexual nature condemning homosexuality and oral sex, this is in keeping with the general consensus in Jamaica regarding sexuality and sex acts. In Green's (2003) study of graffiti inscriptions in New Zealand, the sex-related

inscriptions in the women's toilets request and give help whilst in the men's toilets there were mainly requests for sex.

Of the 48 inscriptions found in toilets, only four were of a sexual nature. One was graffiti T4 *All Clitoris Are Beautiful*, one was in reference to the sexuality of K-Pop band members: *NOT THEY ARE HETEROSEXUAL*, and the final two were reference to sexual acts: *I'm gonna ... eat your ass* and *For a good suck blow job! Call 1 646 750 46*. There are no inscriptions interested in the virginity of the French students, or phrases asking for sex (only nudes), condoning homosexuality or specific sex acts. The lack of these such phrases could suggest that France is a sex positive culture.

Image 223 Graffiti T34-T37



There are four writers present in graffiti T34-T37. The first writer has started the conversation by writing part of the first line of the song *Old Town Road* by Lil Nas X which was released in December 2018. The second writer adds the second part of the first line. The third writer begins writing the second line: *I'm gonna ride 'til I can't no more*. However, the writer builds suspense and indicates a change with the use of ellipsis followed by *eat yo ass*. A fourth writer has attempted to correct the lyrics by adding *ride till I can't*. No further words or inscriptions were legible or present at the time the photograph was taken. This is once again an example whereby the surrounding graffiti inscriptions are key to understanding the meaning and context of the inscription. Without taking into consideration the previous phrases, graffiti T36 can only be categorised as containing sexual nature rather than a play on song lyrics.

#### 4.8.5 Tags




Tags can be described as the calling cards of the street artists, graffiti writers, and taggers (Macdonald, 2001; Menis, 2002; Moran, 2016; Stowers, 1997). It is often a word or phrase that they have chosen as their artistic signature. As the content of their name can be anything, it is sometimes impossible to know if something is a graffiti

message or tag. Tags are often short, being written in a matter of seconds (Lynn & Lea, 2005). The aim of tagging is to write one's tag in as many places as possible, often the bigger and harder to remove the better, this creates respect within the tagging community (Lannert 2015). I have identified 110 inscriptions that are possibly tags, in this section I will present some of those and the reasoning behind the presumption.

Table 52 List of Potential Tags

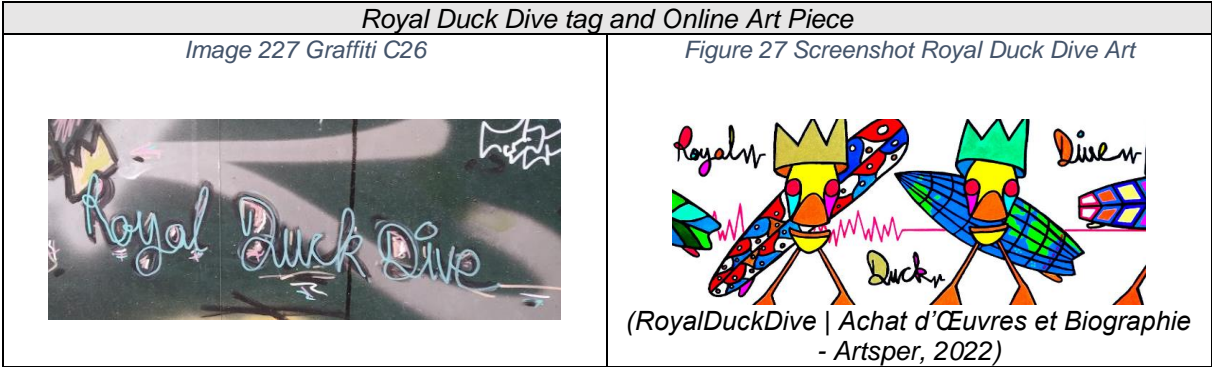
Tags	Frequency	Sources
Deal	23	City = 23
Away	10	City = 10
Teach, Toy	6	City = 11 Desktop = 1
Five	5	City = 5
Burn	4	City = 4
Riot, Harsh, Shady, Fred Rush Collins, One	3	City = 15
Task, The Keys, WUDS THE FUCK? HEAT, Crew, Bye, Zob	2	City = 14
Slim, Royal Duck Dive, Cost, P. Fresh, UNCOOL, WHO, AWe, PALM, WAVY, easy, CHEESY FUNKY FRESH SKiA, SCRiBe, EVER, JADIS TOMC MATHI SMILE 365, FLY'PEE, EGGS HOME, SWAY, RAINiNG DAY, VFL GANG, MEET, ERROR DRIN VAVA PACO, EIGHTERS, CLaM, DADDY, MOKA one 2017, EYe, FLiP	1	City = 27
Total = 110		City = 109, Desktop = 1

The tag that appears the most in the corpus is *deal*. This is due to one photograph that contained 22 inscriptions in the same space, one big piece and 21 smaller more tag-like pieces. This repetition can be explained as the act of tagging is 'itérative, la répétition faisant du graffeur un expert de son propre geste, répété, automatisé, ritualisé' [iterative, the repetition makes the graffiti writer an expert of his own gesture, as it repeated, automated, and ritualised] (Beyaert-Geslin 2019, 119).

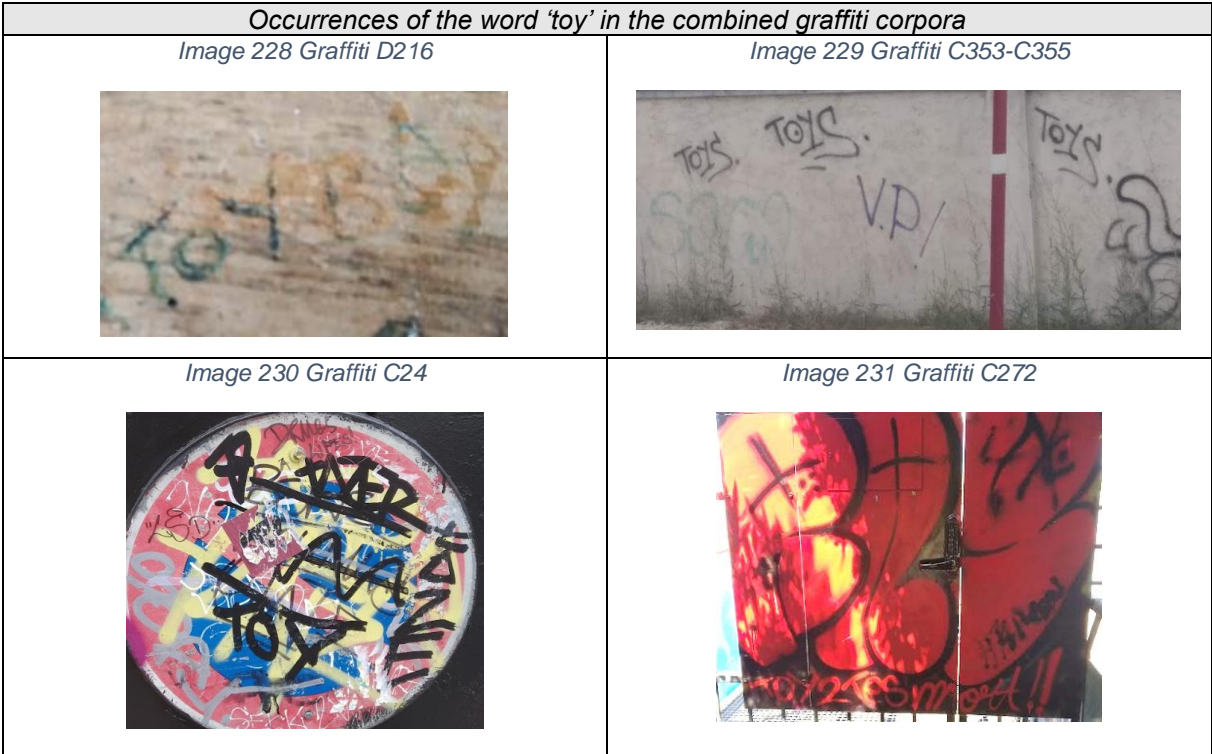
Tags in the combined graffiti corpora		
Image 224 Graffiti C223-C244 	Image 225 Graffiti C327 	Image 226 Graffiti C368 - C369 

Graffiti C26 contains the words: *Royal Duck Dive*. In a perfect world, the writer would be contacted to know if this is a song title, family expression, tag etc. In some cases, the ethnographic contact with the artists can be replaced by online 'detective' work. For example, a search online quickly finds several websites referring to an artist who calls themselves: *Royal Duck Dive*, an artist from Lille who has settled in Bordeaux

(Oeuvrissimart, 2016). A website hosting their work for sale displays work containing the same words in the same handwriting and therefore I was able to confirm that the tag is the same.



The word *toy* and *toys* can be seen repeatedly in the corpus, and in particular the city corpus. This could be a person's tag or another artist calling someone a *toy* which in the graffiti world is used to refer to a writer who is inexperienced or artistically incompetent (Macdonald, 2001). MacGillivray and Curwen (2007) find that the use of the word *toy* is a means to denigrate tags and distinguish the novice tags from 'real graffiti' (p. 363).



The word *toy* appears five times in the city corpus, on a heavily tagged road sign, a wall and part of a door. *Toy* is also found on a desktop as part of the phrase *toy boy*, the ink in the word *toy* is still visible and this could suggest that the word *toy* was

engraved deeper than the word *boy*. The difference in the ink could be an indication of a second writer who added *boy* at a later date with a different pen and depth of engraving. The three inscriptions on the wall appear to be the same writer, the other three do not bear much resemblance to the others.

The two street artists David Selor and Fred Rush Collins use pseudonyms for their work. They both have social media accounts where people can follow them and see photographs of their artwork. An interview with David Selor is presented in section 4.12.2.

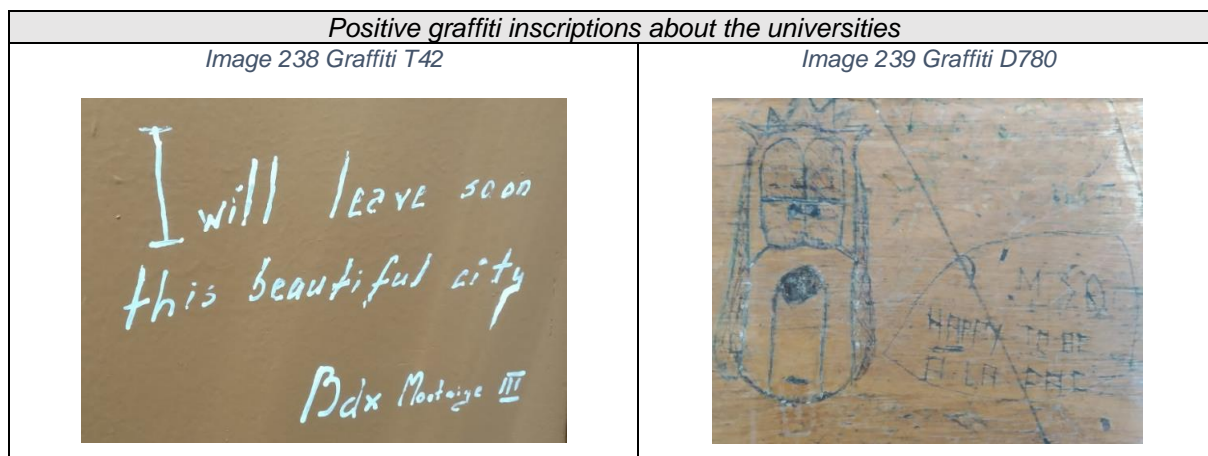
**4.8.6 University Focused Inscriptions**

The combined corpora contain 13 inscriptions that openly refer to the universities of Bordeaux and Bordeaux Montaigne. Eight of the inscriptions were found on the desktops, two in the toilets and one on the walls of the university.

<i>Negativity towards the Universities in Graffiti Inscriptions</i>		
<p><i>Image 232 Graffiti D106</i></p> 	<p><i>Image 233 Graffiti D666</i></p> 	<p><i>Image 234 Graffiti D668<sup>67</sup></i></p> 
<p><i>Image 235 Graffiti D789</i></p> 		<p><i>Image 236 Graffiti D627</i></p> 
<p><i>Image 237 Graffiti C101<sup>68</sup></i></p> 		

<sup>67</sup> This photograph featured in an article by the researcher with other examples of graffiti found in the city of Bordeaux (Peake & Reynolds, 2020).  
<sup>68</sup> This photograph featured in an article by the researcher with other examples of graffiti found in the city of Bordeaux (Peake, 2020).

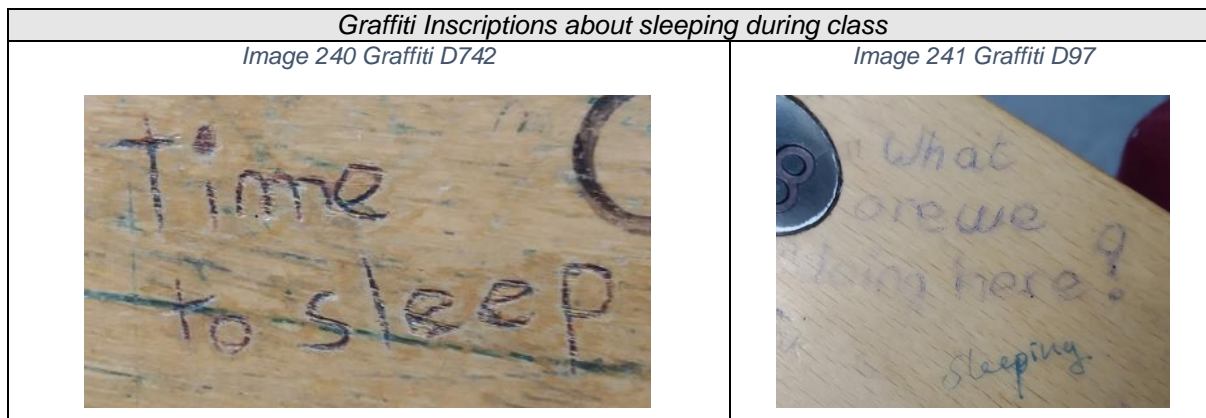
Seven of the inscriptions were negative towards the university using words such as *fuck*, *hate* or *losers* to express this discontent. The students aimed their negativity at both specific classes and classes in general. One student was frustrated with *this lesson* which could refer to that one class or that subject in general. One student wrote *SVTE First Losers* which could be considered insulting towards the students that follow that educational programme. One inscription was found on the walls of the université and referred to the strikes at that time. It highlights the generational gap between students and teachers with the use of the phrase *ok boomer*. The phrase *Help je veux plus faire de chimie H1 ni d'electromag* was potentially written by 2 students, the change in colour and handwriting in the last two words are the indicators of change. Although this phrase is not overly negative, it is evidence of a negative experience for potentially one or two students.



Two of the phrases appeared to be positive about the university experience: *I'm so happy to be a la fac* and *I will leave soon this beautiful city Bdx Montaigne!!* The use of the words *so happy* and *beautiful city* suggest that these students are expressing their fondness for their higher education learning experience. However, the second phrase is written in a speech bubble which is next to a drawing of Droopy the Dog. Droopy the Dog was generally depicted as a tired, unenthusiastic character (DB, 2020), the phrase *I'm so happy to be a la fac* could in fact be ironic due to the presence of the cartoon character.

The three remaining phrases are featured in other sections of the thesis. The two inscriptions *Kef was here (bio)* are included here as it contains the abbreviation *bio* which stands for Biology, the inscription is also found in section 4.6.3: 'X was here'. The final inscription *Highway to hell = university or stairway to heaven* is analysed in section 4.9.1: Conversing, as it is an example of conversational graffiti.

As well as the inscriptions that refer to a class, subject, or the universities themselves, there are also some phrases which could be referring to classes or the institutions. This assumption can be made due to the content and the placement of the inscription. The placement of the phrases throughout the corpus is significant. The same phrase can have different meanings depending on where it is found.



For example, graffiti D742 was found on an amphitheatre desktop, its message is one of fatigue, but the pragmatic interpretation could be that it reflects the student's feelings towards their teacher or the subject. The second graffiti inscription above has both a question and an answer. The first student could be asking the person next to them or asking themselves in general why they are taking that class or at that university. The second writer replies *sleeping* and this could be interpreted as their feelings towards the class that they are in: it is potentially boring or too early in the morning for the student to concentrate.

In this study, the majority of the graffiti inscriptions related to education were found in the buildings themselves, primarily on desktops. In Jaffe et al.'s (2012) study, they identify a type of political graffiti they call 'school politics' (p.11). Unlike the university graffiti in this study, the inscriptions Jaffe et al. (2012) find are mainly in the city. They are also positive about their school, rather than the negative ones found in this study. This suggests that the writers have a positive feeling towards the school, or at least a negative feeling towards the rival school.

#### 4.9 Conversational Graffiti

In this section, I will present and analyse examples of conversational graffiti. Texts are written by one party, but read and interpreted by another party, or parties (Holt, 2017). The texts are read following the political and cultural identity of each reader, not only the intentions of the writer (Holt, 2017; Sturken and Cartwright, 2009), this can provoke responses; the inscriptions become examples of conversational graffiti.



Conversational graffiti is defined by Sheivandi et al. (2015) as graffiti inscriptions that solicit a response in writing from other writers. I agree with this definition but I also include inscriptions and areas that have one or more writers, but are considered as one unit of analysis. The areas of study: desktops, toilet cubicles, and the streets, are both public and private at the same time, Islam (2011) writes that the private spaces are capable of producing public dialogue because ‘the very invisibility of authors in their moment of enunciation eases authorship into being’ and ‘that discourse thus produced often does not keep to itself, but reaches to and responds to, other voices’ (p. 247). Obeng (2000) also identifies interaction between graffiti writers including turn-taking and repair mechanisms. Examples of this private and yet public dialogue are divided into three areas of conversational graffiti: conversing, modifying and swarming.

In this study, I have identified 72 inscriptions that were created by a potential 189 writers. Due to the anonymous nature of graffiti and my limited skills in handwriting analysis, these figures are estimates. Most of the inscriptions have two potential writers (n = 60), three writers have been identified in six of the inscriptions, one of the inscriptions had four writers, two inscriptions had five writers, and one inscription had 36 writers – or contributors see graffiti D323 Walking Dead vs Game of Thrones. Examples of conversational graffiti inscriptions were found in all three corpora. Sixty-six inscriptions were identified in the desktop corpus as having more than one writer, four inscriptions were found in the toilet corpus and one came from the city corpus.

#### **4.9.1 Conversing**

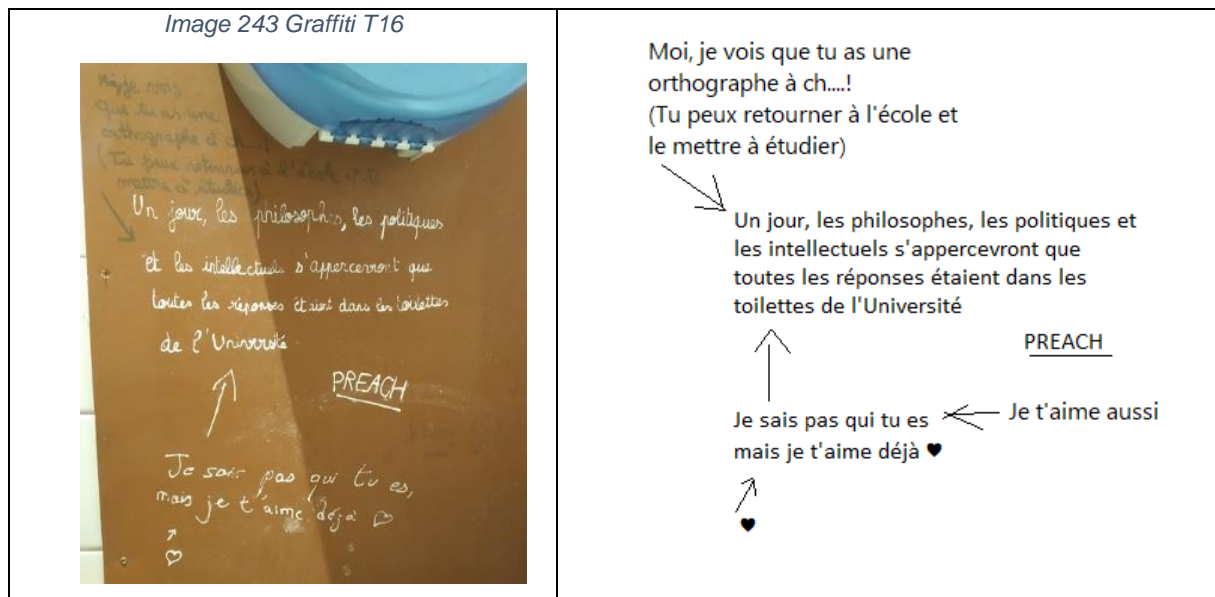
In this subsection the distinction is that the writers ask and answer questions. This group of conversational graffiti inscriptions are the closest to the definition provided by Sheivandi et al. (2015). In Islam’s study (2011), he uses the term ‘responsive chain’ and found that they were often about social and political themes (p. 253). In this study, however, the content of the conversation graffiti is mainly about popular culture, particularly television series and K-Pop music.

Image 242 Graffiti D323



In this graffiti inscription, the original writer has proposed a vote between two popular television shows: *The Walking Dead* and *Game of Thrones*. There appear to be 15 visible votes for *The Walking Dead* and 20 votes for *Game of Thrones*. In theory, each cross represents a person, but there is no guarantee that each participant only voted once. Despite this uncertainty, this inscription remains the one with the most contributors. Graffiti D323 is an example of an inscription where writers are giving their point of view (Fløttum, 2000).

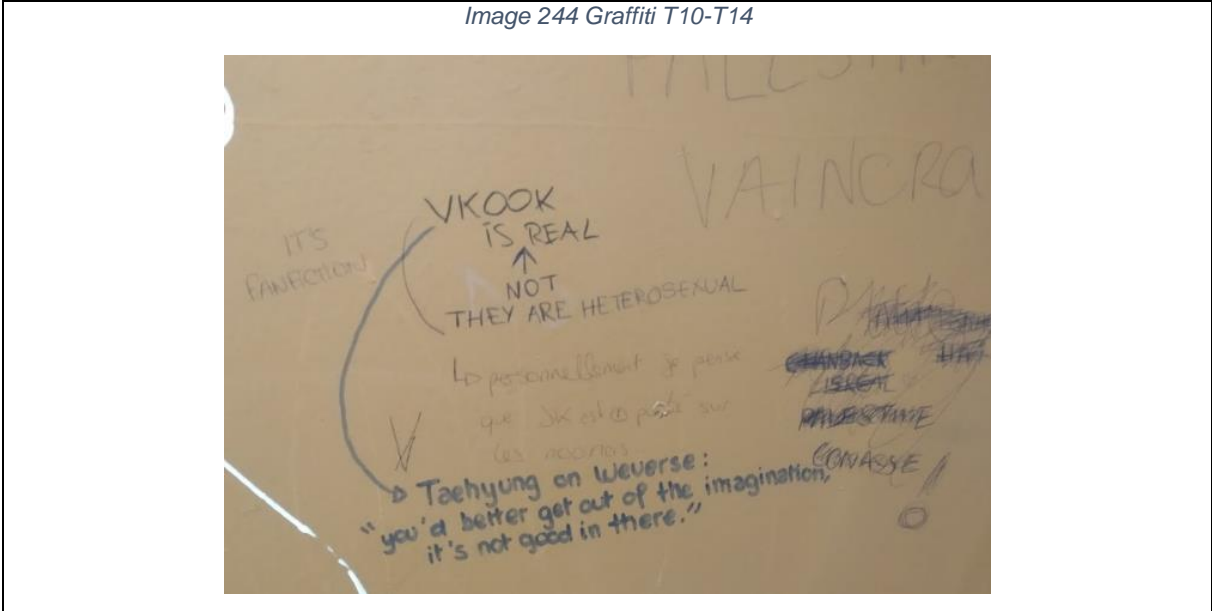
Image 243 Graffiti T16



Graffiti T16 contains the word *PREACH*, which is a part of a conversation on a toilet door in the University Bordeaux Montaigne. From the arrows it is easy to identify the original messages and see the responses by other writers. The inscription *PREACH* is the only inscription in English, the others are all in French. Trahan (2011) describes this pattern of responses as 'encircling' whereby the original message is in

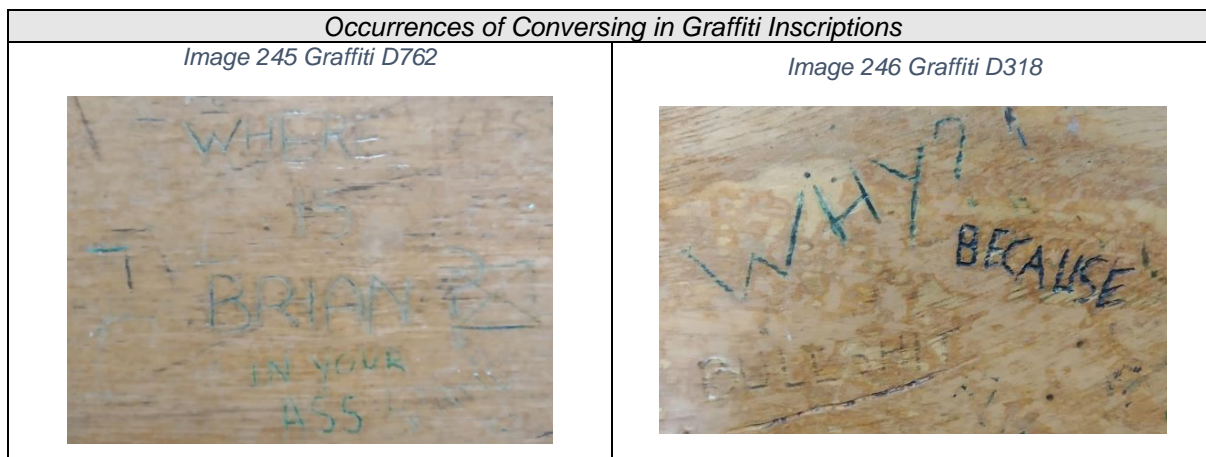
the centre and the replies surround it (p. 5). In Trahan’s example (2011), he posits that the use of encircling was to ‘contain’ the message, the original message was homophobic and the surrounding messages were either anti-religion or pro-gay rights. In the example in my corpus, there is one comment replying criticising and potentially containing the original message and there are also two messages of support agreeing with the original writer. The supporting messages are next to one another, the opposite side of the original message to the negative response. This could suggest a further link of support between the two writers who agree with the original message.

A topic that occurs significantly more in the toilets of UBM than in any other corpus area is K-Pop. It is the theme of 20 inscriptions, and it is also the starting point of several graffiti conversations. Image 244 shows graffiti inscriptions T10-14. Other inscriptions concerning K-Pop music were explored and presented in section 4.8.1.1: Music.



This *conversation* in both English and French is an example of conversational language hybridity where writers respond to one another using English or French for their inscription but the conversation itself is not consistently in one language. One of the inscriptions includes manifest intertextuality whereby one of the graffiti writers quotes a Tweet from one of the K-Pop artists being discussed (doolset 🍊 [@doolsetbangtan], 2019; Sierra, n.d.). The asynchronous conversation discusses the fanfiction imagined relationship between Taehyung and Jungkook from K-Pop band BTS. Vkook is the relationship name, given to them by the fans. Another relationship also referenced in the photograph is Chanbaek. The writers have each added arrows

indicating the message they are replying to, and these arrows aid the reader to follow the conversation and the interactions between the writers.



In graffiti D318, there are three inscriptions each from a different writer. The texts follow a chronological order and are understood when read top to bottom. One student asks *WHY?*, someone responds *BECAUSE*, and a third person disapproves of this answer adding: *BULLSHIT*. The coherency of this conversation is a demonstration of the English-language reading and writing ability of the student authors. The second and third authors have understood the previous message and replied in a coherent manner.



#### 4.9.2 Modifying

This subsection will explore and analyse inscriptions where an inscription has been modified by one or more other writers. In tagging, the act of covering over another person's graffiti or tag can be considered as an insult (Macdonald 2001). The majority of inscriptions with modifications are found in the desktop corpus and are therefore not subject to the same rules as tagging. The first examples address linguistic modifications in conversational graffiti where one writer makes a spelling or grammatical mistake and another writer modifies the original text. This type of interaction can be seen in graffiti D3, D334, and T29.

Occurrences of Modification in Graffiti Inscriptions	
<p>Image 247 Graffiti D334</p> 	<p>Image 248 Graffiti D3</p> 
<p>Image 249 Graffiti T29</p> 	

In graffiti D334, the original writer wrote *THE NORTH REMEMBER* and a second writer added the *S* to make the phrase grammatically correct. The second student used red and this could be to emulate the traditional red pen a teacher would use to annotate and mark students' work. In graffiti T29 the first writer's inscription was corrected by a second writer who removed the unnecessary *the* to make the sentence grammatically correct. The evidence that the sentence was corrected by a second author is seen in the form of the corrector fluid used to cross out the word *the*. The line is thicker and implies the use of an applicator rather than a small brush or corrector pen.

In Graffiti D3 there are two forms of modification. The initial modification of the word *boring* to read *booring* by the first author. This supports the findings of (AbuJaber et al., 2012; Gasparyan, 2020). This type of vowel elongation was also seen in the five phrases containing the word *looser* which from context appears to be modification of the word *loser*. In graffiti D3 the second modification was either by the original writer or a second writer, one of the *O*s was removed to modify the word and give the spelling *boring*.

Graffiti Inscriptions containing a modification from English to French	
<p>Image 250 Graffiti D519</p> 	<p>Image 251 Graffiti D638</p> 

Another example of one person modifying another person's graffiti can be seen in graffiti D519 and D638. The original inscription in graffiti D519 reads "GO!" A second

writer added *VEGETARiAN* and a third writer suggested changing the *A* to and *E* to make the word the French spelling: *vegetarien*. This could be evidence of resistance towards the English language.

It could be argued that the same motivation was present for the second writer in graffiti D638. The writer added the *E* to the word *sex* in order to change the word from the English spelling to the French spelling. The last *E* in the word *sexe* is thinner and lighter than the other letters and there is an upwards slant in the shape of the second *E* that is not present in the first *E*. These variations in the writing style are indicators that this was the work of a second writer.

Image 252 Graffiti D588



Graffiti 588 reads both *Florian* and *Flower Power*. It appears that the second writer split the word *flower* in two and added *RIAN* above *wer* to create the desired inscription. The *RIAN* is written in capitals whereas most of the letters in *Flower* and *Power* are lowercase.

Image 253 Graffiti D513



The graffiti inscription *Faith No Mord/e* was originally *Faith No **More*** but a second writer drew over the *E* with a darker pen to form the letter *D*. This modification created the hybrid phrase: *Faith No Mord/e*. The French word *mord* is the third person singular in the present simple of the verb to bite, *morde* is the present subjunctive third person

singular form. The original phrase: *faith no more*, can be considered a criticism of religion where the writer is suggesting the end of faith, alternatively, it could be a reference to an American rock band which has used the name *Faith No More* since 1983. The modification *faith no mord*, can be understood as *faith does not bite*. In French, the use of the subjunctive, as seen in the third version of the phrase *faith no morde*, would change the sentence to *faith, don't bite*.

Image 254 Graffiti D304



In some cases, the graffiti has been modified from the original and therefore this raises the question of how it should be entered into the corpus and categorised. In the case of graffiti D304, the word *GOD* has been adapted into the word *GOOD*. It is not clear whether the word play was intentional by the first writer or an adaptation by a second.

#### 4.9.3 Swarming

I propose the term: swarming as a neutral alternative to the broken window theory. The broken window theory states that disrepair breeds disrepair and attracts graffiti and vandalism; for more information see section 2.8.1. Swarming is a reference to ants: one ant finds a good spot with food, and this attracts more ants. In the same way one writer finds a well-placed wall or board and leaves their mark, passing writers then add their mark and a graffiti swarm is created. When the desks already have a high level of inscriptions, it may be tempting to add another. This temptation is part of what I define as swarming. Mangeya (2014) and Mendonça (2020) have also found that graffiti inscriptions are rarely found on their own and most walls are covered by more than one participant.

Occurrences of Swarming in the City

Image 255 Wall	Image 256 Wall
	
<p>11 February 2019 12 inscriptions</p>	<p>7 September 2020 24 inscriptions</p>

Image 255 and 256 are examples of swarming. The following images were taken seven months apart with almost a 7-month interval. The first image shows a wall with 12 inscriptions whereas the second shows 24 inscriptions. Within the space of seven months, the number of inscriptions on the wall doubled.

Image 257 Graffiti C111 and C112



Image 257 is an example of conversational street graffiti and swarming. Due to the anonymous nature of graffiti, the identity of the writers is unknown but there are significant differences in the way the letters are formed and therefore I conclude that there are three writers who wrote in English on this parking meter.

The first inscription put *BASE-ART!*, but as *base* and *art* exist in both French and English, it is difficult to determine whether it was intended to be in English or French. This is built upon by the second writer who put *FREE BASE!* The third writer added *FREE – BAISE!*, *free* is an English word and *baise* is an informal French word for sexual intercourse. Unlike in the first example of swarming where the writers added



their own tag or phrase, here the graffiti writers adapt the previous inscriptions and there is a sense of continuity between the messages.

As demonstrated in the examples above, most conversational graffiti in this study is found in the universities, either on the desktops or in the toilets. One of the reasons for this could be that every student is a potential graffiti writer, they are all seated at a potential canvas with a writing instrument. Another factor that could explain the high level of inscriptions is that the writers are restricted in movement for periods of time. Students are often sat at their desks in the amphitheatres and classrooms for an hour or two at a time. If the student is not engaged with the class material or is waiting for the start or end of an exam, they may be drawn to read the inscriptions on their desktop and reply to the inscriptions that are in front of them.

*Image 258 Amphitheatre*






Finally, despite being public places, the students are relatively private at their desks. The layout of the desks puts distance between the teacher and students. This means that from a distance a student writing on the desk or on paper would look the same to a teacher at the front of the classroom. The added distance put in place during the pandemic and exams means that students are isolated from their peers, and this adds to the feeling of privacy.

There are several parallels between my own study and that of García-Arenal Rodríguez (2018) who studied the graffiti left by prisoners in their cell. In her study, the writers were limited to the confines of their prison cell, in my study, the students were


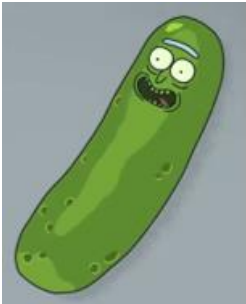
confined to their desktops. García-Arenal Rodríguez (2018) notes that the graffiti inscriptions produce ‘dialogues between prisoners, perhaps even between prisoners who have never met’ (p. 42).

**4.10 Images and Drawings<sup>69</sup>**

Graffiti is often studied as an art for the drawings, the street art pieces, and the aesthetic element of the letters rather than the words themselves. The aestheticization and stylisation of the words and drawings accentuate the syncretism by reinforcing the status of the image (Beyaert-Geslin, 2019). This study, however, does not focus on the aesthetics of the phrases as it aims to analyse the inscriptions on a semantic level. There are 130 graffiti inscriptions that are accompanied by images or drawings. This subsection presents some of the images present in the combined corpora. All the inscriptions are visible in the supplementary appendices.

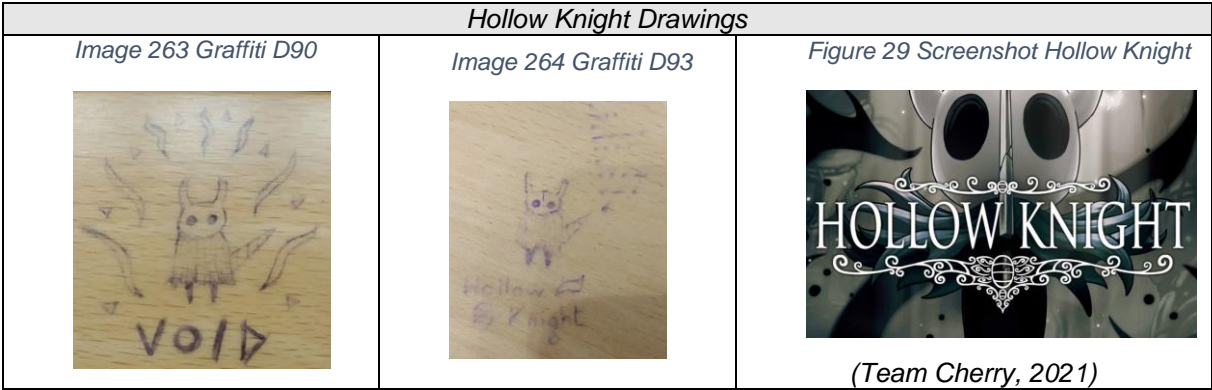
<i>Graffiti Inscriptions with drawings</i>		
<i>A painted phrase with an image</i>	<i>Desktop drawing</i>	<i>Stencil Art</i>
<p><i>Image 259 Graffiti C373</i></p>  <p><i>City, Talence</i></p>	<p><i>Image 260 Graffiti D46</i></p>  <p><i>Desktop, UBM</i></p>	<p><i>Image 261 Graffiti C98</i></p>  <p><i>City, UBM</i></p>

The images and drawings in the inscriptions can be small, such as the flag drawn on to the letter H in the tag *Teach* in graffiti C373. They can be the main focus of the inscription such as in graffiti D46 where the text is naming the drawing or in graffiti C98 where the text is a part of the drawing.

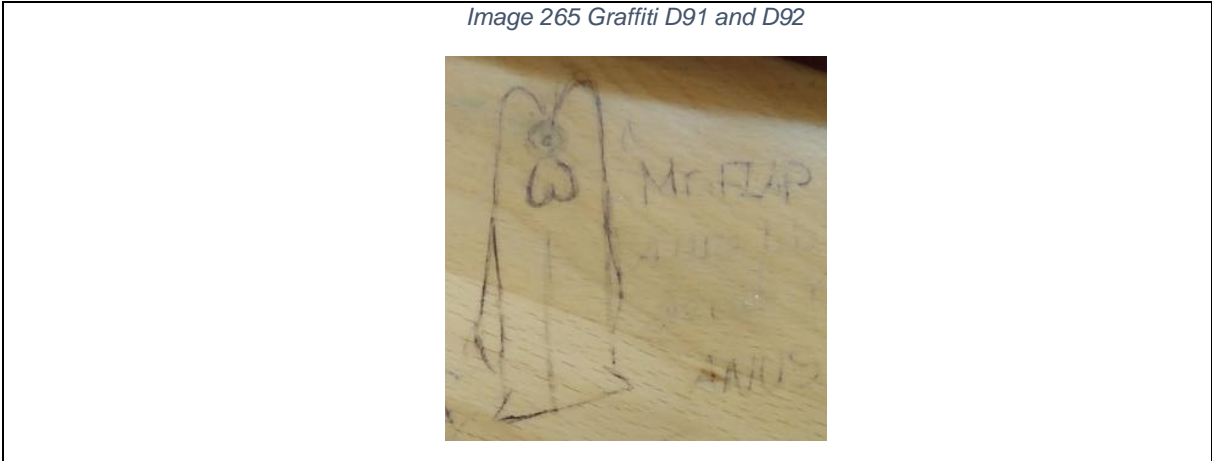
<p><i>Image 262 Graffiti C251</i></p> 	<p><i>Figure 28 Screenshot of Pickle Rick</i></p>  <p><i>Image (Jaffe, 2017)</i></p>
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<sup>69</sup> The images and drawings used in the script tattoo corpus will be analysed when the image is used in the thesis and not in a separate section to avoid repetition.

In some cases, the theme of the graffiti is understandable through the accompanying image. For example, in graffiti C251, the words “by *agathe* !” suggest that this is a tag accompanying a drawing. Taking the drawing into context, the graffiti can be associated with an episode from a popular North American animated series called *Rick and Morty* (Jaffe, 2017).



At the University of Bordeaux Montaigne one piece of graffiti explains another. The first inscription found reads *VOID* and is accompanied by a drawing, without using a search engine the theme of the drawing and inscription is not clear, as in graffiti D90. I then found graffiti D93, which shows the same character and contains the words *Hollow Knight*. The website [hollowknight.com](http://hollowknight.com) confirms that *Void* is from the online game *Hollow Knight* and consequently confirms the theme of the first drawing.



In the case of graffiti D91 the text is accompanied by the cartoon character *Mr Flap*. The animated cartoon ran for two/ three series starting in 2017 and can be found online at France.tv (Everybody Wiki, n.d.; France TV, n.d.). This means that this inscription was probably created after 2017. The image and the context of the cartoon also gives reason to believe that the word *flap* is a noun referring to genitalia rather than a reference to flying.

Inscriptions containing 'Green Boys'

Image 266 Graffiti D228



Image 267 Graffiti D254



Figure 30 Screenshot from YouTube



GreenBoys 2005 ●  
@GreenBoys2005  
319K subscribers

<https://www.youtube.com/user/UGB050ff>

In graffiti D228 and D254 the inscriptions read: *Green Boys*. Without further information this could be referring to an ecological group, a football team, a film, or a K-pop song. Graffiti D254 is accompanied by a drawing that resembles the logo for the football team. As both graffiti inscriptions are found in the same campus, there is reason to believe that they both refer to the football team. As we compare the graffiti inscriptions next to one another there is a strong potential that they were both written by the same person.

Image 268 Graffiti D61



Graffiti D61 contains a group of animals which could be the work of one writer / artist. Each animal has been assigned a name by the writer: for example: *Sacha le chat* and the overall group of animals has been named *Gang Gang*. The word gang appears in the Larousse but as it is a loan word from English, I have included it in the

corpus. As a loan word, *gang* can also be seen as an example of language flux where the word is in the later stages of flux appearing in the dictionary of the receiving language. According to Hoffer (2002), words appear in major dictionaries once they have been used for twenty to twenty-five years.

Image 269 Graffiti D572



Although graffiti D572 does not contain an image or drawing, the words are arranged in a unique manner. The inscription contains three words *smoke*, *some* and *weed* and they are arranged in the style of an acrostic poem. Graffiti D572 is the only example of an inscription written in this format.

#### 4.11 Comparative Corpora

I intended to compare my own datasets with a public dataset of graffiti inscriptions, however, most datasets do not record or give more information about the graffiti other than identifying it as graffiti. It would appear that the majority of datasets available online are more interested in the location of the graffiti, the surfaces it is on, as well as the removal process. The linguistic content of the inscriptions is not a point of interest for researchers who are only focused on where the graffiti is and how it can be removed for their work.

##### 4.11.1 Madrid Signature Corpus

One such corpus I have used for comparison is the Madrid signature corpus which was taken from Kaggle.com and created by Jesus Jara López in 2017.<sup>70</sup> The corpus

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<sup>70</sup> <https://www.kaggle.com/datasets/jesusjara/graffiti-signatures-of-madrid>

includes 197 photographs of tags collected by the researcher in the Malsaña neighbourhood in the city of Madrid, Spain (Jara Lopez, 2017). The researcher has focused mainly on tags rather than inscriptions, however, some of the tags were written near graffiti inscriptions and therefore I was able to collect some data. There are eleven graffiti inscriptions containing English in the dataset.

Table 53 Distribution of Inscriptions

Inscriptions in English	Inscriptions in Spanish	Illegible
See Table 54	A Tu Gusto (n = 9) Raro (n = 1) La Academia (n = 1) Primo (n = 1) Chica (n = 1)	N = 173
N = 11	N = 13	

The full dataset can be seen on Kaggle.com, the nine phrases in English are presented in Table 54.

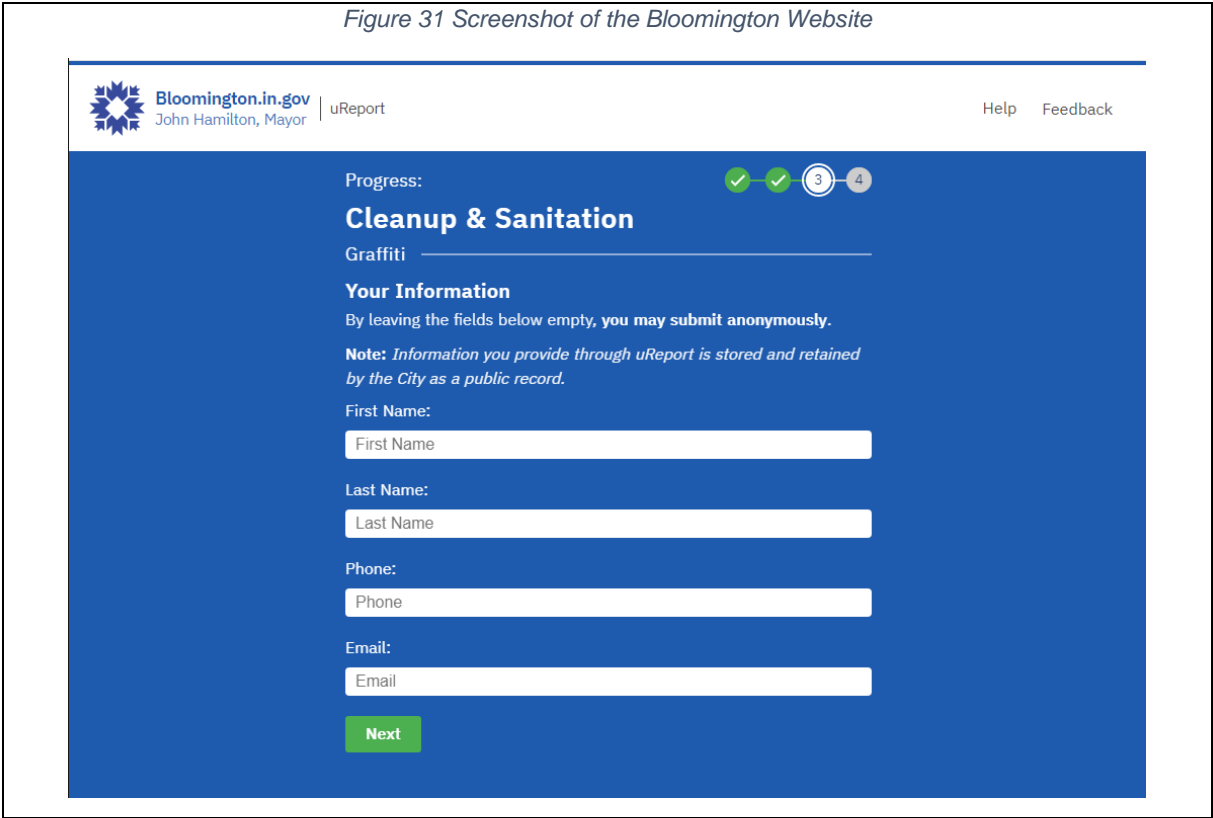
Table 54 Madrid Signatures in English

Photographs of English Graffiti Inscriptions		
SOCK 	GiRL POWER 	HAZE 
SUDAL GO HOME 	YOU ARE WHAT YOU THINK 	I LOVE 
HAZE! 	BiKE RULES SeKos 	BUSED 
i ♥ GU 	BORE 	

Table 54 contains the eleven photographs that featured English in the Madrid Signature corpus. The researcher has focused on the signatures, or tags, in his photographs. This is clear in the photographs, for example, the phrases *SUDAL GO HOME*, *YOU ARE WHAT YOU THINK*, and *I LOVE* are all photographed next to a tag, the true focus of the original researcher. Unfortunately, the researcher did not take photographs of these inscriptions specifically and therefore the end of the sentence *I LOVE* is unknown.

### 4.11.2 Bloomington City Corpus

The Bloomington City corpus is from data.world. It was created in 2017 by S Charlesworth. The only information given about the dataset is the description: ‘Graffiti reports. Charlesworth respects graffiti as one of the four elements of hip hop. Not all graffiti is equal’ (Charlesworth, 2017). The dataset appears to be from official records about graffiti. Some data entries are made by the police, others are by the public through an online web form or a phone call, however, not every entry has information of the contact method. Every entry is from the city of Bloomington, Indiana, United States of America. Megler et al. (2014) write that semi-official graffiti reports, like the reports in the Bloomington corpus, are ‘unprompted responses reflecting visceral reactions to graffiti in the local environment, rather than artificial responses such as those solicited in periodic surveys’ (p. 64), using them allows the graffiti to be seen through other people’s eyes – not just the researcher’s.



Of the 707 entries, 158 contained English graffiti inscriptions. Twenty entries were people testing the system, this was indicated in the text box with the word ‘test’ or words, ‘just a test’, ‘Just a test, please ignore this report’ or ‘Test report’. A further 11 inscriptions did not contain any graffiti, for example they were from people writing about shoes on powerlines, questions about the project, and thank you messages to the organisers.<sup>71</sup> The 158 inscriptions gave a total of 401 tokens. A brief summary of the corpus is given below. The entries are numbered as E1, E2 etc. and the graffiti inscriptions are labelled BC1 to BC158 for Bloomington Corpus.

The most frequent words in the corpus are *fuck*, *cops*, *kills*, *I*, *KKK*, *the*, *to*, *you*, the anarchy symbol (A) and *is*. I will be focusing on the words *fuck*, *I*, *you*, *love*, the anarchy symbol, and the acronym *ACAB* for the comparison as these tokens are present in both this corpus and my combined graffiti inscription corpora.

Table 55 Bloomington Corpus Compared to Thesis Combined Corpora

Relative Frequency 10,000	<i>Fuck</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>You</i>	(A)	<i>ACAB</i>	<i>Love</i>
Bloomington City Corpus	648 (798 including variants of <i>fuck</i> )	224	149	124	74 (and AC(A) B)	49
Combined Graffiti Corpora	255 (262 including variants)	246	165	23	33	146

The word *fuck* and the *ACAB* acronym are used twice as much in the Bloomington corpus than in the corpora used in this study. The use of the anarchy symbol, (A), is used almost 6 times more in the Bloomington corpus (n = 8). There is one example of the word *ACAB* with the anarchy symbol replacing one of the As, this has also been

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<sup>71</sup> One entry was by the same person who was adding information to his previous entry. One entry is by a student who is reaching out via the web form asking or someone who would be willing to be interviewed for a research project at school. One entry is a thank you for removing the graffiti in her area. Three entries are reporting shoes on a power line because the person does not know where else to report the incident. One person claims to have information about a possible graffiti writer. Two entries about parking. One is identical and could be a double entry. One entry is about a business offer to raise the profile of the website.



seen in my own corpus and is used a further three times in relation to the police: *BPD shoot to kill* (A). The anarchy symbol also appears in the phrases: (A)+ *infinity*, *I ♥* (A) *ppl*, and *no borders* (A). These inscriptions are all examples of hybrid language and suggest that the graffiti writers in Bloomington City associate anarchy with capitalism, in the form of the company Apple, as well as immigration issues, and the police.

As seen in my own corpus, the acronym ACAB has also been modified in this corpus. In this corpus the modification is to: All Cops Are Darren Wilson – This inscription refers to the policeman named Darren Wilson who shot and killed Michael Brown Jr, an 18-year-old African American who was unarmed (Lakshman, 2021). This was one of the events that led to the Black Lives Matter movement as well as the revival of ACAB graffiti. A total of 29 inscriptions in the Bloomington corpus are aimed at the police. These inscriptions include the phrases: *I hate cops*, *kill cops*, *BPD shoot to kill*, *f the police die pigs*. From the context I believe BPD stands for Bloomington Police Department. This is in comparison to my own combined corpora whereby there are 24 inscriptions that cite the police. The percentage of police references is significantly higher in the Bloomington corpus 18% versus 1.9% in my corpus. This could suggest that the topic of police is more important for the graffiti writers in Bloomington than the graffiti writers in Bordeaux.

I will be limiting the use of this dataset because it is not my dataset and some of the entries are hard to interpret. For example, graffiti BC43 reads: *'Employee of Sarah Jane & David's had "cats" spray painted on their business sign'* the wording is not clear as to whether the graffiti is the words *cats* or whether it is drawings of cats. The use of speech marks suggests it is a word studied, therefore the accuracy or detail of the phrases is not the focus for the people writing the entries. Entry 91 reads: *'red paint with the words i hate cops wrote on building 922 s. morton'*. The data entry gives the information necessary for the appropriate authorities to find the inscription. Some of the entries are vague and explain that there are 'multiple f\*\*ks' without specifying a number (entry 255), others such as entry 251 read:

*'Near the indicated location on the sidewalk on the north side of 1st street is spray painted a 4-letter expletive (F\*\*\*\*) repeated about 10 times. This has been here for at LEAST 3 weeks now and it's not only offensive but a disgrace that it has been allowed to remain in our community for so long. Not only must it be doubly offensive to families walking with children but it sends the message that this is appropriate and tolerated in our city, especially as it's along a busy corridor.'*

In these cases, I have included the word in question the minimum times required, two times for entry 255 and 10 times for entry 251. Another issue is that the same graffiti could be mentioned in several reports as there is no photograph to verify that each entry refers to a different inscription. These issues question the validity of this dataset, however, it is merely a comparative corpus and not the focus of the study.

This section has compared the combined corpora collected and analysed for this study with two additional corpora found on the internet. This demonstrates that there is a lack of access to such datasets. The use of these additional corpora is limited, but is able to show that some themes are common to the graffiti world. The following and final section in this chapter presents the interviews that took place with graffiti writers in Bordeaux.

## 4.12 Interviews

This section focuses on the interactions I have had with graffiti artists and writers. The four interviews were carried out in person or via telephone. M. Liberté and Pascal consider themselves to be or to have been graffiti writers, David Selor identifies as a street artist and Jean is a tattoo artist as well as an amateur tagger. All of the interviews were with males who were involved in graffiti from a young age, this is consistent with previous research that associates the practice of graffiti writing and tagging with young males (Ferrell, 1995; Guthrie, 2005; Megler et al., 2014). Ben-Said (2011) concludes his research highlighting the benefits of and encouraging future research to include the voices of people who influence and affect the linguistic landscape. Therefore, this section analyses their perspective on their contribution to the linguistic landscape.

### 4.12.1 M. Liberté – Graffiti Writer







M. Liberté is a French man in his 40s who I met outside the reconstruction of the prison in Gradignan. As we were outside and there was lots of background noise, I did not record the interview, but I took notes while we talked as he continued writing on

the walls of the construction site. He identifies as a graffiti writer and has been practising for about 20 years. M. Liberté explains that he often writes on bins because although it is vandalism, most people, and in particular most police officers, do not mind and leave him to it, this in contrast to Kuisel (1993) who finds that it is the content of the graffiti determines whether or not people accept its presence.

M. Liberté did not have a tag or graffiti name when I asked him for one for my study. I said I might have to create one to help when I write my text and I suggested M. Prison as we had met outside the prison, he suggested M. Liberté [*Mr. Freedom*]. I feel this is very indicative of his work, trying to see the positivity in everything. He does not consider himself to be bilingual, however, he is capable of writing the following phrases:

Table 56 M. Liberté’s Inscriptions

Photograph	Information
<p>Image 271 Graffiti C380</p> 	<p><i>I asked him about this one and he said he could not remember if it was an E or an I in the word relax.</i></p>
<p>ALL YOU NEED IS LESS (Not written at this site)</p>	<p><i>M. Liberté found this phrase on a t-shirt in a shop in Bordeaux and liked it.</i></p>
<p>Image 272 Graffiti C381</p> 	<p><i>He asked me if there was a mistake, so we corrected it together removing the E on BREATHE.</i></p>
<p>Image 273 Graffiti C382</p> 	<p><i>We wrote this one together in honour of a friend I had recently lost to a brain tumour. I told him that my friend was an English teacher and I wanted to write something for him, M. Liberté instantly suggested the phrase Stay Curious, it was very fitting for my late friend.</i></p>
<p>Image 274 Graffiti C383</p> 	<p><i>Even though this word is also French (informal order) he likes to write it because it works in both English and French.</i></p>

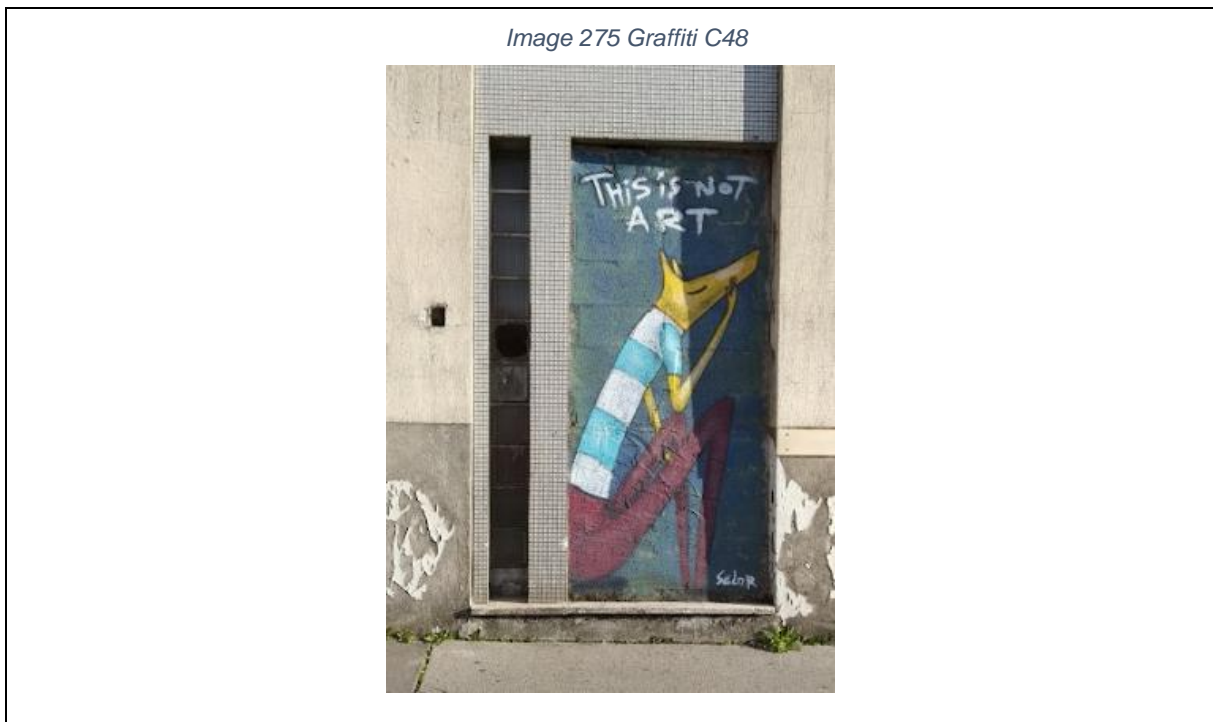
M. Liberté explained that he had been in prison for not paying around 20 train tickets. While inside, he was appalled to find that meat was being served every day and often twice a day in the prison cafeteria. This is despite all the warnings in the prison sick bay to eat less meat. There are around 600-700 prisoners at Gradignan. M. Liberté asked me if I had any contacts in the graffiti world. I agreed to contact the people I knew to let them know that a new wall was available in Talence and that he

hoped to meet other writers this way. In particular, he hoped to find a street artist to create a mural featuring the message:

*“La viande,  
Sur ma vie,  
C’est une tuerie“  
[Meat,  
I swear on my life,  
it’s a killer]*

On his request I contacted the artist that I had previously spoken with but he was worried about the implications of writing on the walls of a construction site.

#### 4.12.2 David Selor – Street Artist



David Selor identifies as a street artist, and practises in Bordeaux. I have not given him a pseudonym as the name *David Selor* is his own pseudonym to protect himself legally. I contacted David via the email on his website about this English piece: *this is not art*. He replied and explained that there was no reason behind the choice and that French street artists often write in English because ‘it sounds better’.

*‘Il n’y a pas de raison particulière, et même en cherchant je n’en trouve pas. Dans la plupart des cas, les street artistes français en France, écrivent en anglais car ça sonne mieux.’*

*[There was no reason in particular, and even thinking about it I can’t find one. In the majority of cases, French street artists in France, write in English as it sounds better.]*

I was able to call him and ask more about his work in English. David explains that he is contacted by people outside of France for his artwork and therefore must 'internationalise' his texts. He explains that English is popular at the moment and he feels that France is behind when it comes to speaking English. David does not claim to be bilingual, however he writes all his inscriptions himself for example: *in the last minute of your life take a selfie and tourist trap*. He explains that he adapts his phrases to fit the location: when he creates art in London or areas with a lot of tourists, he writes in English so that a larger audience will understand his work.

#### 4.12.3 Jean – Tattoo Artist and Tagger<sup>72</sup>

Jean is a tattoo artist who is also a tagger; we met by chance in a bar in Bordeaux and he agreed to talk to me about his involvement in the two worlds. He is an example of a graffiti writer who has a 'real' life as a tattoo artist alongside his graffiti writing activity (Macdonald, 2001). At the time of the interview, he had been tattooing for two and a half years but tagging for much longer. He explains that several of his colleagues are also tattoo artists by day and graffiti writers by night.

Jean started by saying that for him, being a tagger is about being '*amoureux de la lettre*' [*in love with letters*]. He explained that taggers want to create beautiful words and phrases. For Jean, tagging and graffitiing is about creating art with letters, creating harmony between the wall and the graffiti writer:

*'Il va se familiariser avec la lettre pour faire une mise en forme esthétique de la lettre'*

*[(The tagger) will become familiar with the letter in order to shape the letter aesthetically.]*

I asked him about the graffiti community and how he meets and communicates with other writers and in particular the tagger *away* who can be seen around Bordeaux. According to Jean, who knew the writer through a colleague, the tagger *away* is a young writer in his early 20s. Jean did not believe that there is a definite connection to English as a language but to English as part of that graffiti writer's linguistic context and surroundings. For Jean, English was an undeniable part of the language used in everyday France.

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<sup>72</sup> Jean declined to provide a photograph of a drawing, tattoo, or tag in the interest of anonymity.

*'Mais tu ne peux pas dissocier quelqu'un qui vit dans le, dans la culture actuelle qui va vouloir insuffler de l'anglais dans ses textes.'*

*[But you can't disassociate someone who lives in today's culture who is going to want to infuse English into their texts.]*

Jean explained that English is an integral part of graffitiing and tagging and that many French writers use English as an homage to the North American origins of graffitiing and tagging.

*'L'intérêt de faire de l'anglais dans le tag vient des Etats-Unis. De cette inertie qu'a créé les Etats- Unis dans le graffiti. Ils sont précurseurs et ont insufflé l'anglais dans le tag. Les Français aujourd'hui sont influencés par le graffiti et vont faire des tags à connotation anglaise. Mais c'est un parti pris. C'est un choix personnel de faire ça.'*

*[The interest in using English in tagging comes from the United States, from this uh, to say, this inertia that the United States has created in relation to graffiti, they have infused English into tagging. So today's French people are influenced by graffiti and so they will make tags that have English connotations. But it's a, it's a bias, it's a, it's a personal choice.]*

Jean added that he is both a tagger and a tattoo artist and he avoids writing in English in both areas of his life. His tag is a nickname which is linked to a film and his tattooing style is black and grey drawings. Despite his reticence towards English, he admitted that it is everywhere:

*'On ne peut pas enlever la culture graphique ou cinématographique qui nous a insufflé tout le tout le contexte anglais. Aujourd'hui on est, on est baignés dedans depuis 20 ans, 30 ans, on est baignés dans l'anglicisme.'*

*[You can't take away the graphic or cinematographic culture that gave us the whole English context, today we've been immersed in it for 20,30 years, we're immersed in Anglicism.]*






Jean found it normal for French people to have and want English language tattoos because of the presence of English in the linguistic landscapes.

*'En fait les français veulent un anglais qui se, qui se dégage du français. Ils veulent être différent du français. Donc du coup, ils font du texte en anglais.'*

*[The French (people) want to have, have, have, English that is, that is, uh, that stands out from French. They want to be different from the French, so they write the text in English.]*

Jean cited a French rapper, Akehenaton, who said that it was easier to say 'I love you' than 'Je t'aime', suggesting that the use of English can facilitate communication and also provide distance for the speaker/writer. In his experience, it is commonplace to have English script tattoos. As with tagging, he repeated that the choice of language is personal to each tattoo bearer.

**4.12.4 Pascal – Tattoo Bearer and Former Graffiti Writer**

<p>Image 276 Pascal 1</p> 	<p>Image 277 Pascal 2</p> 	<p>Image 278 Pascal 3</p> 
<p><i>Life Goes On</i></p>	<p><i>GHETTO FABULOUS</i></p>	<p><i>My Dear Nala</i></p>
<p>Image 279 Pascal 4</p> 		<p>Image 280 Pascal 5</p> 
<p><i>Some of Pascal's Art</i></p>		<p><i>WHEN WE LEAVE</i></p>

Pascal is a former graffiti writer who also has tattoos, he did most of his writing between 2005 and 2015. Pascal considered himself to be part of the second or third generation of graffiti artists in France. We met at a conference I participated in which was about street art and graffiti. At the time of the first interview, he had three script tattoos in English: *Life goes on*, *Ghetto Fabulous* and *My dear Nala*. Pascal described himself as a painter rather than a street artist or graffiti writer. He explains that he used to do graffiti art before moving into muralism and then to painting in general. He now works as an independent artist running art therapy with various audiences such as in schools and hospitals.

Pascal's first tattoo was the script tattoo *Life goes on* and is in reference to two songs: one called *Life Goes On* by North American singer Cunnie Williams, and the second was the music for a movie trailer for a film that took place in Marseille. He describes the phrase as his '*leit motiv*' and it reminds him that, whatever happens, life goes on. Pascal's second script tattoo *ghetto fabulous* also refers to the French town of Marseille after having spent time there. The words in the script tattoo are also taken from a song by a North American rapper.

His third tattoo, *My dear Nala*, is in traditional Old School style, which can also be called American Traditional, and refers to his dog Nala. Pascal explains that this tattoo was a flash that he chose and, as the flash was prewritten in English, in keeping with the format of an Old School tattoo, he kept it in English. Pascal also has the phrase *honeymoon USA* which he got in Los Angeles.

We then discuss Pascal's career as a graffiti writer. He used to write the word *who* in the streets in various forms and in as many places as possible. Pascal explains that he and several other writers would all spray and write the word *who* without telling anyone to create mystery around each inscription: *who* did it? This shows an understanding of the word *who* in English. Pascal explains that they also created hybrid phrases using the word *who*, such as in *Wholouse* instead of Toulouse and *Wholalardime* which was a reference to a song by the group *Zebda* who were from Toulouse.

Pascal explains that hip-hop culture has had a profound influence on graffitiing and elements of hip-hop culture can also be found in tattooing. This supports the writings of (Pennycook, 2006) who writes that hip hop, and rap in particular, and English are 'woven together in new and creative ways' (p. 4). Whereas Obouronanga (2022) writes that 'la culture hip hop provient de la pratique du graffiti et qui précède les autres formes d'expressions que sont rap, le djing et le breakdance' [*hip hop culture stems from graffitiing which preceded other forms of expression such as rap, djing, and breakdancing*] (p. 89). Pascal sees the two art forms as being very different and having little in common; this reflects what Pierre said in his interview and could also suggest why there is a lack of research comparing the two. However, despite the stark contrast between the two areas he recognises that there is a substantial amount of movement between the two groups whereby graffiti writers are tattooed and become tattoo artists as well as tattoo artists becoming graffiti writers. He tells me that in his personal experience, many friends and acquaintances that he made through graffitiing became tattoo artists. This is mainly due to money; as mentioned earlier it is hard to earn a



living through graffitiing, and Pascal explains that within the ‘anarchical’ graffiti groups it is often more respected to become a tattoo artist than to commercialise one’s artwork:

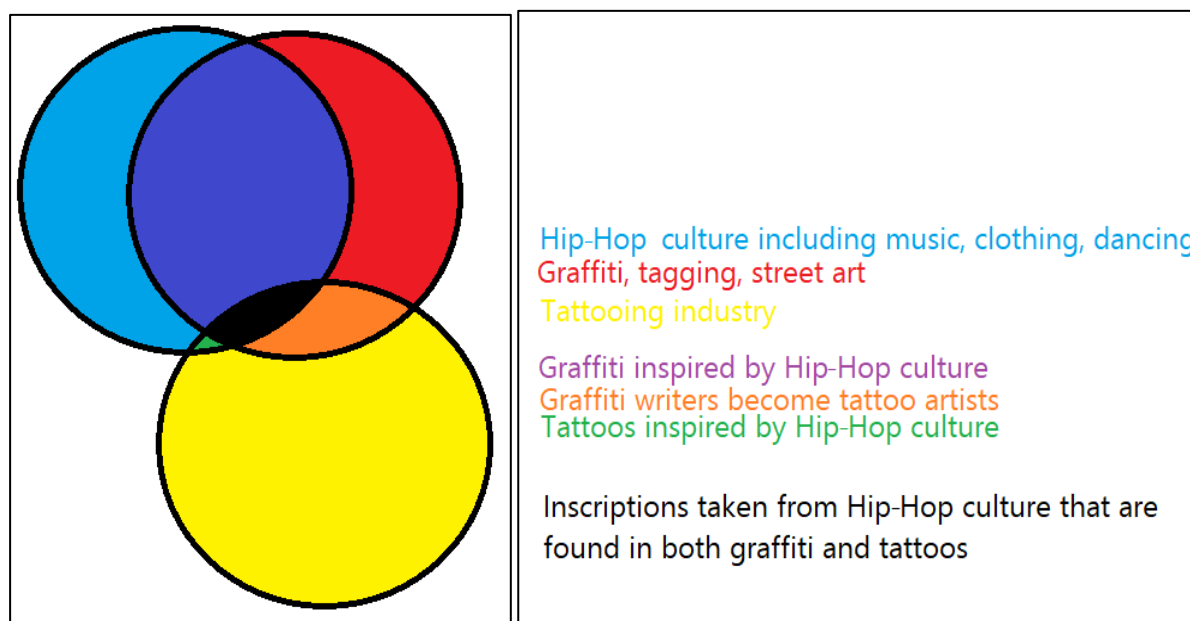
*‘Si tu veux rester underground c’est mieux de devenir tatoueur que de peindre pour des galeries [...] C’est, c’est une histoire d’éthique personnelle. C’est beaucoup mieux, c’est plus rock and roll d’aller faire des tatouages que d’aller faire des toiles ou travailler avec des institutions’*

*[If you want to stay underground it’s better to become a tattoo artist than paint in a gallery. It’s, it’s a question of personal ethics. It’s much better, it’s more rock and roll to tattoo than to paint canvases or work with institutions.]*

This reflects Hampton et al.’s (2013) findings where the graffiti artists interviewed explained that in order to have paid, legal work, they had to have more mainstream political ideas.

We then discussed the presence of English in graffiti in France. Despite having used the English word *who* as a tag for several years, Pascal feels that there is not a lot of English present in French graffiti writing, and when it is used, it is in order to reach an international audience or in an English-speaking country such as the United States. He adds that English is sometimes used as a joke or as means to connect with the culture of hip-hop. He explains that many well-known graffiti writers have English names and use English words such as ‘*crews*’ and ‘*teams*’ for their writing groups. In the 80s and 90s graffiti writers would add the words ‘*one*’ or ‘*two*’ to the end of their name, this was particularly common if more than one writer used the same name. He believes that the presence of English being used in France is linked to the growing use of social networks. Pascal cites *ACAB* as being an internationally recognised and internationally used acronym in graffitiing. He explains that as modern graffitiing and tagging originated in the United States of America they were linked to rap music through Hip-Hop culture. Pascal believes that there are more connections between Hip-Hop and graffiti than between tattooing and graffitiing, this is supported by Christen (2003) who writes that some of the disc jockeys, rappers and dancers were also, or had previously been graffiti writers as hip-hop culture emerged from similar neighbourhoods. See Figure 32 for a visual representation.

Figure 32 Relationship between Graffiti, Tattooing and Hip-Hop Culture



Pascal tells me that the first rappers in France did not have visible tattoos as the association at the time with tattoos was with gangs, not with Hip-Hop. He explains that now lots of rappers, in particular the most well-known, are all tattooed, he cites: Seth Gueko, Swift Quad, Kanoé, and Roméo Elvis. He cites IAM, which is pronounced *I am*, as one of the precursors of rap music in France who were inspired by their North American counterparts. According to Pascal, many artists such as DJ Dee Nasty, spent time in the United States in the 80s and they brought hip-hop culture back with them to France.

I asked Pascal for his opinion as to why the French graffiti writers and tattoo bearers are drawn to North American culture and he explains that once again it was the sheer presence of the culture whilst growing up. He remembered watching the series *Arnold and Willy* and the *Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, as well as the films *Rocky* and *Rambo* which were not necessarily about the 'American Dream' but North American culture in general.

Pascal and I had a second telephone interview where we discussed the first interview in more detail. I then sent him my interview transcript and the notes I had made for my analysis. The following comments are from the additional contact. He adds that there was also a famous television show in 1984, called *H.I.P. H.O.P.* by *Sidney*. The show upset a lot of people as it was the first of its kind to show black youths dancing and North American hip-hop culture, especially as it was on TF1 (Télévision Française 1) which was France's main television channel at the time and therefore lots of people would have seen the show.

Pascal explains that the anarchial nature of graffitiing continues to shape some graffiti writers who are now moving away from rap music as it is the most listened to music in France. The graffiti writers turn towards other underground movements which are more in keeping with their values. He adds that despite the democratisation of tattooing and its presence in mainstream culture, it is still considered alternative and underground to a certain degree and therefore the graffiti writers prefer to stay underground through tattooing than work with art galleries.

Pascal concludes his reread of my notes and analysis by adding that today he is no longer interested in or passionate about graffiti. Graffiti remains firmly in the past for him. He works only with local companies and authorities and therefore his use of English is also restricted to immigrants who are not able to speak French. However, English remains a part of his travels and his tattoos, but he aims to add French phrases in order to conserve his French identity. Pascal explains that he has several phrases in mind to have tattooed on his body in French, but has not yet had the time to do so.

Since our first interview he has added another English script tattoo to his collection, this time it was in memory of a friend who died the day after giving Pascal and his wife a CD. The tattoo reads *When we leave* which is the name of the album that was given to Pascal. He explains that despite wanting to have French tattoos, there are other tattoos that take priority, such as this one which expresses his grief.

#### **4.13 Concluding Remarks**

This chapter has presented the findings from the graffiti inscription data which were collected during a three-year period in the city of Bordeaux, various classrooms at the universities of Bordeaux and Bordeaux Montaigne, and public toilets found at both universities as well as public bars in the city of Bordeaux. The data were analysed as both a combined corpora of the three spatial distributions as well as individual corpora by space. The biggest corpus, taken from the desktops of the two universities, contained 797 inscriptions, the city corpus contained 392 inscriptions, and the toilet corpus contained 48 inscriptions.

The attitudes, interests, and opinions of the Bordelaise population was made apparent through the data: music and metal bands were present in a significant number of inscriptions. The socioeconomic inscriptions reveal the political views of the time, particularly in relation to alleged police brutality and the fight for women's equality.

The desktop corpus reveals the thoughts, feelings, and interests of the university graffiti writing students of Bordeaux. Student graffiti inscriptions have been analysed

as means of communication for students who need to express themselves (Olusoji, 2013). The level of negativity and morbid inscriptions in the corpus would suggest that the graffiti writing students of Bordeaux are somewhat frustrated and act out those frustrations on the desktop. The linguistic range on the desktops also demonstrates the language ability of the writers as well as their ability to learn and memorise extracts from songs and books, displaying an interest in these mediums in English. The use of English could be an indication that the writers wanted to reach an international audience, as is found in Toenjes' (2015) study in Palestine.

The interviews with the graffiti writers support the findings that English is a part of the graffiti community and is particularly seen as a means of communication with a wider population both in, and outside of, France. All of the interviews were conducted separately, however, there were some elements that were mentioned in more than one interview, Uithol (2020) calls this 'agreement between participants' (p. 16). Pascal and Jean both refer to rap music and the fact that modern graffiti styles originated in the United States of America which supports the findings in the literature review (Bloch, 2016, Novak, 2017). Jean and Pascal also agree that the flow is mainly from graffiti writing into tattooing rather than the other way around (McAuliffe, 2012). As English is the official language in the United States, it has been associated and incorporated into graffitiing from its early days in the 1970s.

In the next chapter: Script Tattoos, I will present the data collected from the online survey and the tattoo corpus that was built from it. A quantitative analysis of the data will be given as well as a qualitative exploration of the words and themes used.

*Image 281 Tattoo Bearer 400*



## **5 Script Tattoos in English**

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the results and analysis of the data pertaining to the study of script tattoos written in English by L1 French speakers. The data includes a corpus of 825 script tattoos, an online survey of L1 French tattoo bearers, three interviews with tattoo artists and four interviews with tattoo bearers. This chapter will give background information about the participants of this study, the survey and methods used, as well as the research context - and also give an overview and justification for each of the research methods used as well as the analytical approach adopted. Each of the script tattoos and quotes from the survey have been written according to what was written in the survey. If the text has been verified with the tattoo bearer and changed, it will be labelled with [CHK]. If I have been unable to verify the text, it will be written verbatim and labelled with [UNCHK] to signal that it is unchecked.

## 5.2 Research Questions

The following methods of data collection were used to create a database of English language tattoos: online surveys (one in English and two in French), face to face interviews, email correspondence and posting on social media. The data was then compiled into a corpus which was used to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the demographic of bearers with an English tattoo who are L1 French speakers?
2. What words and phrases are tattooed in English by French speakers?
3. What are the common themes being tattooed in English?
4. What are the reasons given for being tattooed in English?
5. How do L2 English speakers express themselves through script tattoos?
6. What can we learn about L2 English use through script tattoos?
7. How do the L2 English users position their own identities as English speakers through their tattoos?
8. How is identity expressed in tattoos?

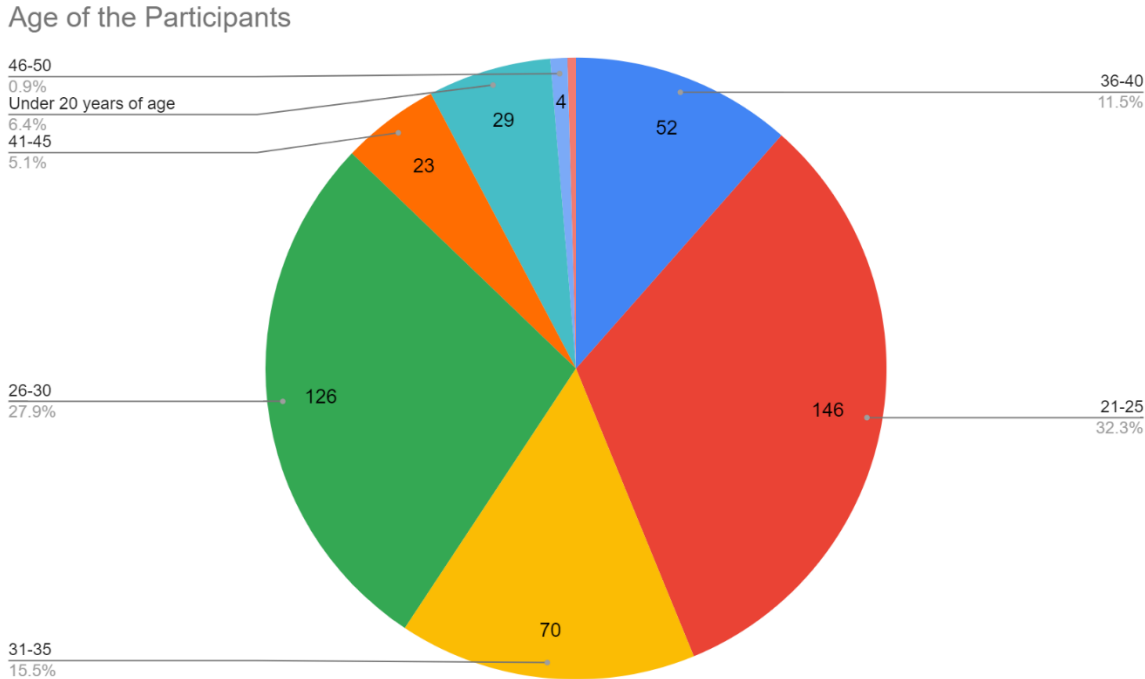
The findings to these research questions will aid in answering the main research question concerning script tattoos in English: What can be learnt about L2 English use through script tattoos on L1 French speakers?

This section focuses on the data from the harmonised survey results, see section 3.5.2 for details on the data harmonisation. The harmonised data came from 602 participants with a total of 825 script tattoos in English. This section will explore both the data about the people who replied to the survey, their script tattoos and the detailed reasoning given by the participants.

### 5.3 Demographic Information about the Participants

The participants were asked to select the category of age that applies to them, the ages ranged from 18-20 to 51-55 years of age. The biggest age group of respondents were aged between 21-25 (n = 32.5%), this was followed by 27.5% of the participants 26-30 years old. See Graph 4 for the full details of the ages of the participants.

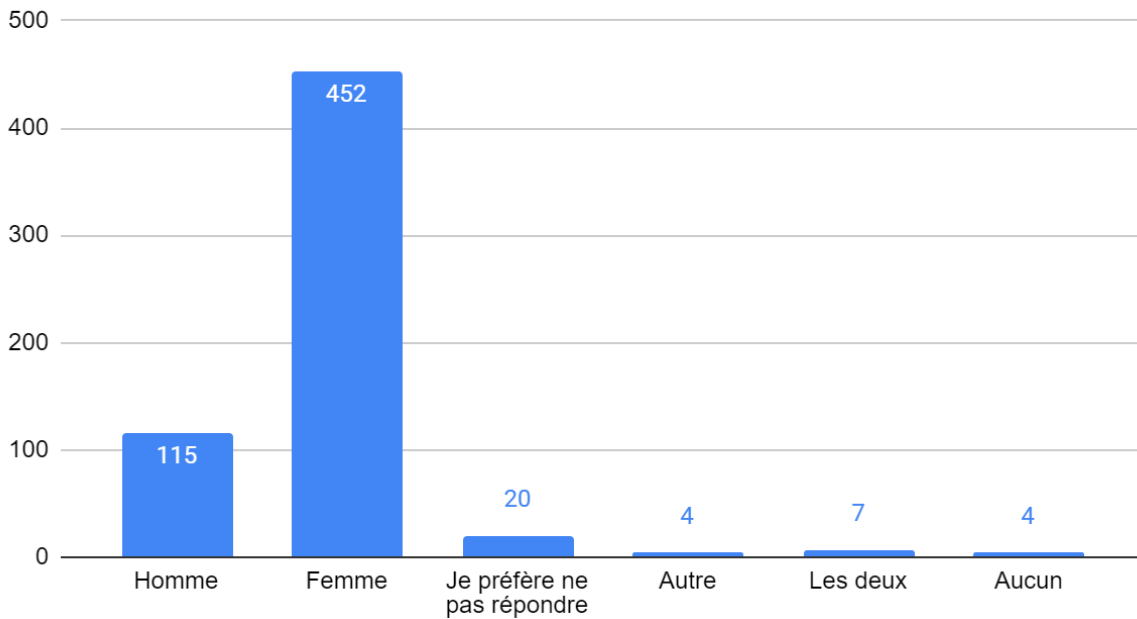
Graph 4 Ages of the Participants



The participants were asked with which gender they identified. The majority, almost 75%, of the participants responded that they identified as female (n = 452). The second biggest group, containing 115 participants, identified as male. Twenty participants did not wish to respond to the question. Fifteen of the participants were non-binary, associating with both or neither of the binary genders. See Graph 5 for the full distribution of the genders.

Graph 5 Participants' Gender(s)

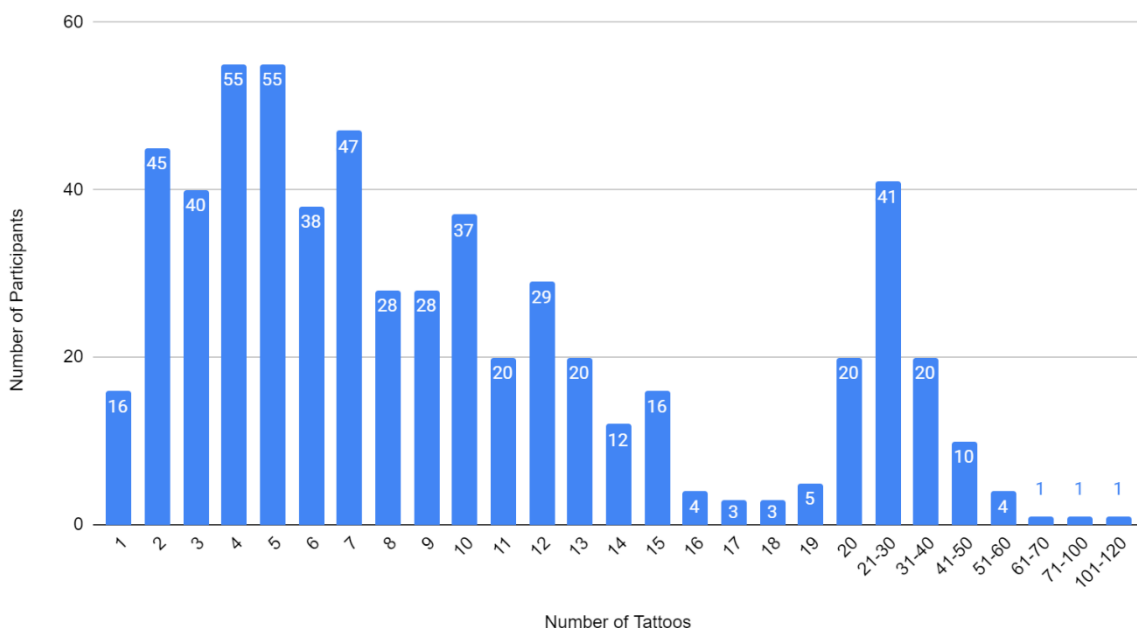
### Participants' Gender(s)



The 602 participants had a combined total of 6,897 tattoos (including both English script tattoos and others). The respondents to the survey had a mean average of 11.4 tattoos each, with a modal average of five tattoos per participant, which is supported by Graph 6 showing the tattoo distribution in more detail. The most tattooed participant had 120 individual tattoos. Two participants did not write how many tattoos they had and one participant wrote 10+. The total number of English script tattoos was 825, this gives a mean average of 1.3 English script tattoos per participant.

Graph 6 Tattoo Distribution

### Tattoo Distribution





There is a peak in the category of 21-30 tattoos, this is to be expected as it is the first grouping. The downward sloping continues from 31-40 tattoos per tattoo bearer.

This concludes the section that focuses on the demographic information of the participants. The group of participants consists mainly of females who are in their 30s. Three quarters of the participants declare that they speak at least two languages and half speak at least three. The next section will focus on the script tattoos themselves and the answers the participants gave about why they chose the word or phrase and why they chose English.

**5.4 Language Ability**

The participants were asked about the languages they speak for two reasons. Firstly, to establish that they were L1 speakers of French and secondly, to identify which languages the participants spoke. In order to do this the participants were asked about their languages through the following questions:

- Quelle est votre langue maternelle ?*
- [What is your mother tongue?]*
- Parlez-vous d'autres langues ? (Veuillez les classer de la langue où vous êtes le plus à l'aise, à la langue où vous êtes le moins à l'aise)*
- [Do you speak any other languages? (Please order them from the language in which you feel the most to least comfortable)]*

The division of the language questions allowed the participants to write that they had two L1 languages and then list any other languages they are comfortable speaking. Table 57 shows that all the participants stated that French was their first language (n = 602). Nineteen participants indicated that they had two first languages. Six participants cited Spanish as their second first language and two participants wrote that English was their second first language (or one of). See Table 57 for all of the languages cited as an L1.

*Table 57 Participants' First Languages*

First Language(s)	Total number of participants
French	584 participants
French and Spanish	6 participants
French and Creole	5 participants
French and English French and Portuguese French and German French and Dutch French, English, and Hawaiian French and Polish French Sign Language	7 participants in total

The participants were then asked if they spoke any other languages in order of ability, from strongest to weakest. Of the 442 respondents that wrote they spoke a second language, 306 of those respondents also spoke a third language, 95 spoke a fourth language, 21 spoke a fifth language, and 19 spoke six languages or more. 150 respondents indicated that they did not speak a second language. This is evidence to suggest that the tattoo bearers in this survey are predominantly multilingual speakers (Kramsch 2006). A total of 36 languages were cited by the participants. Tattoo bearer 522 respondent listed 19 languages:

*'Anglais, Italien, Mandarin, Russe, et les autres langue étudiées en hobby je ne les parle plus : Norvégien, Arabe, Hébreu, Finnois, Islandais, Allemand, Espagnol, Néerlandais, Japonais, commencé le Danois pour le fun, après les éternels Latin & Grec, et des langues imaginaires de Tolkien le Quenya et le Sindarin et j'essaie en ce moment d'apprendre l'Ojibwa'*

*[English, Italian, Mandarin, Russian, and the other languages were studied as a hobby I don't speak them anymore: Norwegian, Arabic, Hebrew, Finnish, Icelandic, German, Spanish, Dutch, Japanese, [I] started learning Danish for fun, after the eternal Latin & Greek, and Tolkien's imaginary languages Quenya and Sindarin, and I'm trying to learn Ojibwe]*

The ability to speak two or more languages is particularly strong in this group of participants with 73% speaking at least two languages. Language learning is often considered an academic skill taught in schools. This interest in languages, or at least ability to speak two or more, can be perceived as a sign of being educated. As demonstrated in the literature section, tattoo bearers are generally associated with deviance and criminality (Adams, 2009; Kosut, 2006; Mangeya, 2014; Rokib & Sodiq, 2017) and those groups are often associated with having received less formal education. The language ability of these tattoo bearers contradicts the previous assumptions about tattoo bearers.

The following table and graph show the six most frequently cited languages in the survey. The most cited language was English, followed by Spanish. English consistently decreases as a second, third, fourth language etc. However, there are more cases of Spanish, German, Italian and Dutch as a third language than a second language.

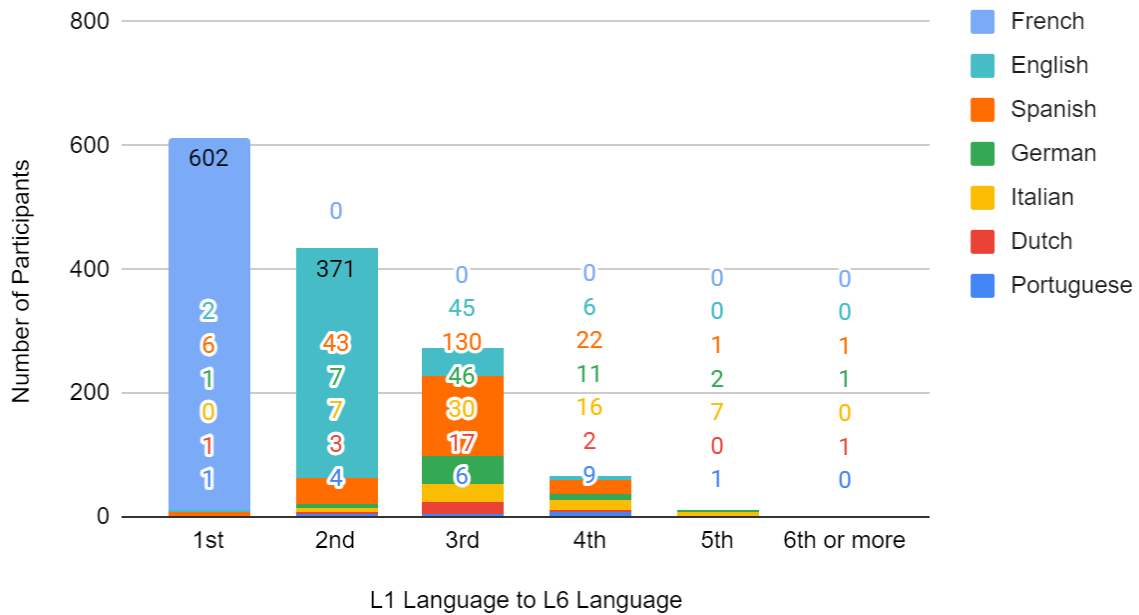
Table 58 Languages Cited in the Survey

Language	English	Spanish	German	Italian	Dutch	Portuguese	Total languages
1st (with French)	2	6	1	0	1	1	602
2nd	372	43	7	7	3	4	442
3rd	45	130	43	30	17	6	306
4th	6	22	11	16	2	9	95
5th	0	1	2	7	0	1	21
6th or more	0	1	1	0	1	0	19
Total in the corpus	424	203	68	60	23	16	X

One of the participants, TB432 who is a female of 26-30 years of age, indicated that her first language is French, but in the next question answered that they were more comfortable in English than in French. This suggests that language ability is not always directly linked to how comfortable someone feels in a language. The participant's tattoo reads *Let it be* which she explains is from a *Beatles'* song. This could be an indication of why the tattoo bearer feels they are more comfortable in English: through a love of music in English. This goes against previous research where the participants reported that they felt more 'real' and/or 'natural' in their L1 than in their L2 or L3 (Pavlenko, 2006, p. 18).

Graph 7 Other Languages Spoken

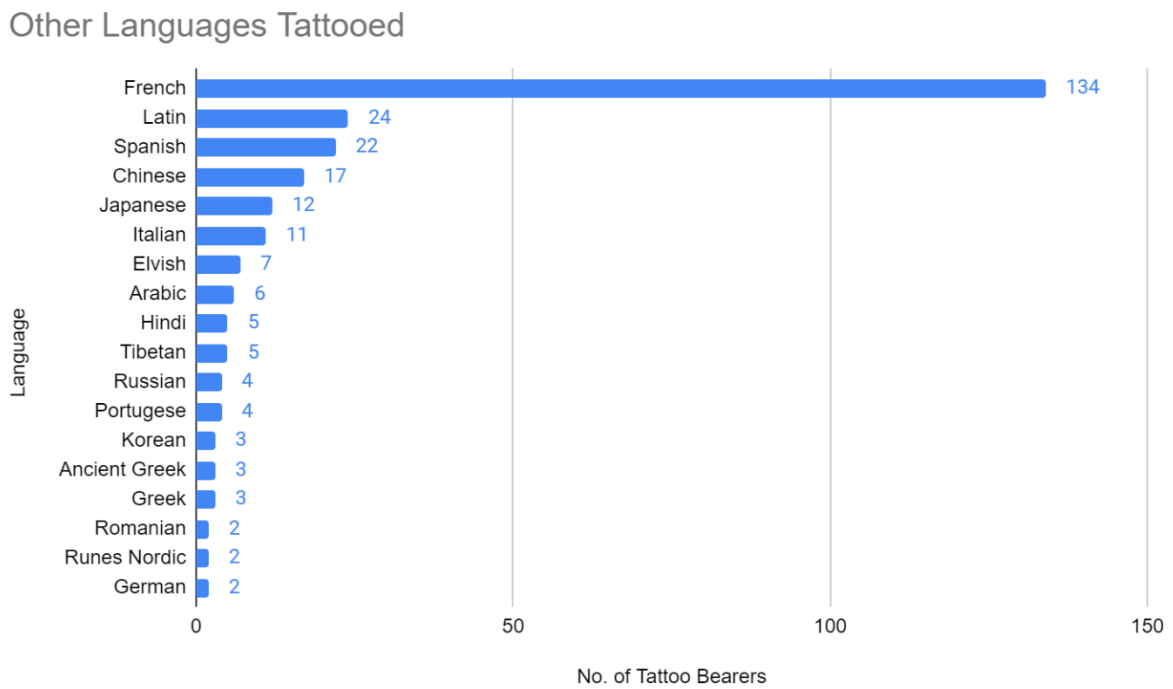
## Languages Spoken



The data shows that 61% of the participants cited English as their second language (n = 371). English is not only the most common second language, but also the second most common language spoken, after French, with 70% of the participants writing that they speak or understand English well enough to list it as a known language in the survey (n = 424). This data is based on the self-evaluated language abilities of the participants. The data reveals that 72% of the participants spoke a second language (n = 435), 45% spoke a third language (n = 274) and 11% spoke a fourth language (n = 66).

The data is also evidence that this group of tattoo bearers is interested in languages and has learnt two or more languages. This interest is also reflected on their bodies, of the 602 participants, 237 have more than just the English language tattooed. The tattoo bearers cite 36 languages, besides English, for their script tattoos. There is a total of 283 tattoos in a language other than English.

Graph 8 Other Languages Tattooed



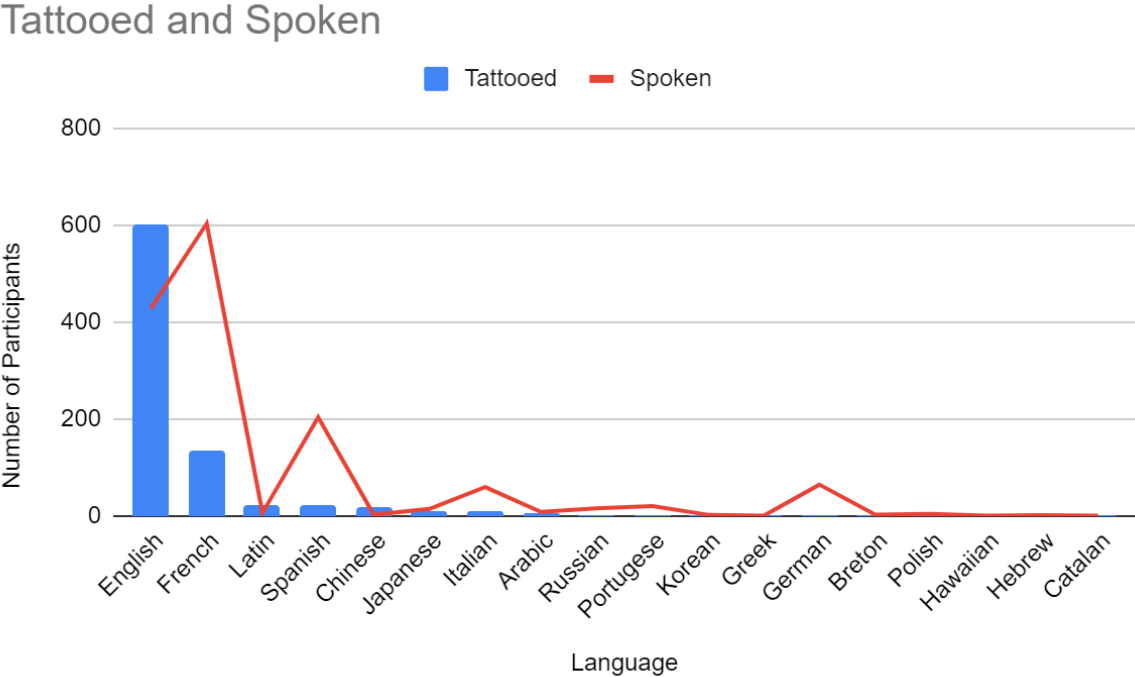
Graph 8 shows that French was the most popular language to be tattooed after English. This result is in part due to the researcher's post asking for script tattoos in English, however the initial survey contained 1,456 responses and therefore just under half of all the total participants had at least one script tattoo in English. Graph 8 only shows the languages that were cited more than once in the survey, however, a further seventeen languages were cited by just one participant each: see Figure 33.

Figure 33 Word Cloud of Languages



Of the seventeen languages above, three are fictional languages that were created for television series: Vulcan from *Star Trek*, Elvish from *The Lord of the Rings*, and Valyrian from the *Game of Thrones*. The tattooed languages differ slightly from the spoken languages. Eighteen languages are cited as being both spoken and being in a tattoo in both corpora.

Graph 9 Frequency of Languages Tattooed versus Spoken Languages



Graph 9 shows the number of people who speak one of the 18 languages versus the number of people who have one of the 18 languages tattooed on them. English and French are the top two most spoken and tattooed languages. Most of the languages are spoken more than tattooed, this could reflect the tattoo bearer’s preference for pictorial tattoos rather than script tattoos. For example: Spanish is spoken by 203 people but tattooed by 22. Italian is spoken by 60 people, but tattooed by 11. German is spoken by 65 people but only tattooed by two people. Latin is found in 24 people’s tattoos but only seven people say they speak it. Chinese is also tattooed by 17 people and only spoken by two. This further reinforces the group identity of the participants as being language enthusiasts, both on their bodies and on the tips of their tongues. Neither Graph 8 nor Graph 9 represent how many script tattoos there are, but rather how many people have a tattoo in each language. Table 59 shows the number of languages tattooed per participant.

Table 59 No. of Languages Tattooed per Participant versus Languages Spoken

	No. of Languages								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8+
Per Participant	Languages Tattooed	370	187	35	8	1	0	1	0
	Languages Spoken	248	80	209	54	9	1	1	1

The table shows that most participants have one language tattooed on their bodies and this decreases with each additional language. The person with the most languages tattooed has seven languages. The tattoos are in: English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Hebrew.

The tattooed language data can be compared to the number of languages spoken by participants. Almost as many participants speak one as speak three languages (n= 248 and n = 209). Whereas the number of people with one language tattooed (n = 370) is significantly higher than the people with three languages tattooed (n = 35). Comparing the two datasets side by side reveals that the participants express themselves more through speaking different languages than through being tattooed in different languages.

Reasons may be that speaking languages is less of a choice, if someone is brought up in a bilingual or trilingual household, they do not choose to learn the language but grow up in a multilingual environment. But they can then choose whether or not to put those languages on their skin. Another reason could be that speaking languages is for some people, a question of daily usage, whereas a tattoo is a (semi) permanent feature of the skin. Ghosh (2020) discredits the permanency of a tattoo writing that even ‘an undeletable tattoo terminates with the mortal body it is attached to’ (p. 295).

The fact that the tattoo bearers are interested in and able to speak other languages would suggest that they are open-minded towards other cultures and their way of thinking. As seen in the literature, it is difficult to separate learning a language and learning about another culture as many elements are intertwined and inseparable (Tinker, 2011). Müller (2012) suggests that tattoos from other cultures are a means of opening oneself up to other sources, influences and ways of thinking. The same logic could therefore be applied to script tattoos, having tattoos in another language is a way of showing one’s language ability and interest in other languages than our own.

### 5.5 Most Common Words and Phrases

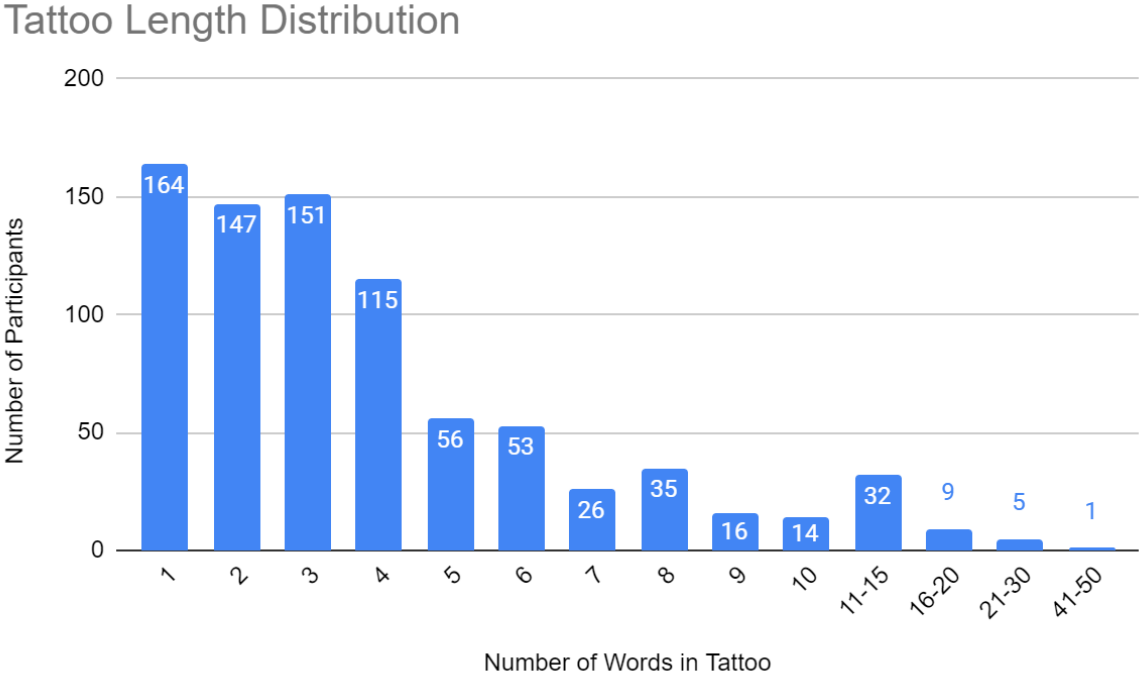
Tattoos can be one word or as many words as can be fitted on the human body. In order to study tattoos as tokens I will analyse them in two distinct groups: one-word tattoos and phrase tattoos. After focusing on the tattoos as tokens, section 5.5.2 and 5.5.3, I will explore the words as tokens in section 5.5.4: Individual Words.

The corpus created from the survey shows that a total of 79 tattoos had the same word or phrase as another tattoo. These tattoos were either a single word, or a phrase that the participant listed as a single item, for example the word *dream* (n = 6) or the phrase *let it be* (n = 4). The first part of this subsection will focus on the repeated one-word tattoos, the second part will focus on the repeated phrase tattoos.

#### 5.5.1 Tattoo Lengths

In this section, I will analyse the lengths of the script tattoos. As part of the analysis of the script tattoos, I counted the words used in each tattoo and created Graph 10. The lengths of the tattoos can be considered a way of assessing the language level of the tattoo bearers. Shorter tattoos are less likely to have grammatical errors and are often easier to understand. E.g. the one-word script tattoo *love* (TB603) versus the 11 word script tattoo *The life is short but my love to you is forever* (TB89).

Graph 10 Word Length of the Script Tattoos



Graph 10 illustrates the distribution of English script tattoos by number of words in a tattoo. The average number of words in the tattoos is 4.16 words. Whereas the modal



average of the tattoos is just one word long, 164 tattoos contained one word (19.9%). There is a slight rise around 11-15 words long, this is in part due to the grouping of the data.



According to Koller and Bullo’s (2012) definition, single word tattoos such as *alive*, *believe*, *care*, *sisters*, *witch*, *I* and so on, would be considered monomodal as there is only language. However, I would argue that in the example of tattoo bearer 455, even one-word tattoos can convey a multimodal message. The positioning of the word on the continuous line represents a heart monitoring machine and that the word *alive* suggests that the bearer’s heart is functioning. The placement of the word on the wrist is also significant, it is a place that the bearer can easily and regularly see. These factors lead me to believe that this tattoo, and the other text only tattoos, are not monomodal as many choices were made to create them.

The long tattoos (21 words and over) are mostly quotes and citations from English speaking contexts such as books, films, and songs. They are all examples of manifest intertextuality. The tattoo bearers explained that the quotes and lyrics chosen ‘*speak to them*’ and identify with parts of their life such as parenthood. Tattoo bearer 23 has the tattoos: *sometimes you’ve gotta fall before you fly* and *serenity, courage, wisdom*; they wrote that they chose English because ‘*ces mots me parlent tout simplement*’ [*these words simply speak to me*].

Table 60 Longest Script Tattoos

Word Count	Tattoo	Source	Reason
21	<i>I cheated myself like i knew i would i told you i was trouble but you know that i’m no good</i>	Song lyrics from I’m no good by Amy Winehouse	‘Refrain chanson amy winehouse et citation .J’ai en effet le portrait de amy winehouse tatoué sur ce bras dont le thème est londres .’  [Chorus of an Amy Winehouse song and a quote [in French] from Amy Winehouse. I have indeed Amy Winehouse tattooed on my arm where the theme is London]
24	<i>Boo, forever spinning like a ghost on the bottom of a top, I’m haunted by all the</i>	Boo, Forever, short poem	‘My native language is French and I have been living in England for 7 years. So both languages are important to me.’

	<i>space that I will live without you.</i>	<i>by Richard Brautigan</i>	
24	<i>I've been walking, I've been waiting, in the shadows, for my time, I've been searching, I've been living for the tomorrows, all my life</i> (Additional tattoos: <i>Alive &amp; Free, Embrace your dark side to let your sun shine through, Black roses, Fallen Angel</i> )	<i>Chorus from the song In the Shadows by the Rasmus</i>	<i>'J'aime cette langue, je trouve quelle sonne bien a l'oreille et limite la compréhension de mes tatouages par les autres (je vis en France) .</i> <i>J'ai choisi ces phrases soit parce que soit c'est moi que les ai écrite car elle reflète ma personnalité et mes pensées soit parce qu'elles sont issues de chansons qui me parlent.'</i>  <i>[I like this language, I find it sounds better and limits who understands my tattoos (I live in France) I chose phrases that were either written by me because they reflect my personality and my thoughts or because they come from songs which speak to me.]</i>
26	<i>My insecurities could eat me alive. But when I see my baby, suddenly I'm not crazy. It all make sense when I look into his eyes.</i>	<i>Song lyrics from Hailie's Song by Eminem</i>	<i>'C'est un extrait tire du titre "Hailie's song" de Eminem, artiste que j'adore qui a écrit cette chanson pour sa fille. J'aime beaucoup la signification. Encore plus depuis que j'ai eu mon fils.'</i>  <i>[It's an extract from the song "Hailie's song" by Eminem, an artist that I love who wrote the song for his daughter. I like the meaning a lot. Even more since I had my son.]</i>
29	<i>I am alpha and omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. Revelation 21:6</i>	<i>Bible verse 21:6 from the book of Revelations</i>	<i>'tire de fallout 3 qui l'a tiré de la bible, je trouvais ça en jetait. ^^'</i>  <i>[from fallout 3 which took it from the Bible, I thought it was pretty cool.]</i>
43	<i>I feel high at the start of the night I see the bright fire when I look at the sky I might dream hard with the beat of the drum I can't hold back now the time is come. We stand strong.</i>	<i>Opening verse from Stand Strong by Sub Zero Project featuring Meccah Dawn</i>	<i>'15 ans de ma vie'</i>  <i>[15 years of my life]</i>

The longest tattoo is 43 words long. It is the opening verse of a song by Sub Zero Project featuring Meccah Dawn.<sup>73</sup> The table above suggests that the longer the phrase,

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<sup>73</sup> Sub Zero Project is a Dutch duo that creates predominantly English language music. Mecca or Meccah Dawn is a North American singer songwriter.

the more likely the phrase is taken from an English-speaking context i.e. an English language film, song, or book. The tattoos that are inspired by other texts and are *copied* from other texts are examples of ‘manifest intertextuality’. Manifest intertextuality is a term coined by Fairclough (1993) to describe texts that have overtly drawn their content from other texts. The use of manifest intertextuality in the tattoo corpus will be discussed further in section 5.6.1: Popular Culture. The tattoo that was inspired by the Eminem song, *Hailie’s song*, is an example of constitutive intertextuality whereby the pronoun *her* was changed to *his* as the script tattoo was written for a son not a daughter (*Eminem – Hailie’s Song*, n.d.).

**5.5.2 One-Word Tattoos**

One-word tattoos are the most frequent length of tattoos, if using a modal average. There is a total of 164 one-word tattoos. The most frequently tattooed one-word tattoos in this corpus are *family*, *hope*, and *love* (n = 11).

*Table 61 Most Popular Single Word Tattoos*

<i>One-word Script Tattoo</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
<i>Family, Hope, Love</i>	11
<i>Freedom</i>	7
<i>Dream(s), Sister(s), Dad</i>	6
<i>Always, Mom</i>	5
<i>Alone, Believe, Brother, Free</i>	3
<i>Bitch, Faith, Memories, Princess(s), Queen, Smile, Strong, Warrior</i>	2
<i>Alive, Angel, Animals, Atheist, Be Youtiful, Blessed, Blondie, Bloom, Breathe, Broken, Care, Childhood, Cure, Cursed, Damaged, Dark, Death, Demon, Destiny, Endlessly, Ephemera, Escape, Fallen, Firework, Forever, Forevermore, Friends, Fuck, Game, Handmade, Happiness, Hate, Hell, Joy, Liberty, Life, Light, Lust, Madness, Moon, Neverland, Nevermind, Nevermore, Nightmare, Promise, Proud, Remember, Rise, Rock, Sadly, Scandal, Silence, Sloth, Slut, Slytherin, Strength, Struggle, Success, Sunlight, Surrender, Truth, Uncle, Victory, Void, What ?, Wild, Will, Witch, Wonderlust, Wyld</i>	1
<i>Type Total = 91</i>	<i>Token Total = 164</i>

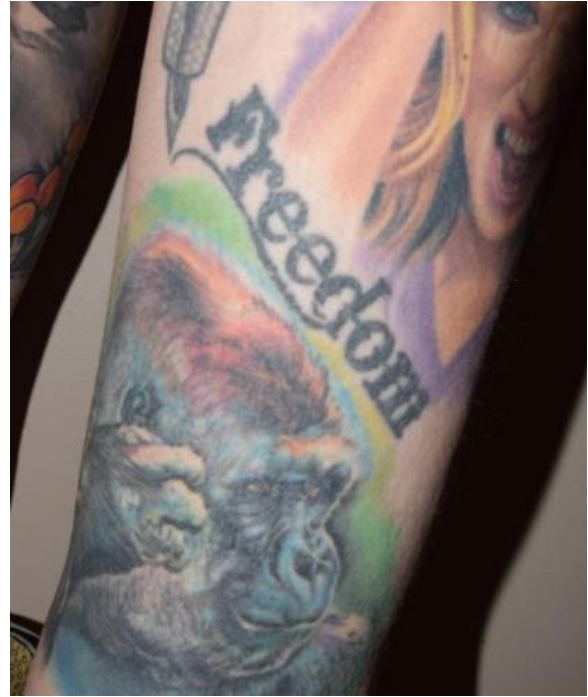
Table 61 above shows the most repeated one-word tattoos which account for 70 of one-word tattoos. However, having the same word does not limit the creativity that the tattoo bearers display in their one-word tattoos.

*A comparison of two tattoos with the same word*

Image 283 Tattoo Bearer 296



Image 284 Tattoo Bearer 305



The word *freedom* appears in seven script tattoos as a single word. Tattoo bearers 296 and 305 both have the word freedom, but the tattoos are unique in font, size, body placement, and accompanying images. Both women write that the word freedom is important to them, tattoo bearer 305 writes that freedom is a '*valeur fondamentale*' [core value] for her whereas tattoo bearer 296 wrote that '*ce mot et cette phrase ont une grande résonance en moi*' [this word and phrase resonate with me greatly].<sup>74</sup>

The two tattoos are examples of multimodality and individuality, tattoo bearer 296 links her tattoo to a dandelion whose seeds are blowing away in the wind amongst the birds. Whilst tattoo bearer 305 associates her tattoo to writing through the image of a pen. This shows how one word can be understood and presented by different people. Koller and Bullo (2019) also find that despite similar experiences inspiring a tattoo, they write that 'it seems that the complexity and variability of feelings and mental states that living with serious medical conditions brings with it do not lend themselves to a single, permanent tattoo' (p. 15), this diversity is seen throughout this study.

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<sup>74</sup> Tattoo bearer 296's second tattoo reads *Love is stronger than death*.

The most popular one-word tattoos: *family*, *hope*, and *love* are shared by 11 tattoo bearers. The script tattoo *family* is worn by seven females and four males, five of those tattoo bearers are between 20 and 30 years of age. The script tattoo *hope* is worn by seven females, two males, and two people who identify with both sexes. The word *hope* is worn by seven people aged 21 to 30 years of age. A similar distribution is also seen in the script tattoo *love*. Of the ten tattoo bearers who have the word *love*, seven are female, two were men and one preferred not to give their gender. The participants were also mainly in their twenties (n = 7).

This suggests that tattoo bearers that have positive one-word tattoos have a tendency to be female and in their twenties. The trend is reduced with the script tattoo *freedom*. There are seven tattoo bearers with the word *freedom*, four were female and three were male – considering that in this study 75% of the participants are female this suggests that the script tattoo *freedom* is favoured by males rather than females. However, the script tattoo is still shared by seven tattoo bearers who are twenty to thirty years old.

Of the 207 tattoo bearers who are 31 and above, 22 of them had a one-word tattoo. The 22 tattoo bearers share a total of 34 script tattoos. There were 90 tattoo bearers aged 30 and under with a total of 164 script tattoos. The mean average of tattoo bearers 30s and under with a one-word tattoo is 1.8, whilst the mean average of the 31-year-olds and over is 1.5. From this select dataset, it suggests that one-word tattoos might not be favoured by one age group over another.

### **5.5.3 Phrase Tattoos**

The following table presents the seven most popular phrase tattoos. The phrase tattoos consist of two or more words. The most popular phrases were *stay strong* (n = 11), *believe in your dreams* (n = 9), and *never give up* (n = 8).

Table 62 Most Popular Phrase Tattoos

Script Tattoo (Slight variations have been grouped together in this table)	Number of Occurrences
<i>Stay Strong</i>	11
<i>Believe In Your Dreams</i>	9
<i>Never Give Up</i>	8
<i>Never Grow Up</i>	6
<i>One Love, Once Upon A Time, Never A Failure, Always A Lesson</i>	5
<i>Let it be, We're all mad here, Only God can judge me</i>	4
<i>One life, Follow your heart, One life one chance, After all this time? Always..., If you can dream it you can do it</i>	3
<i>Bad bitch, Be yourself, Cry baby, Forever Young, Love yourself, Mischief Managed, Never Again, Never Forget, Nobody's perfect, Stay true, Think positive, Thug life, True Love, You Can, Born to die, Follow your dreams, Forever and ever, I love you, Just a dream, Life goes on, Live laugh love, Never back down, Never look back, Never lose hope, Nobody is perfect, People always leave, Trust no one, Dad, I love you, Death doesn't stop love, May we meet again, Remember who you are, Think less live more, True love never dies, Everything happens for a reason, Get rich or Die tryin, No time for the regret, To the moon and back, Happiness is only real when shared, Where life begins love never ends, Sometimes you've gotta fall before you fly, Do not dream your life, live your dreams, I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul.</i>	2
Total Repeated Inscriptions = 255 570 Script Tattoos are not repeated and can be found in the appendices	

The most tattooed phrase was *stay strong*, and it was shared by nine females and two participants who preferred not to answer the question of gender. The tattoo bearers ranged from being a teenager to 41-45 years of age, and four of these tattoo bearers were aged 21-25. This suggests that this phrase is favoured by women and associated with femininity by tattoo bearers. There was one male tattoo bearer who had the phrase *always stay strong*. The use of *always* was potentially the modification necessary for the male tattoo bearer to de-feminise the phrase. Koller and Bullo (2019) find eight script tattoos with the words *strong* or *strength*, they consider the tattoos as 'self-directed imperatives, where the wearer requests herself to "stay strong"' (p. 9).

The participants explained that they chose the phrase *stay strong* because it represents their history and battles in life (n = 6), as a reminder to stop self-harming (n = 3), one person wrote that it was prettier in English, and one wrote that the meaning was personal. Placement of the phrase was also important to one of the tattoo bearers, tattoo bearer 301 chose to have one word on each wrist to stop her from self-harming again in the future. Tattoo bearer 460 chose to have her tattoo on her collarbone, this area of the body will be visible for her when she chooses. She writes that the tattoo is for herself: to tell her to continue being strong and that now she is no longer a minor, she is the only person in charge of her life. Tattoo bearer 478 also has the tattoo *stay strong* because of a poor relationship with their parents.



The second most tattooed phrase, *believe in your dreams*, was written in several forms. The various forms are based on the spellings given by the participants, I was not able to contact the tattoo bearers to ask them about the spellings or for a photograph. Therefore, it is unclear whether they have the phrase *believe in your dreams* tattooed on their bodies or the phrases that they wrote in the survey. If the tattoo reads *believe in your dreams*, the question remains as to why they did not write it the same on the survey. The presence of inconsistencies in the corpus is discussed more in section 3.6.3: Data Anomalies in the Tattoo Corpus.

Table 63 Variants of 'Believe in Your Dreams'

Tattoo All [UNCHK]	<i>believe in your <b>dreams</b></i>	<i>believe in your <b>dream</b></i>	<i>believe <b>on</b> your dreams</i>	<i><b>belive</b> in your dream</i>	<i><b>bélie</b>r in your dream</i>
Frequency	4	2	1	1	1

The table above shows that of the nine script tattoos, two were missing the 's'. One script tattoo had the preposition *on* instead of *in*, and two of the script tattoos had the word *believe* spelt incorrectly, this could be either on the person's skin or just in the online survey. I was not able to contact the tattoo bearers to verify the phrases or ask for a photograph.

The importance of the accuracy of the responses to the survey may not have been clear to all the participants, for example, one participant wrote that their tattoo was the chorus of a song but did not write the words out in the survey. The last variant is most probably due to the participant using a French keyboard to answer the survey. The auto-correct function automatically changes words to the closest correctly spelt word in the language of the user's phone. Evidence of this has been seen in several of the script tattoos. For example, tattoo bearer 314 wrote that their script tattoos are *promise* and *no friend's fort a sister* and gave the following translations: *promesse* and *aucun*

*ami ne vaut une sœur* [no friend is worth a sister]. I can therefore presume the intended phrase, but I cannot be sure of the exact tattooed phrase.

The participants who share the phrase, or a version of the phrase, were mainly female (n = 7) there was also one male and one person who preferred not to answer. All the participants who gave an explanation wrote that the phrases were related to their past and that they believed in their dreams as indicated in the tattoo. This would suggest that this phrase, *stay strong*, is tattooed by females more often than males.

This trend continues with the phrase, *never give up*, the third most tattooed phrase. There are 7 females with the tattoo *never give up* and one male and six of the tattoo bearers are also aged between 21-25 years of age. Six of the tattoo bearers write that they chose these words because they represented their personal story and life choices. The same reasoning and results can be seen in the next most tattooed phrases: *never grow up* (n = 6), half of the participants were 21-25 years of age, and all but one of the participants wrote that their tattoo was linked to their personal life, past and/or present.

As the survey was answered by mainly females (75%), the results are not an accurate representation of the distinction between genders. The results from this section suggest that the phrases that are most tattooed in this corpus are mainly worn by females in their 20s and are related to their life story / personal identity. The theme of life story and self-representation will be explored more in section 5.6.2.

#### **5.5.4 Individual Words**

After having analysed the script tattoos as a whole, I reviewed the words on an individual basis. Instead of taking the tattoo *be yourself* and analysing it as one datum, it will be divided into two data and analysed separately. This will allow me to focus on the script tattoo corpus from a different perspective.



Table 64 List of Repeated Words in the Script Tattoos

Word (Unlemmatised)	Total Occurrences
The	100
You	84
A/ Love	72
Is	69
Never	66
I	60
My	63
Life	54
To	52
And, Your	49
Me	45
Of	41
In	40
Live	33
Dream	32
One	30
Always, Be, Not	28
Are	27
All, Die, It	24
For	23
Can, Hope, If	22
Up	21
Strong	20
Dreams	19
Forever	18
Family, Time	17
On, Only, Just, Stay, We	16
Believe, Heart	14
There, You're	13
Free, Give	12
But, Dad, Do, Freedom, Where, World	11
Am, Back, Death, Don't, Free	10
Am, Bad, Dad, Every, Forget, Make, Mom, Nothing, Yourself	9
Follow, Here, Go, Judge, Know, Let, Stop, Until, Who	8
Alive, By, Day, Failure, Fuck Good, Lesson, Mad, Makes, Own, See, Than, Think, Too, True	7
Again, Alone, Doesn't, Devil, Dies, Ever, Fight, Grow, Happiness, Keep, Light, Look, Made, More, Stronger, Us, Was, Way	6
Beautiful, Been, Before, Bitch, Chance, Come, Everything, Fly, Get, Goes, Happens, Hard, Has, Have, Hell, Lose, Memories, Moon, Need, Perfect, Queen, Reality, Remember, Ride, Side, Sister, Sometimes, Spirit, Still, Things, Upon, Wild	5
About, An, Because, Better, Breathe, Cry, Game, Girl, Laugh, Learn, Leave, Mind, Pain, Nobody, Now, Real, Right, Scar, So, Soul, Tell, They, Today, Tomorrow,	4
Afraid, After, Another, Baby, Begins, Best, Body, Born, Breath, Brother, Captain, Care, Crazy, Dark, Days, Does, Down, Else, End, Ends, Everyone, Eyes, Different, Fall, Feel, Faith, Hate, He, Hurts, Kill, Lies, Living, Memory, Mum, Music, Over, Part, Past, People, Regrets, Rich, Rise, Show, Skin, Smile, Sorry, Strength, Story, Surrender, Take, Thug, Times, Trust, Wanna, Without, Would, Young, Yesterday,	3
Against, Art, Beat, Bed, Beyond, Cancer, Carry, Choices, Cure, Cruelty, Demon, Each, Fast, Fate, First, Flowers, Fucking, Gone, Gotta, Heaven, Impossible, Infinity, Lifestyle, Little, Lessons, Lust, Matters, Madness, Master, Men, Might, Mine, Monster, Open, Old, Peace, Princess, Playing, Positive, Pretty, Promise, Reason, Roses, Sadly, Said, Second, Shine, Silence, Sisters, Sky, Someone, Stand, Thone, Very, Worst, Yet	2

According to the data in this corpus study, the most frequent words tattooed in English, after functional words such as *the, a, I, you are love* (n = 72), *never* (n = 66), followed by *life* (n = 54), *live* (n = 32), *dream* (n = 32), *always* (n = 28), *die* (n = 24), *hope* (n = 22), *strong* (n = 20), *dreams* (n = 19), and *forever* (n = 18). I have decided to focus on the four words: *love, never, life* and *live*, as the words: *family, dreams, strong*, and *hope* are analysed in section 5.5.2.

#### 5.5.4.1 Love

The word *love* is featured in 72 script tattoos, 21 of those phrases are shared by more than one tattoo bearer, see Table 65.

Table 65 Script Tattoos Containing the Word Love

Phrase	Frequency	
Love	11	
One Love	5	
Death doesn't / does not stop love, Love never dies	3	
Love Yourself, True Love, I love you, Live Laugh Love, True love never(s) dies	2	
All I need is love, All I need is your love, Faith Hope Love, Fight the devil with this things called love, Fuck love, Love always love, No lies just love, One life one love, Self love, Thug love, Forever in my love-life-family, Family, where life begins and love never ends, where life begins love never ends, Dad i love you, Fuck you and love you, Mum i love you, Love is enough, Love is pain, Love is strange, Love is stronger than death, Be Happy ! Love me for who i am, Love me or leave me, If you love me tell if I cry, confort me but if I die don't follow me, The greatest things you'll ever learn is just to love and be loved in return, I am and become love in spirit and communication, I love you mum, I love you to the moon and back, Laugh as much as you breathe love as long as you life, Only love can keep someone alive, My first love daddy, Love hurts, Nothing can stop love not even death, One love one mode, Where there is love, there is life, The life is short but my love to you is forever, maman, toi know I love you, you're the Queen of my heart, Love your madness, Love yourself first. NO LOVE, ENDLESS LOVE	1	
With lemmas: n = 74 (Detroit lover, No Body Loves Me)		
	Unlemmatised	Lemmatised
Love as a noun	40	41
Love as a verb	21	22
Love unidentified ('Love')	11	11

Of the 72 script tattoos that contain the word *love*, 25 were about love in general, for example: *love, one love, love is enough*. The second biggest theme in the script tattoos about love was a negative association with love, in these examples: the devil, pain, strangeness, death and so on (n = 9). Tattoo bearer 57 explains that they have the tattoo *fuck you and love you* because it represents love for them: '*car je préfère cette écriture et ce que l'amour pour moi*'. Tattoo bearer 446 has the script tattoo *love is strange* and explains that the phrase is a mix between *life is strange* and *love is pain* from the television show *Orange is the New Black*. This is an example of constitutive intertextuality. The tattoo bearer has combined two phrases to create their own phrase which represents what love is for them.

The second biggest group includes the tattoos that are focused on grief (n = 11). Tattoo bearer 329 writes that their tattoo is for all the people in their life who have died, both friends and family. Tattoo bearer 390 also has a tattoo for the loss of two people, in this case their grandmother and their first love. Tattoo bearer 361 has the tattoo *Love Never Dies* following her father's suicide, whilst tattoo bearer 537 has the same tattoo for the loss of her friend during surgery. Finally, tattoo bearer 284 has the phrase *Only love can keep someone alive* but does not attribute it to a specific person but rather people in general without love: *'pour moi une personne sans amour, meurt.'* Tattoo bearer 296 has the tattoo *LOVE IS STRONGER THAN DEATH*. She does not write that her tattoo is an homage, but that it resonates with her. The phrase is followed by a cross which is often used to symbolise death, this further suggests that the script tattoo is in honour of a lost loved one.

Image 286 Tattoo Bearer 296



The presence of the cross which is symbolic in Christianity could be an indication that this phrase was inspired by a biblical reference. In the Song of Solomon 8:6, the verse reads: 'Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame.' Therefore, this script tattoo could be an example of constitutive intertextuality if the original phrasing was taken from the Bible.

The next biggest theme in the script tattoos containing the word love is that of self-love (n = 8). The tattoo bearers either use a first-person pronoun to refer to themselves: *All I need is love* and *Love me for who I am*, or they use a pronoun in the second person to talk to themselves: *Love yourself first* and *love your madness*. Tattoo bearer 126 explains that her tattoo is a message to herself to give her confidence: *'car c'est une phrase qui m'inspire et qui me donne confiance en moi'*. The use of personal

pronouns is explored in section 5.5.5.3 and the theme of messages and mantras is explored in section 5.6.4.

Script tattoos containing the word *love* about family or a family member are the next biggest identifiable group (n = 7). There are three script tattoos that are about love for a mother, two for a father, and two for family in general. This can be contrasted with the three tattoos that appear to be about a romantic partner: *true love*, *I love you*, and *I love you to the moon and back*. Not all the tattoo bearers wrote the intended recipient of their declaration of love. Tattoo bearer 203 wrote that her tattoo, *true love never dies* is for her husband whilst tattoo bearer 403 has *true love* and it was inspired by a friend: *‘Car c’étais plus joli et que c’était une phrase qu’un ami disait souvent.’* Tattoo bearer 6 explains that their tattoo *All i need is your love* is for all of their loved ones, not just a romantic partner or their family: *‘Parce que j’ai besoin de l’amour de mes proches.’*

#### 5.5.4.2 Never

The word *never* is featured in 33 individual script tattoos and a further 10 phrases that are repeated more than once in the corpus (n = 33); *never* is not found written alone. See Table 66 for the repeated phrases using the word *never*.

Table 66 Use of the Word Never in the Script Tattoos

Tattoo	Frequency
<i>Never give up</i>	8
<i>Never grow up</i>	6
<i>Never a failure always a lesson</i>	5
<i>Never again, Never forget, Never back down, Never look back, True love never(s) dies, Love never dies, Never lose hope</i>	2
<i>Whatever happens Never give up your dream, Always a lesson. Never a failure, Artists never die, Soulmates never Die, BABE NEVER DIE, WE’LL NEVER DIE, The hope never dies, Never stop dreaming, Never stop Fighting, Never stop growing, Family, where life begins and love never ends, where life begins love never ends, Never surrender, I’ll never surrender, Never be afraid to be afraid, Since you have gone to heaven angels have never been so beautiful, The biggest fish in the river gets that way by never being caught, There is a light that never goes out, Tomorrow never happens, You never know how You are strong until you strong remain, Never leave me, The heart never lies, Princess princesse never mine que sa peut te foutre, Folies are the only things you will never regrets, Never say die, Without the dark we’d never see the start, You only live once than it’s Never too late, Never un my heart, Sometimes I forgive, I never forget – always believe, Never forget 09 11 2001, Never forget the past, I will never forget you, Never forget your freedom</i>	1

As with the most popular tattoos, the overall message seen in the phrases using the word *never* are mantras and mottos. They are messages of guidance from the tattoo bearer to themselves. One respondent explained that they had chosen the phrase *never give up* following an eating disorder, they wanted to remind themselves of this phrase and chose to have it in English because when she got the tattoo when she was very young and it sounded better in English at that point (TB397).

The repeated use of the word *never* makes it a keyword but does not show how it is used in the tattoos. Therefore, it is important to analyse the keywords in context, or what P. Baker (2004) calls *clusters*. *Never* on its own is a negative word, whereas in context it can be used as a positive, motivational word: *never give up*. In Table 66, of the eleven repeated phrases, four are motivational, three are about love, three are about the past, and one is about the future. Similarly, the word *dream(s)* can be seen on its own (n = 4) but is most tattooed as part of the short sentence *believe on/in your dream(s)* (n = 9) or other longer sentences such as *If you can dream it, you can do it* (n = 4).

### 5.5.4.3 Life and Live

The word *love*, as both a noun and a verb, is the fourth most used word in the corpus. However, when counted as a noun and a verb it is used less than the verbs *live* and *die*. The most used noun is *life*, which is used 54 times and the verb *live* is also the most used verb (n = 33).

Table 67 Occurrences of Life and Live

Life	Both	Live	Frequency
One life		/	4
/	Don't/do not dream(s) your life, Life/live your dream(s)	/	3
One/Une life, one chance, Life goes on,	/	Live your dreams, Think less live more, Live laugh/love	2
Basketball changed my life, Chaos IS my life, for ever alone, thug life, Happiness is not a destination, it's a way of life, Hip-Hop as a way of life, I'm not playing with death, I'm playing with life, I've been searching, I've been living For tomorrows, all my life, More than my own life, Music is life, ride for life, Singing it's my life, Thug life, Where there is love, there is life, you are the spirit of my mind the breath of my life, You gave me life, Life,	Don't be afraid, live your life, So live a life you will remember, If we admit that human live can be ruled by reason then all	Breathe live, just live, Laugh as much as you breathe and love as long as you live, live and let live, Ride to live, Far from the heart, protect the dormez where i live, monsters are real, and ghosts are real too. They live inside us and sometimes they win, If you don't live for something you will die for nothing, Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow, Y live for you memory, too weird to live but too rare to	1

<p><i>Forever in my skin love-life-family, Life is a bitch, Smile because life is a joke, Life is brutal, enjoy! Life is gamble, my life is nothing without you, our life is now, My Life Is sadly beautiful, The life is short but my love to your is forever, life is the symptom death is the cure, Family, where life begins and love never ends, where life begins love never ends, Life isn't about finding shelter in the storm, My life isn't made of failures by if Lessines, Make life a dream and dream a reality, Life doesn't promise a bed of roses, My life for theirs, I am alpha and omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. Revelation 21:6, Nobody dies Virgin. Life fucks us all. Dream your life in colour. MY LIFE MY CHOICES MY MISTAKES MY LESSONS, One life one, Life would not be worth being lived if theme was no second chance, Life free,</i></p>	<p><i>possibility if life is destroy</i></p>	<p><i>die, Dream as if you'll live forever, live as if you'll Die today, Live free, To live is to die, Nothing else matters, It is better to die standing to live kniss on the ground. You only live once, you only live once than it's Never too late, ride to live live to ride, remember yesterday think about tomorrow but live today, Live while you can, Boo, forever spinning like a ghost on the bottom of a top, I'm haunted by all the space that I will live without you.</i></p>	
N = 45	N = 9	N =28	
<p><i>(Guaranteed) grumpy not just a mood it's a lifestyle, Stupid lifestyle, Not in this lifetime,</i></p>	<p><i>Create your life by living your dreams</i></p>	<p><i>Alive, Everything that kills makes me feel alive, Pain is good makes you feel alive, Here is the thanks to the monster who did not succeed in swallowing me alive, I've been searching, I've been living For tomorrows, all my life, Life would not be worth being lived if thème was no second chance, My insecurities could eat alive. But when I see my baby, suddenly I'm not crazy. It all makes sense when I look into his eyes. Alive &amp; Free, I olive you</i></p>	Lemmas
N = 48	N = 10	N = 37	

The script tattoos containing the words *life* and *live* are generally a comment about the bearer's life as opposed to life in general. There are 17 script tattoos that describe the person's life, e.g., *basketball changed my life* and *Hip-Hop as a way of life*. The tattoo bearers align their passions with life: *ride to live live to ride*, but also describe their pain: *life is brutal*. In these inscriptions, tattoo bearers use their tattoos to communicate both positive and negative feelings towards life. This is also present in the script tattoos that affirm the notion of mortality such as: *I'm not playing with death, I'm playing with life* and *life is the symptom but death is the cure* (n = 15). In addition, there are 10 script tattoos that associate *life* with a loved one or family, including: *you gave me life* and *where there is love, there is life*.

**5.5.5 Part of Speech and Semantics**

The previous sections concentrated on the semantic analysis, whereby the occurrences are classified according to their meaning. This section focuses on the grammatical analysis of the corpus: the tattoos will be categorised according to their grammatical features, which I refer to as parts of speech (see appendices for the full list).

To begin, the phrase will be divided into individual words. The individual words are then categorised as: nouns, adjectives, verbs, prepositions, or adverbs etc. For example: the tattoo *'I love you'*, will be reduced to *'I'*, *'Love'* and *'You'*, *'I'* is a personal pronoun, *'Love'* is a verb in the present tense, and *'You'* is a personal pronoun. The verbs are also divided into infinitives, base forms or tense forms, *love (v)* can be seen in the following forms for example: *love, loves, loving, or loved*. *Love (n)* as a noun is seen as both *love* and *lover*.

*Table 68 Examples of Part of Speech*

<i>Tattoo</i>	<i>Individual words</i>	<i>Part of Speech</i>	<i>Verb Tense</i>
<i>I love you</i>	<i>I</i> <i>Love</i> <i>You</i>	<i>Pronoun</i> <i>Verb</i> <i>Pronoun</i>	<i>-</i> <i>Present tense</i> <i>-</i>

In the corpus, thirteen words can be labelled in one or two categories. The word *struggle* can be either a noun and a verb. The word *void* can be an adjective, noun, or verb. Where possible, I referred to the corpus and the translation provided by the participant. If no translation was given, the word was allocated the category for example: *adjective or noun*. All past participles were counted as a verb rather than an adjective to prioritise form over function.

Table 69 Full Word Length Distribution of Semantic Categories

825	Verb	Verb or Noun	Adjective	Noun	Adverb	Personal pronoun	Pronoun	Interjection	Number	Preposition	Conjunction	Determiner	French	Acronym	Genitive	Onomatopoeia	Unidentified	Letters
total	844	13	236	818	336	412	85	2	36	291	112	240	51	4	6	2	24	1
30-50 words	33	0	5	21	9	22	1	0	1	14	3	14	0	0	0	0	0	0
21-30 words	24	0	4	8	6	21	3	0	1	12	3	11	0	0	0	1	1	0
16-20 words	40	0	4	12	7	19	5	0	0	8	14	8	4	1	0	0	0	0
11-15 words	106	0	24	61	40	69	10	0	1	41	24	25	13	0	0	0	2	1
10 words	35	0	9	24	10	12	3	0	0	15	4	15	5	0	0	0	0	0
9 words	44	0	8	20	15	11	13	0	1	14	11	6	0	0	1	0	3	0
8 words	72	0	16	55	25	46	16	0	1	21	17	25	2	0	0	0	1	0
7 words	57	0	10	47	17	22	6	0	2	22	3	13	7	0	0	0	3	0
6 words	67	0	16	82	32	24	6	0	2	31	7	42	1	0	1	0	2	0
5 words	73	0	24	61	25	36	4	1	2	20	9	29	4	0	0	0	4	0
4 words	90	0	24	111	45	63	5	0	10	46	7	34	8	2	0	0	6	0
3 words	122	0	25	100	70	49	8	0	4	42	9	9	6	0	3	0	1	0
2 words	61	2	53	105	27	17	4	0	11	5	1	9	1	1	1	0	0	0
1 word	20	11	14	111	8	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0

Table 69 shows the total distribution of the words in their respective semantic categories. The most frequently used part of speech are verbs ( $n = 844$ ) followed by nouns ( $n = 818$ ). Thirteen words could be categorised as either a verb or noun.

In this table all French words have been grouped into one column: French, this represents the hybrid phrases containing French. The 51 words include French words such as *Pichouline*, in the script tattoo *Pichouline forever* and potential typographical or autocorrect errors such as the *à* in the script tattoo: *à little more each day*. I have decided not to include these words in the English language categories as they are not the focus of this study. However, the tattoos containing French words will be analysed in either the section 5.5.6: Errors or section 5.7.5: Word Play and Hybridity.

### 5.5.5.1 Verb Forms

As a means of analysing the linguistic ability and range in the script tattoo corpus, this part focuses on the use of verbs, firstly through an exploration of the forms used, then the verbs themselves. Of the 825 phrases, 461 contained a verb. Each phrase has been analysed, and the verb forms used have been identified in the phrases, as seen in Table 69.



Certain categories have been combined due to the nature of the tattoos. The one-word tattoos containing a singular verb are often in the past participle or the simple past, for example: *cursed* and *damaged*. The verbs where there is no context available have been assigned to the category: unknown. Tattoo bearer 14 has the word *blessed* and gives the translation *blessor*, he does not write that he speaks English in the survey and therefore this could be an error in translation. Tattoo bearer 180 has five script tattoos in English including the one-word tattoo *cursed* which she translates as *Maudite*. The tattoo is on her lower abdomen to represent her incurable gynaecological illness.

Image 287 Tattoo Bearer 423



In the tattoo: *Damaged*, tattoo bearer 423 explains that she has poor health and therefore uses the word *Damaged* to remind herself to accept who she is and that despite her problems she has a good life. The concept of pain and damage is added to by the use of the colour red which could represent blood, and suggest that the tattoo has been carved into the bearer's wrist and that the tattoo is bleeding the word *damaged*.

*'...j'ai une santé fragile donc je trouvais important comme acceptation que oui, je suis endommagée mais je le vis bien.'*

*[...I have poor health and so I found it important to accept that yes, I'm damaged but I live with it.]*

The word *damaged* is the spelling for the adjective, the past simple, and the past participle of the verb. The script tattoo *Damaged* could be an adjective describing the bearer or a past simple verb describing what happened to the bearer. In this case, I have categorised it as a past participle. Script tattoos containing more than one verb form are counted in both or all of the respective categories.

Table 70 Examples of Script Tattoos by Verb Form

Verb Form	Script Tattoo	Number of Verbs
Present Simple	Death <b>is</b> the cure	283
Imperative	<b>Don't</b> worry <b>be</b> happy	238
Infinitive	To live is to die	40
Modals (can/might/may)	You <b>can</b>	28
Past Simple	Nobody <b>said</b> it <b>was</b> easy	24
Gerund	<b>Singin</b> it's m'y life	24
Passive	<b>Made</b> by mom	17
Future (will / 'll/ going to)	<b>I'll</b> never surrender	16
Present Continuous	If we die, we're <b>taking</b> you with us	9
Present Perfect	Since you <b>have gone</b> to heaven angels <b>have never been</b> so beautiful	8
Past Participle	<b>Damaged</b>	8
Noun or Verb (Lack of context)	Surrender	7
Conditional	Without the dark we'd never see the stars	4

The present simple tense is the most used verb form and accounts for 283 of the verbs in the script tattoos; this is followed by the imperative (n = 238). The conditional is the least used, there are only four examples in the 825-phrase corpus. The following paragraphs will explore the use of the tenses in more detail.

#### 5.5.5.1.1 The Present Tense

As shown in Table 70, the present tense is the most frequently used tense in the corpus. This could be in part due to the level of English of the tattoo bearers. As the present tense is generally the first tense taught it is likely that they would have covered the present simple even if the bearer does not know a lot of English. The present simple is used for general truths, repeated actions in the present, something that is true in the present, as well as state verbs.

State and stative verbs are verbs which are never or rarely used in the progressive tenses. Stative verbs are often used to describe our emotions, feelings, and possessions. Tattoos are often a visual expression of the bearer's feelings and emotions; therefore, we would expect to see these verbs used significantly, see section 5.6: Themes and Meanings. The grammatical restrictions of the verbs themselves might be the reason that the use of the present simple is so high throughout the corpus. State verbs such as *be* are often written in the present simple, (n = 155) this increases the proportion of present simple verbs. Table 71 presents the script tattoos containing *I am* or *I'm*.

Table 71 Script Tattoos containing 'I am' and 'I'm'

'I am' + Description		'I am' without description
<i>I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul [x2]</i>	<i>I am the Devil, and I am here to do the Devil's work</i>	
<i>I am and become love in spirit and communication</i>	<i>I am alpha and omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. Revelation 21:6</i>	<i>You're no longer where you were but you're wherever I am</i>
<i>i'm not crazy my reality is just different than yours,</i>		<i>Love me for who I am</i>
<i>I'M OK</i>		

The verb *be* in the present simple with the pronoun *I* is used primarily as a description, of the tattoo bearer or of their life philosophy. It is noteworthy that four of the phrases are quotes from popular culture. The first is from the poem *Invictus* by Ernest Henley, the second is from the film *Edward Scissorhands*, the third is from the film *The Devil's Rejects*, and the fourth is from the Bible but the tattoo bearer saw it in the game *Fallout 3*. Tattoo bearer 173 describes their tattoo, *I am and become love in spirit and communication*, as a 'phrase culturelle' [cultural phrase].

Image 288 Tattoo Bearer 422



In tattoo bearer 422's tattoo: *I'M OK*. It is accompanied by a severed hand making the OK symbol. It could be argued that the message is complete, and the use of the present tense is to describe the general state of the tattoo bearer in juxtaposition to the severed hand.

The second usage is without a description. In the inscription *you're no longer where you were but you're wherever I am* the script tattoo represents the geographic location of the tattoo bearer and the spiritual link to the tattoo bearer's father who passed away. In the inscription *Love me for who I am* the *I am* refers to the essence of the person without describing the tattoo bearer. This could suggest both privacy and intimacy, the

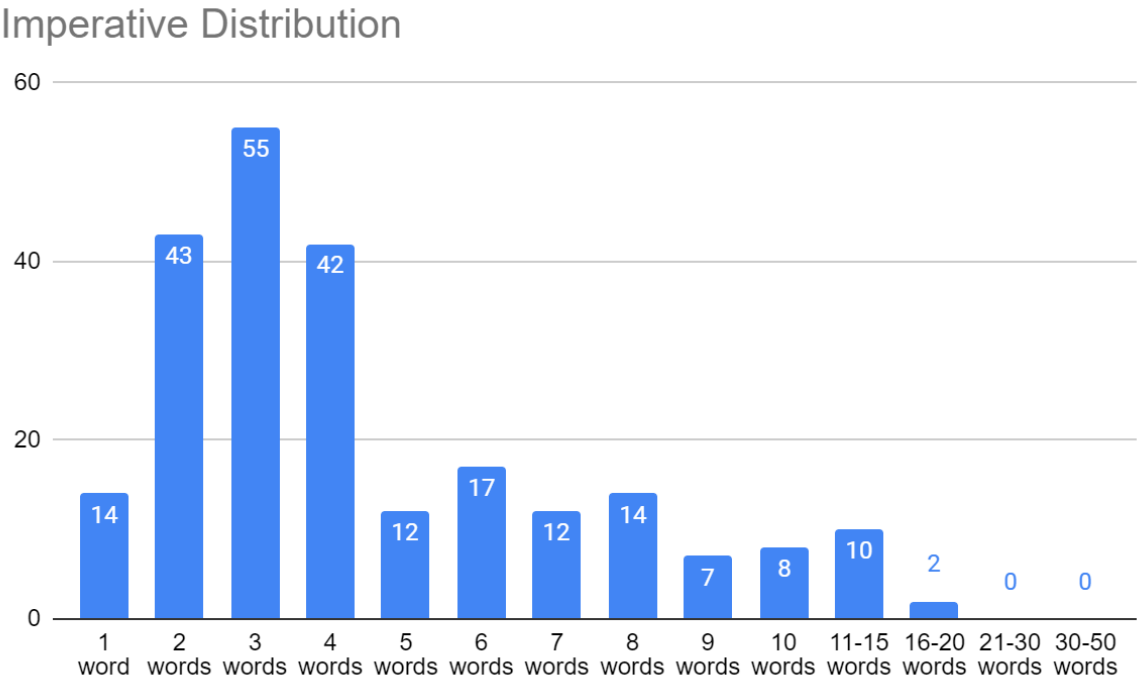
tattoo does not reveal very much about the tattoo bearer, and at the same time is intimate, asking for those who know the tattoo bearer to love her as she is.

Tattoo bearers may choose the present tense as they represent the emotional and physical decision behind being tattooed. Tattoos that are expressions of grief are aimed at keeping the lost loved one close in the present with the tattoo bearer (Kirkland, 2009), therefore a present tense tattoo keeps that person in the present with the tattoo bearer: *death doesn't stop love*. It could also be because the phrases being tattooed are seen as general truths by the tattoo bearers; they are affirming their principles and beliefs by inking them into their skin (semi-)permanently.

**5.5.5.1.2 The Imperative**

The imperative is the second most frequently used form, with a total of 238 verbs in the imperative. The shorter phrases mostly used a verb in the imperative, for example: *stay strong* (n = 11) or *believe in your dream(s)* (n = 9). These phrases were mostly personal messages from the tattoo bearer to themselves like a mantra. One participant, (TB590), explained that the *'phrases from books are in relation to my passions, [they are] studies that have become mantras'* (*'phrases de livres en rapport à mes passions, études devenues des mantras'*). The script tattoos can be divided grammatically into positive phrases (n = 149) and negative phrases using words such as: *not, never, no one, nothing* (n = 42). The imperative is mainly used in shorter phrases, Graph 11 shows the distribution of the phrases by length of words.

*Graph 11 Imperative Distribution*



The graph shows that the use of the imperative is concentrated around the two- to four- word long tattoos and then tapers off after 20 words. As the imperative is used for instructions it is most often seen in short phrases as effective communication is often clear and concise.

In script tattoos such as: *Think, Dream, Believe, Dare* and *Laugh hard, Run fast, Be kind* there are series of verbs. In these inscriptions the use of the imperative is to convey a message of positivity. The phrases encourage the tattoo bearer and/or readers to live their life in a certain way.

Image 289 Tattoo Bearer 422



Tattoo bearer 422 has a script tattoo using the imperative: *handle with care*. The presence of the heart and diamond next to the phrase adds to the notion of fragility. The words *handle* and *care* are also both in capitals which could be to emphasise the message of the tattoo, and in particular, the word *handle*. In this script tattoo the imperative is not used to guide and inspire the tattoo bearer/readers as in the examples above, in this case it is used as a warning to readers in order to protect the tattoo bearer.

A grammatical feature of the imperative is that it is often used without a subject in the second person. It could also be argued that there would be a reduction in the use of *you* and *your* in script tattoos as tattoos are personal and often written for the bearer, not the potential readers. In most linguistic contexts when a single person is talking about themselves, they will use a first person pronoun. However, Table 72 shows that this is not the case in this tattoo corpus.

Table 72 Pronouns in Imperative Phrases

<i>I</i> N = 5	<i>Me</i> N = 11	<i>My</i> N = 5
<i>You</i> (as a subject pronoun) N = 12	<i>It</i> N = 2	<i>Your</i> N = 30
<i>It</i> N = 4	<i>Our</i> N = 1	<i>Yourself</i> N = 9

The table shows the usage of pronouns in imperative phrases. Despite the grammatical rule that pronouns can be omitted from imperative phrases there are pronouns being used and the majority are in the second person singular: *you*, *your* and *yourself*. This gives rise to the questions of who is talking and who is reading the tattoos.

In tattoos where there are only pronouns in the second person singular, without further information from the tattoo bearer, it is unclear whether the message is for the bearer or a second party. For example, the tattoo *Be yourself* (n = 2) could be aimed at the bearer or at readers of the tattoo. The two tattoo bearers have translated this tattoo differently, one used the formal second person plural: *restez soi même* the other used the informal second person singular: *soit toi-même*. This difference in translation could suggest that the first tattoo bearer's message is for the people around them, thus the use of the second person plural, whereas the second tattoo bearer's message could be for one person or for themselves. The second tattoo bearer, (TB265) explained that both she and her sister share the tattoo and that is their mantra which reminds them to be true to themselves.

*'Cette phrase faite en commun avec ma sœur est comme un mantrat qui nous rappelle de rester fidèle à nous même'*

*[This phrase I did with my sister like a mantra which reminds us to be true to ourselves]*

One tattoo bearer has the tattoo *believe in your dream* which uses the imperative but gives the reasoning for the tattoo: *'parce que je crois dans mes rêves'* which is an affirmative sentence in the present simple *[because I believe in my dreams]*. This could be an instance where the translation is adapted to suit the tattoo or the bearer's English ability and is therefore slightly different from the French translation.

Three tattoo bearers have the phrase *love yourself*. All three tattoo bearers with the phrase *love yourself* use the second person singular pronoun to refer to themselves. Tattoo bearer 126 explains that it is to inspire and give themselves confidence: *'... c'est une phrase qui m'inspire et qui me donne confiance en moi'*.

Tattoo bearer 214 wrote that the phrase was representative and that she should love herself before loving others: '*car elle me représentait d'abord s'aimer soit meme avant d'aimer les autres*' [because it represented me first to love oneself before loving others]. Tattoo bearer 465 explained that the tattoo was a reminder for their future self: '*Cette phrase est un rappel pour mon moi futur*'. The use of the pronoun *you* can also be seen in the tattoo: *Live while you can* which is a message from tattoo bearer 305 to herself to enjoy life. The theme of tattoos being a mantra or motto is cited by 82 participants and will be discussed in further detail in the themes section 5.6.4: Mottos, Messages and Mantras.

Image 290 Tattoo Bearer 305



The use of the first person is present in 12 phrases. In some tattoos the use of the first person suggests that the message is for another person. For example: *Let me be my only judge* is a tattoo inspired from the personal story of the tattoo bearer, no further information is given as to who the message is intended for but the use of *let* and *me* is a clear indication that the phrase is intended for another person or other people. The same distance is created in the tattoo *Breathe on me, just put our lips together and blow*, the tattoo bearer is interacting with another person in this phrase, this is supported by the use of *our*.

Some people chose phrases in the imperative in English to represent and remind them of a time in their lives. For example, one participant, (female 21-25 years of age) has the words *never surrender* tattooed on her body.

*'Je l'ai fait au moment où j'ai surmonté une déception amoureuse ainsi qu'une enfance difficile. Il me rappelle de ne jamais abandonner, que tout finit par s'arranger.'*

*[I got (the tattoo) at the moment when I overcame a disappointing relationship and a difficult childhood. It reminds me never to give up, that everything works out in the end.]*

The visible and permanent nature of the tattoos as well as the pain endured during the inking could be considered testimony to the tattoo bearer's determination to have the specific phrase on their body as a reminder rather than on a piece of paper in their house for example. Kirkland (2009) writes that in tattooing: 'the flesh reveals the pain that gets experienced in life' (p. 328).

### 5.5.5.1.3 The Future

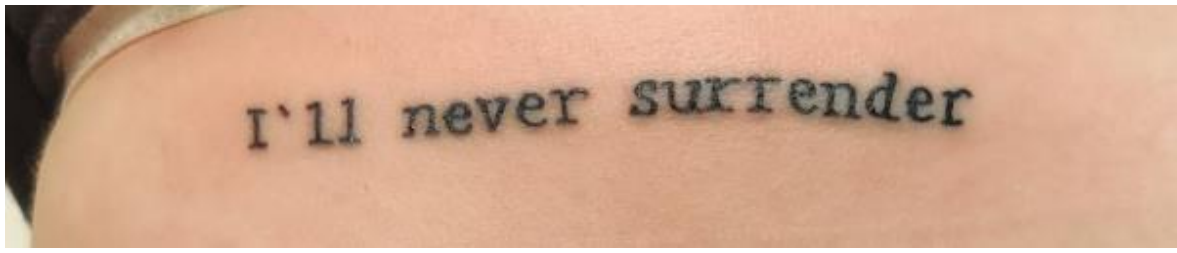
The future was one of the least used forms. The markers of the future found in my corpus are: *will*, *gonna* and *shall*. Most of the phrases in the corpus used the *will* form for the future.

Table 73 Use of the Future Tenses

Marker	Frequency	Script Tattoo
Will	9	<i>Later will be too late. Our life is now, Folies are the only things you will never regrets, If you don't leave for something you will die for nothing, Boo, forever spinning like a ghost on the bottom of a top, I'm haunted by all the space that I will live without you, I am alpha and omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. Revelation 21:6, I will never forget you, There will be an answer, Every scar will build my throne, So you live a life you will remember</i>
	4	<i>I'll never surrender, WE'LL NEVER DIE, One day I'll fly always, The greatest things you'll ever learn is just to love and be loved in return</i>
Gonna	1	<i>It's gonna be ok</i>
Shall	1	<i>No day shall erase you from the memory of time</i>

Table 73 shows the occurrences of the future in the script tattoos. The script tattoos using *will* were predominantly promises to the tattoo bearer or to another person: *I'll never surrender* and *I will never forget you*. Six of the inscriptions use the personal pronoun *I* and refer to the tattoo bearer themselves, there is one extract from the Bible and one extract from a poem. The five inscriptions that refer to another person contain advice (n = 4): *so live a life you will remember*, a promise: *no day shall erase you from the memory of time* (n = 1). The two phrases: *there will be an answer* and *it's gonna be ok* are both reassuring but they do not use the pronouns *I* or *you*, therefore these phrases could be referring to the tattoo bearer themselves or another person. The two phrases are taken from songs that are significant for the tattoo bearers. The final two phrases use the personal pronoun *we* or *our*. The first phrase can be considered an act of defiance and strength for the future: *WE'LL NEVER DIE*, whilst the second phrase is about living in the moment: *Later this will be too late. Our life is now*. Neither tattoo bearer indicated who the *we* or *our* referred to, tattoo bearer 211 explains that she chose the phrase after having a 'de-click' and she realised that life could end at any moment and therefore it is important to seize every moment.





Tattoo bearer 52 explains that she chose the phrase because life is not easy and it is a promise to herself to never give up, whereas tattoo bearer 454 could be promising another person, or people, not to forget them.

### 5.5.5.2 Verbs

In order to analyse the 77 verbs used in the corpus I have arranged them in two tables one with and one without lemmatising. The occurrences of each verb have been counted in both the script tattoo corpus and the AmE06. The relative frequency of each verb is also shown to better compare the data.

Table 74 Verbs - Without Lemmatising

Verb	Total		Relative Frequency over 10,000	
	Personal Corpus	AmE06	Personal Corpus	AmE06
Live	33	212	97	2
Be	28	4651	82	45
Love	22	347	65	3
Die	21	80	62	0.8
Dream	21	62	62	0.6
Stay	16	131	47	1
Believe	14	245	41	2
Give	12	293	35	2
Hope	12	145	35	1
Let	10	423	29	4
Know	9	805	26	7
Forget	9	51	26	0.5
Go	8	576	23	5
Look	8	422	23	4
Stop	8	195	23	1
Judge	8	103	23	1
Follow	8	102	23	1
See	7	820	21	8
Think	7	588	21	5
Keep	6	241	18	2
Fight	6	102	18	1
Grow	6	56	18	0.6
Fuck	6	22	18	0.2
Ends	6	12	18	0.1
Get	5	828	15	8
Come	5	543	15	5
Tell	5	306	15	3
Leave	5	197	15	1
Remember	5	165	15	1
Fly	5	51	15	0.5

<i>Happens</i>	5	39	15	0.4
<i>Lose</i>	5	35	15	0.3
<i>Begin</i>	4	122	12	1
<i>Learn</i>	4	111	12	1
<i>Laugh</i>	4	48	12	0.5
<i>Breathe</i>	4	13	12	0.1
<i>Ride</i>	4	33	12	0.3
<i>Say</i>	3	604	9	5
<i>Take</i>	3	599	9	5
<i>Fall</i>	3	148	9	1
<i>Feel</i>	3	265	9	2
<i>Trust</i>	3	72	9	0.7
<i>Kill</i>	3	70	9	0.7
<i>Rise</i>	3	27	9	0.3
<i>Smile</i>	3	13	9	0.1
<i>Surrender</i>	3	6	9	0.1
<i>Have</i>	3	3698 <sup>75</sup>	9	36
<i>Put</i>	2	392	6	3
<i>Try</i>	2	158	6	1
<i>Start</i>	2	114	6	1
<i>Stand</i>	2	107	6	1
<i>Create</i>	2	103	6	1
<i>Wait</i>	2	88	6	0.9
<i>Open</i>	2	82	6	0.8
<i>Walk</i>	2	80	6	0.8
<i>Carry</i>	2	77	6	0.8
<i>Win</i>	2	63	6	0.6
<i>Enjoy</i>	2	37	6	0.4
<i>Mind</i>	2	28	6	0.3
<i>Dance</i>	2	12	6	0.1
<b><i>Cheated</i></b>	2	5	6	0.05
<i>Shine</i>	2	5	6	0.05
<i>Forgive</i>	2	4	6	0.04
<i>Become</i>	1	325	3	3
<b><i>Changed</i></b>	1	125	3	1
<i>Shall</i>	1	151	3	1
<i>Call</i>	1	82	3	0.8
<i>Hurt</i>	1	81	3	0.8
<i>Want</i>	1	62	3	0.6
<i>Wish</i>	1	51	3	0.5
<i>Matter</i>	1	49	3	0.5
<i>Fear</i>	1	21	3	0.2
<i>Spoil</i>	1	3	3	0.03

Table 74 shows both the frequency and relative frequency of the verbs in my corpus compared to AmE06 without lemmatising. The table shows all the verbs present in the corpus in their most frequent form, for example the verbs *end* and *change* appeared in the corpus in the third person present simple, *ends*, and in the past tense, *changed*. The majority of the verbs are used more in the script tattoo corpus than in

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<sup>75</sup> Due to the quantity of occurrences in the AmE06 I have not counted the use of *have* as an auxiliary and as a verb but kept the global total.

the AmE06 corpus. The most significant differences are seen in the verbs: *live*, *love*, *die* and *dream* (rf differences = 95, 62, 61.4 and 61.2). The next 33 verbs that are used more frequently in the script corpus have a difference in relative frequency ranging from 10 to 46. This is followed by a further 35 verbs that have a difference in relative frequency ranging from one to nine.

Two verbs have the same relative frequency in the two corpora: *become* and *might*. Finally, two of the verbs are used more in the AmE06 than in the script tattoo corpus: *have* and *would*, both verbs are used as auxiliaries. The biggest difference between the use of verbs in the two corpora is seen in the verb *live*, their relative frequency is 97 in the script tattoo corpus and two in the AmE06.

The significant difference in relative frequency seen in most of the verbs could be in part due to the reduced lexical diversity in the script tattoo corpus. The script tattoo corpus has a token-type ratio of 0.49 and the AmE06 has a type-token ratio of 0.051.

Table 75 Verbs – With Lemmas

Verb	Total		Relative Frequency over 10,000	
	Personal Corpus	AmE06	Personal Corpus	AmE06
Be	132	42,428	312	416
Live	37	643	108	6
Love	22	499	64	4
Die	30	255	88	2
Dream	21	148	61	1
Stay	16	222	46	2
Go	14	5,820	41	57
Believe	14	412	41	4
Give	12	682	35	6
Will	12	475	35	4
Hope	12	145	35	1
Let	10	423	29	4.
Fuck	10	28	29	0.3
Look	8	1,117	23	11
See	8	1,520	23	14
Grow	8	328	23	3
Have	7	1,0297	20	101
Fight	7	193	20	1
Come	6	1,389	17	13
Get	6	1,525	17	15
Keep	6	5,099	17	50
Learn	6	423	17	4
Fall	6	269	17	2
Take	5	1,579	14	15
Laugh	5	145	14	1
Try	5	592	14	5
Kill	4	227	11	2
Hurt	4	98	11	1
Trust	4	63	11	0.6
Ride	4	81	11	0.8
Want	4	1,106	11	10
Call	3	652	8	6
Stand	3	396	8	3
Wait	3	256	8	2
Matter	3	58	8	0.6
Walk	3	225	8	2
Break	3	250	8	2
Smile	3	146	8	1
Fear	2	77	5	0.8
Become	2	76	5	0.7
Cheat	2	12	5	0.1
Dance	2	84	5	0.8
Change	1	247	2	2

Table 75 shows all the verbs present in the corpus in their most frequent form with lemmas. Despite the addition of the lemmas, the relative frequency of the verbs remains higher in script tattoo corpus than in the AmE06 corpus. In keeping with the non-lemmatized verbs, the most significant differences are seen in the verbs: *live*, *love*, *die* and *dream* (rf differences = 102, 60, 86 and 60) and also in the verb *do* (rf = 55). The following 17 verbs that are used more frequently in the script corpus have a

difference in relative frequency ranging from 10 to 44. The next 17 verbs have a difference in relative frequency range from one to nine.

There was one verb that has the same relative frequency in the two corpora: *change*. Finally, four of the verbs are used more in the AmE06 than in the script tattoo corpus: *go*, *have*, *keep* and *take*. The verb *have* can be used as auxiliaries.

Table 76 Auxiliaries - With and Without Lemmatising

Verb	Total		Relative Frequency over 10,000	
	Personal Corpus	AmE06	Personal Corpus	AmE06
<i>Without Lemmatising</i>				
<i>Do</i>	11	1,414	32	13
<i>Will</i>	10	36	29	0.3
<i>Would</i>	3	2,266	9	22
<i>Might</i>	2	643	6	6
<i>Be</i>	2	4,651	6	45
<i>Have</i>	1	3,698	3	36
<i>Shall</i>	1	151	3	1
<i>With Lemmas</i>				
<i>Do</i>	33	4,235	96	41
<i>Be</i>	14	42,428	41	416
<i>Will</i>	12	475	35	1
<i>Have</i>	5	10,297	14	101

The use of auxiliary verbs, *be*, *do*, *have*, *shall*, *might*, and *will*, varies between the data with and without lemmatising. In the lemmatised table *be* and *do* are used 15 and 3 times more respectively, whereas in the table without lemmatising the use of *have* and *will* are much closer to the uses of *be* and *do*. The verb *be* is used over five times more when lemmatised than when it is not lemmatised in the script tattoo corpus. In the AmE06, the table without lemmatising, the relative frequency is 45, and with lemmas it is 416 – 10 times more. This is twice the difference in the script tattoo corpus.

The four most frequently used lexical verbs, *live*, *love*, *die* and *dream*, are used significantly more in the script tattoo corpus than in the reference corpus. These words are used more often in script tattoos than they are used in other Northern American English texts. This does not prove that the tattoo bearers *use* the words more often in other forms of communication, just that they *tattoo* them more often than would be expected basing the results on a North American English corpus. The three verbs *live*, *love* and *dream* are often associated with positivity, whilst the verb *die* more generally has a negative connotation. This would suggest that the majority of inscriptions in the script tattoo corpus were positive rather than negative.

### 5.5.5.3 Pronouns

The use of pronouns is one way of showing the direction of the message: is the tattoo bearer wearing a message for themselves or for others? Unlike in the phrases containing an imperative, where pronouns in the second person were used more, the most often written pronoun in the whole corpus were first-person pronouns with a total of 168 uses).

Table 77 Pronouns in Imperative Phrases

Subject Pronouns	Personal Pronouns	Possessive Determiners	Possessive Personal Pronouns	Reflexive Pronouns	Total
<i>I</i> 60	<i>Me</i> 42	<i>My</i> 63	<i>Mine</i> 2	<i>Myself</i> 1	168
<i>You</i> 52	<i>You</i> 32	<i>Your</i> 49	<i>Yours</i> 2	<i>Yourself</i> 9	144
<i>He / She / It</i> 3 / 1 / 7	<i>Him / Her / It</i> 2 / 0 / 13	<i>His / Her / Its</i> 2 / 0 / 0	<i>His / Hers / Its</i> 0 / 0 / 0	<i>Himself / Herself / Itself</i> 0 / 0 / 0	28
<i>We</i> 24	<i>Us</i> 6	<i>Our</i> 5	<i>Ours</i> 0	<i>Ourself</i> 0	35
<i>They</i> 4	<i>Them</i> 0	<i>Their</i> 0	<i>Theirs</i> 1	<i>Themselves</i> 0	5

The possessive determiner *my* is an indication of the subject of the script tattoo. Tattoo bearer 91, an English teacher, has the tattoo *MY LIFE MY CHOICES MY MISTAKES MY LESSONS*. The repetition of the word *my* emphasises and focuses the reader's/s' attention on the bearer and her life choices.

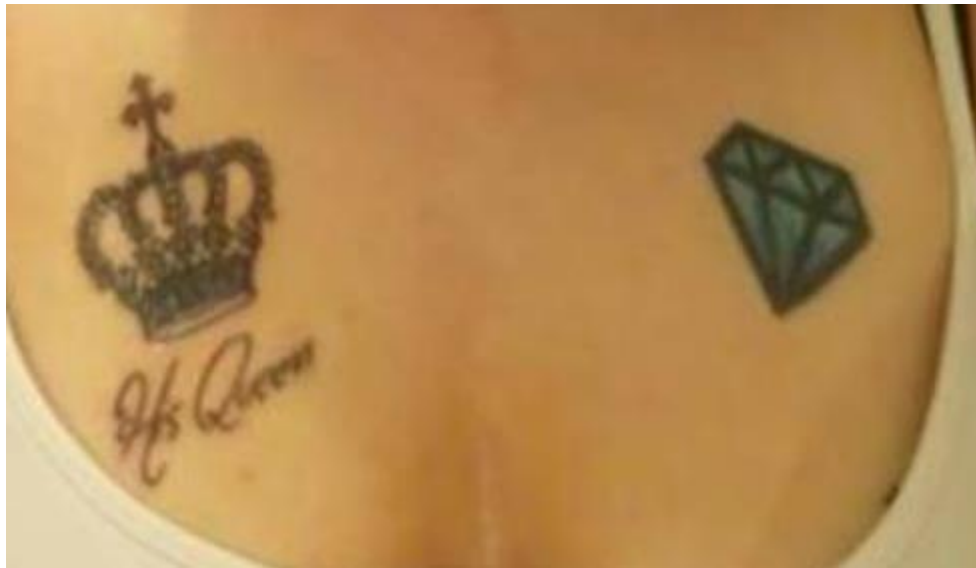
The script tattoos addressing other people, using the pronouns *you*, *yourself*, *your*, and *yours*, are generally positive: *I love you*, *love yourself*. There is one script tattoo where the bearer is swearing at the reader: *Fuck you and love you*. The tattoo bearer explains that this juxtaposition between the two states is how he sees love.

Not unlike the phrases in the imperative, the corpus reveals that the second person singular is used 144 times in the script tattoos. One of the reasons for preferring English is the ambiguity of the word *you*. Tattoo bearer 10 has the tattoo *You're my happiness* and offers both the informal/singular *you* and formal/plural *you* forms as a translation: '*tu es / vous êtes mon bonheur*'. The participant explains that they chose English because the pronoun *you* can mean both *tu* and *vous* in French and therefore the meaning can change with the translation and adapt to the two contexts.

The two phrases containing the pronoun *he* are modified quotes from William Makepeace Thackeray, *The History of Henry Esmond, Esq* and Dia Reeves, *Bleeding Violet: There are thousands of thoughts in a man whom he doesn't know until he takes*

a feather to write and he was like the moon – part of him was always hidden away. Neither participant has indicated whether *he* refers to themselves (both participants were male), another person, or nobody in particular.

Image 292 Tattoo Bearer 286



Tattoo bearer 286 has one of only two tattoos using the masculine third person pronoun. She has *His Queen* on her chest and it is accompanied by a crown. In the survey she wrote that the phrase was better in English: '*car cela rend mieux en anglais*'. The other script tattoo that contains *his* is an adaptation of song lyrics by Eminem: *My insecurities could eat me alive. But when I see my baby, suddenly I'm not crazy. It all make sense when I look into his eyes*. In this sentence the context suggests that the *his* refers to the tattoo bearer's son.

Not all tattoos contain personal pronouns. Nonetheless, the placement of the tattoo on the body can be an indication as to who the tattoo is for. Tattoo bearer 176 explains that their tattoo: *Never Again*, is placed on their shoulder to console other people when they are sad and to remind the bearer herself not to cry for other people, and the way people have made her suffer:

*'[...] Elle veut dire que je ne veux plus pleurer pour les autres et la souffrance que l'on m'a fait subir. Ces mots sont sur l'épaule, car c'est là que l'on console les autres quand ils pleurent.'*

*[It means that I don't want to cry anymore for others and the suffering that has been done to me. These words are on my shoulder, because that is where you console others when they cry.]*



The absence of the pronoun in this phrase, *Never Again*, allows for the phrase to be applicable to both the bearer and any readers. The use of the teardrop drawing at the end of the script tattoo further emphasises the message not to cry.

The pronoun *nobody* is used ten times in the script tattoo corpus, the pronouns *everybody*, *somebody* and *anybody* are not used in any of the tattoos. The pronouns *no one* (n = 2) and *someone* (n = 1) are also present in the corpus.

Table 78 Occurrences of 'Nobody', 'No one', and 'Someone'

'body'	'one'
<i>Nobody said it was easy</i> <i>Nobody's /is perfect [x4]</i> <i>No Body Loves me</i> <i>Everyone has invisible scar that nobody see</i> [UNCHK] <i>Nobody's slave</i> <i>Nobody dies virgin. Life fucks us all</i>	<i>Trust no one</i> <i>... to boldly go where no one has gone before</i> <i>Don't judge someone until you Know the whole story</i> <i>Only love can keep someone alive</i>

The pronoun *nobody* is used in messages that could be seen as positive such as: *nobody is perfect* and *nobody's slave*. I consider the phrase *nobody's perfect* to be positive as it forgives and accepts imperfections. Two tattoo bearers chose the phrase *nobody's perfect* after hearing it in a film, one cites the film *Some like it hot*. One tattoo bearer explains that the phrase represents her vision of humanity, and the last tattoo bearer does not give an explanation other than it sounding better in English than in French.

The script tattoo *nobody's slave* represents the values of tattoo bearer 383. This can also be considered a message of empowerment and is in keeping with her other



tattoos which are all associated with freedom: *live free, sometimes you've gotta fall before you fly*, and *live and let live*.

Image 294 Tattoo Bearer 186



Tattoo bearer 186 has the tattoo *nobody said it was easy*, it includes two verbs *say* and *be* in the past tense. The tattoo bearer explains that the phrase is the title of a song, an internet search reveals that the song is called *The Scientist*, it was written by Coldplay, and that *nobody said it was easy* is the first line of the chorus. Not unlike the phrase *nobody's perfect*, the tattoo bearer did not choose the pronoun *nobody* over *no one* as they were phrases taken from popular culture.

#### 5.5.6 Errors

The errors in the script tattoo corpus are subject to different factors compared to combined graffiti corpora. Firstly, the data inscriptions were entered into the survey by humans and there may have been typographical errors. Secondly, the inscriptions were entered into the survey via telephones or computers and there could have been auto-correct errors. Finally, the stakes are different with this corpus, these inscriptions are potentially permanently inked into people's skins.

I have identified three types of errors in the script tattoo corpus: grammatical, spelling, and punctuation; these modifications can be described as unconventional language use (AbuJaber et., al 2012). The occurrences containing an error can be seen in Table 79, the errors are in bold so that they can be identified easily, where the error is a missing word, nothing is in bold. Some sentences have more than one error. I do not consider abbreviations such as *coz*, *gonna*, and *wanna* as errors as they appear in language use by both L1 and L2 speakers of English. These are the script tattoos that I was unable to check through photographs or through contact with the tattoo bearer.

Table 79 Errors in the Script Tattoos

	Occurrences
Grammar (n = 37)	<i>Life is grammar, All i need is your love, born to <b>dies</b>, <b>the</b> life is short but my love to you is forever, If we admit that human <b>live</b> can be ruled by reason then all possibility <b>if</b> life is <b>destroy</b>, If you go i wanna go with you... if you die i wanna die with you, i have a fucking brain, Just <b>breath</b>, Dad, i love you, Mum, i love you, No time for <b>the</b> regrets, True love <b>Never</b> dies, This is who i really am, I'm the master of my fate, i'm the captain of my soul, <b>the</b> is still hope, You only live once <b>than</b> it's <b>Never</b> too late, <b>I'am</b> not afraid to walk this world alone, i'm not crazy my reality is just different than yours, One day i'll fly always, Mommy, <b>for ever</b>, <b>The</b> hope never dies, <b>fucker</b> peace, no time for <b>the regret</b>, Don't <b>dreams</b> your life, <b>life</b> your dream, Whatever happens <b>Never</b> give up your dream, believe <b>on</b> your dreams, You never know <b>How</b> you are strong until <b>bing</b> strong <b>remain</b> only <b>your</b> option, It is better to die standing to live <b>kniss</b> on the ground, Never a failure <b>Always</b> a lesson, <b>Lets</b> me bid you farewell, <b>The</b> beautiful for earth, Love <b>Never</b> dies, <b>Dont no</b> let sadness of the past spoil your future, Folies are the only things you will never <b>regrets</b>, Because you're mine i walk the line, i'm a barbie girl, in a barbie world, Why are we failing? To learn <b>better</b> to get up</i>
Spelling (n = 26)	<i><b>Hapiness</b>, everything happens for a <b>raison</b> [x2], I'n a world on my own, Magnolia <b>for ever</b>, Princess <b>princesse</b> never <b>mine</b> ques que sa peut te foutre, far from the heart, protect the <b>dormez</b> where i live, Only God can <b>judje</b> me, belier in your dream, <b>Y</b> live for your memory, <b>Une</b> life, one chance, too fast too <b>lite</b>, if you love me tell me if i cry, <b>confort</b> me, but if i <b>Die</b>, don't follow me, If there is a <b>probleme</b>, There is a solution, If there is no solution it's coz there's no <b>problème</b>, Never <b>un</b> my heart, My <b>childrens</b> my <b>lire</b>, No friend's <b>fort</b> a sister, Life would not be worth being lived if <b>thème</b> was no second chance, forever in my <b>hart</b>, wait <b>fir</b> it, right place right <b>tim</b>, There are no false <b>pretense</b>, there is only an ocean of lies, Dream and <b>hop</b>, <b>Don'ts ay</b> a word while <b>de</b> dance with the devil, My life isn't made of failures but if <b>Lessines</b>, <b>belive</b> in your dream, Dreams are wishes your <b>hart</b> makes, <b>Yong</b> Wild and Free,</i>
Punctuation (n = 4)	<i>Who are you, <b>DONT GIVE UP</b>, Prepare for the future <b>!</b>, Bringing the truth, no matter how bad it hurts <b>!</b>,</i>

The most common error was grammatical, this includes the use of the wrong preposition: *believe **on** your dreams* rather than *believe **in** dreams*, the addition of an unnecessary article: *no time for **the** regret*. The wrong verb tense can also be seen in a few sentences: *born to **dies*** rather than *born to **die***. In some sentences it appears that the wrong word has been written, according to the translation provided by the tattoo bearer the script tattoo: ***the** beautiful for earth* should read ***too** beautiful for earth*. However, it is still not clear what is written on the skin of the tattoo bearer without the photograph or without being able to contact the tattoo bearer.

Two phrases are written in a non-conventional word order: *You never know How you are strong until bing strong remain your only option* and *Why are we falling? To learn better to get up*. According to the translations given by the tattoo bearers, the phrases should read: *you never know how strong **you are** until **being** strong **remains** your only option*. In addition to the word order there is also a spelling mistake and a grammatical error. The increase in errors could be due to the increased length of the tattoo, it is not clear however, whether more errors suggest a higher likelihood of these errors being on the skin or only in the survey. The second sentence should read: *why are we falling? To learn how to get up better*.

In this section I include the sentences where the tattoo bearer has chosen to have the 'I' in *I love you* in the lowercase rather than the uppercase. This could be a typographical error, but two tattoos that can be seen in the appendices confirm that the tattoo does have a lowercase *I* rather than an uppercase *I*. The opposite phenomena can also be seen: *True love Never dies* – the uppercase letters could be used to represent the tattoo starting on a new line, this is also seen in the script tattoo: *Never a failure Always a lesson*.

There were four examples where the script tattoo should have had punctuation or the punctuation was misplaced. The first script tattoo: *who are you* would normally require a question mark and the contraction *don't* requires an apostrophe. The next two sentences have a space between the last word and the exclamation mark, this is not a normal feature of writing in English.

## 5.6 Themes and Meanings

The themes present in the script tattoo corpus are indicators of the bearers' use of English and their interests. Peck and Stroud (2015) explain that all bodily inscriptions are accompanied by 'a host of indexicalities or "traces" (excess meaning) that are subject to insertion into social discourse and normative regimes' (p. 6). Czesnek and Stemate (2019) identified four themes in their study: symbols that the bearer likes, personal identity, relationships (both family and friends), and cultural, ideological, or religious. In Mora et al.'s (2016) study of non-Spanish script tattoos in Mexico, they found people with inspirational messages, song lyrics, poems, and random words.

In this study, the common themes in the dataset were established through either the words and phrases themselves, or the responses from the participants. First, I looked at the content of the phrase and decided if the theme could be chosen quickly. For example, the tattoo *animals* is categorised in the theme of *animals and nature*. This was then corroborated with the survey if the participant had written about the meaning of their tattoo. Each tattoo has been categorised as one or more themes, e.g. *I love you mum* is categorised as both *love* and *family*. To avoid repetition of the analysis of the same tattoos, I will focus on the four most popular themes present in this corpus. In order of frequency in the survey: popular culture: - mottos, messages, and mantras; family, and life story and self-representation.

Table 80 Occurrences of Themes in the Tattoos

Theme	Frequency	Examples
Popular Culture	172	<i>to boldly go where no one has gone before, All eyes on me</i>
Life Story and Self-Representation	141	<i>Free, Sadly, Alone, Never back down, Get up and fight</i>
Family	108	<i>Always in my heart, Big sister, Brothers, Made by mom</i>
Mottos, Messages and Mantras	82	<i>Faith hope love,<sup>76</sup> Always stay strong, Never lose hope</i>
Positivity	90	<i>Nobody's perfect, Love is stronger than death</i>
Love	76	<i>To the moon and back, Love hurts, In my Heart</i>
Negativity	68	<i>Cry baby, Sadly, Alone, Never Again, Bitch, Cursed</i>
Grief	42	<i>Over the rainbow, still loving you, Y live for your memory</i>
Life and Death	42	<i>One life, too weird to live but too rare to die, Born to die</i>
Unknown (no reason given)	39	<i>Body art, I need you forever, Thé legend killer</i>
Religion or Spiritual	23	<i>Serenity, courage, wisdom, THE DEVIL IS CALLING ME</i>
Animals and Nature	19	<i>Victory, We are very pretty flowers, No bacon</i>
Geography and Nature	16	<i>West ♡ side, Free to fly wherever you want</i>
Romantic Partner	12	<i>Welcome to paradise, His Queen, Hate/Love</i>
Sex and Sexuality	12	<i>Girls gang, take me, kiss my, give all, my nuts,</i>
Shared Tattoo	10	<i>No friend's fort a sister, brother, love your madness</i>
Friendship	10	<i>Make a wish one last time, you see all my light</i>
Feminism	9	<i>Girl power, RIP Patriarchy, Fight like a girl, Not today</i>
Education and Learning	9	<i>But a lesson I learned in time</i>
Quotes <sup>77</sup>	7	<i>We are each our own demon and we create our own hell</i>

<sup>76</sup> Koller and Bullo posit that the phrase *faith hope love* is an occurrence of intertextuality, they suggest that the phrase is originally from 1 Corinthians 13:13 'But now these three things abide: faith, hope, love.'

<sup>77</sup> Quotes refers to phrases that are attributed to a person outside of song lyrics or extracts from literature.

<i>Motorbikes</i>	6	<i>Braap, Ride to live live to ride, Old school, Too fast too lite</i>
<i>Divorce or Break Ups</i>	5	<i>No Time for the regret, after you</i>
<i>Food</i>	5	<i>If we're die, we're taking you with us, sugar free</i>
<i>Job</i>	4	<i>Care, Skin is a playground, handmade</i>
<i>Sport</i>	4	<i>Basketball changed my life, HELL RIDE, Fresh Meat</i>
<i>Tattoos</i>	3	<i>Skin is a playground, Sorry mom, my body my art</i>
<i>Arts</i>	3	<i>Stupid lifestyle, my body my art, artist never die</i>
<i>Rebellion</i>	3	<i>Thug life [x2], thug love</i>
<i>Old School</i>	2	<i>Old school, No time for regrets</i>

The themes in Table 80 will be discussed in further detail in the following sections. The total corpus contains 825 script tattoos between the 602 participants. This means that the most popular theme is present in 20% of the tattoos. This is one of the reasons I have chosen to focus only on the four most common themes as the final theme to be analysed is only present in 12% of the tattoos.

Most tattoos will contain more than one theme. For example, tattoos out of grief are categorised as both *grief* and the category of the lost loved one – this could be a family member, friend, romantic partner, or pet. The tattoo: *One day i'll fly away always* is an homage to the bearer's brother who died, and it is also lyrics from a song in one of the bearer's favourite films. Therefore, it can be categorised as family, grief, song lyrics, and films. Therefore, the table above adds up to 1,212 themes for only 825 tattoos.

It could be argued that the theme of *Motorbikes* could be included within the theme of *Sport* or *Travel*. I decided not to put the two together because there is no indication by the tattoo bearers as to whether they consider their usage and relationship to motorbiking as a hobby, means of travel, or as a sport. I have also decided not to include *Romantic Partners* nor *Friendship* within the category of *Family*. Dividing them into separate categories allows for the analysis of which loved ones feature in tattoos. There are 109 tattoos for family members versus 14 for romantic partners and 10 for friendships. This could be due to the permanence of family ties demonstrated by the phrase 'you can choose your friends, but you sho' can't choose your family...' (Lee, 1960).

I have equally chosen to separate *Grief* from tattoos pertaining to *Life* and *Death*. All 41 tattoos in the theme of *grief* are in memory of one or more people. Tattoo bearer 60 has the words *Soul cancer* tattooed following the suicide of her brother, he had depression and his illness was described by the priest as a cancer of the soul.

*'Mon frère s'est suicidé il y a quelques années. J'ai décidé de faire mon deuil en faisant un tatouage. Il était dépressif. Lors de la messe funèbre, le prêtre a parlé qu'il souffrait d'un "cancer de l'âme" pour parler de sa dépression. J'ai trouvé cela tellement explicite. Il avait su mettre des mots sur sa dépression.'*

*[My brother committed suicide a few years ago. I decided to mourn him by getting a tattoo. He was depressed. At the funeral mass, the priest said that he was suffering from a "cancer of the soul" to describe his depression. I found this so explicit. He was able to put his depression into words.]*

As explained in the response above, the process of being tattooed for a lost loved one is considered part of the mourning process for the tattoo bearer. Other grieving participants explained that it was more a case of keeping the memory of the lost loved ones. Tattoo bearer 125 has the tattoo *Y live for you memory* (translation: *Je vie pour ta memoire*) in order to remember his father: *'En souvenir de mon pere'* [*In memory of my father*].

In the category of *Life* and *Death*, the script tattoos are about the tattoo bearer's life or are related to mortality in an abstract sense. Tattoo bearer 541 has the tattoos *life is the symptom* and *death is the cure* which refer to his ill health for the last 20 years.

*'Je suis excessivement malade et douloureux depuis 20 ans. Il y a des choses pire que la mort'*

*[I have been excessively ill and in pain for 20 years. There are worse things than death.]*

This connection between life and death, and life and illness, can also be seen in the tattoo: *Pain is good makes you feel alive*. Other tattoo bearers have the words *death*, *life*, and *alive* but did not give any more explanation behind the tattoo. In Koller and Bullo's (2019) study of cancer and endometriosis patients and their tattoos, they categorised the tattoos about the illnesses as part of the patient's life story. In this study, patients with a tattoo linked to their health are categorised as being an issue of life or death, or as a motto reminding the tattoo bearer where they came from.

In the survey, the participants were asked for the meaning of their tattoo. This information was essential for determining the themes behind the tattoos. Tattoo bearer 477 had the word *always* tattooed to represent the different bonds they have in their life:

*'Et le toujours à deux signification, pour signifie le lien très fort avec ma meilleure amie, et pour signifie le toujours d'une relation la relation familiale, amicale et familiale.'*

*[And the always has two meanings, it signifies the strong bond I have with my best friend, and to signify the eternity of a relationship, a family relationship, a friendship or family bond.]*

Without the survey response, I would not have known to identify the tattoo *always* as a family tattoo. In some instances, the bearer cites a well-known story such as Peter Pan, some specify whether they are referring to the book or the film, others do not. The tattoo bearers may not be aware of both the film and the book.<sup>78</sup> Tattoo bearer 25, who has the tattoo: *Nature has the colors of the spirit*, wrote that it was from a music festival:

*'C'est une phrase derrière un bracelet de festival. Elle me parle beaucoup. Elle est poétique et a beaucoup de sens. C'est une métaphore qui veut dire que les capacités de notre esprit sont infinies, comme la nature.'*

*[It's a phrase on the back of a festival bracelet. It speaks to me a lot. It is poetic and is very meaningful. It's a metaphor that means that the abilities of our spirits are limitless, like nature.]*

I searched for the phrase and festival to see if it was held in France or an English-speaking country. There was no trace of a music festival under this name in France or another country. However, the search engine revealed that the phrase 'Nature always wears the colors of the spirit' was originally written by North American essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson in his book *Nature*, which was published anonymously in 1836 (Emerson, 2016). Therefore, this tattoo can also be considered an example of manifest intertextuality even if the tattoo bearer was not aware of the original source.

Finally, 39 tattoo bearers have script tattoos whose themes I could not decipher due to a lack of explanation in the survey. For example, in the tattoos *who are you* and *I need you forever*, the bearers did not indicate if these phrases came from a song etc.

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<sup>78</sup> This was one of the reasons for grouping the Popular Culture themes together. Three tattoo bearers have a Peter Pan inspired tattoo but do not refer to the book or the film, just the character.

or if they were directed at a specific person. Rather than make assumptions I have grouped these 39 tattoos together and categorised them as *Unclear*.

### 5.6.1 Popular Culture

The references to popular culture, in particular, give researchers an insight into what English language contexts are frequented by the participants. The popular culture references could be examples of the cultural influences that Kosut (2000) suggests are reflected in tattoos. Aside from the question of identity, engagement with popular culture in English also has a secondary effect in which the language users learn words and phrases incidentally, this could be through watching, listening, or reading content first-hand in English or looking it up online afterwards. Toffoli and Sockett (2015) explain that the ‘language users see themselves as involved in leisure activities of which language learning is merely a by-product’ (p. 7). This could answer two questions, first, the quantity of tattoo bearers in this study who did not write that they speak English and yet had a script tattoo in English. These people could have ‘learnt’ more English than they think through listening to songs in English (films, books, and television series can all be translated). Secondly, this could explain the positive feelings that are expressed by tattoo bearers. The leisure activity in English fostered a good relationship between the tattoo bearer and English and therefore the tattoo bearer associates the English words with that/those positive experience(s).

The participants cite song lyrics and music as the inspiration for their tattoos (n = 98), followed by literature quotes (n = 28), and references to films (n = 23), and to television (n = 15). All the quotes from other texts are examples of manifest intertextuality. I would argue that this is both a theme: basing a tattoo on an original text, as well as a reason for using English: language authenticity – see section 5.7.2: Language Authenticity.

Table 81 Examples of Popular Culture Inspired Tattoos

	<i>Song Lyrics</i>	<i>Music</i>	<i>Literature</i>	<i>Films</i>	<i>Television</i>	<i>Video Games</i>
<i>Frequency</i>	73	25	28	24	14	2
<i>Example Tattoo</i>	<i>Lose yourself – Eminem</i>	<i>Straight Edge – Musical Movement</i>	<i>Once upon a time</i>	<i>Nobody’s perfect – Some Like it Hot</i>	<i>People always leave – One Tree Hill</i>	<i>Fight the food fight – Fallout 3</i>

The table shows that there are four times as many music inspired tattoos compared to all other popular culture script tattoos. One reason could be that songs are rarely translated, whereas French inhabitants are able to watch films and television series in



either the original English audio or dubbed into French. Music, films, television, and video games are all examples of stimuli heard in the sound landscape.

Two participants wrote that they watched a film or series in English in the survey. In France, not all terrestrial channels offer the English audio versions of the shows, whereas streaming services tend to have both English audio and the dubbed version with the option of additional subtitles. The North American series *One Tree Hill*, which features in two tattoos, aired between 2004 and 2012 in France; it has been available on the Amazon Prime streaming service since 2020.

#### **5.6.1.1 Song Lyrics and Music**

In this subsection I will explore the influence that song lyrics, titles, and music has had on the script tattoos. I have categorised song titles under *music* in general as not all song titles are part of the lyrics. The script tattoos came from a total of 45 identified bands or solo artists. The band that appears the most in the script tattoos is Metallica (n = 4) which is followed by Linkin Park and the Beatles (n = 3). Queen, Bob Marley, Nirvana, Amy Winehouse and Eminem were all featured in two tattoos each.

The choice of artist ranges from Charlie Chaplin's *Smile* released in 1954 to Linkin Park's *One More Light* in 2017. The range of artists is an indication of the eclectic taste in music of the group, and that there is no main group or style of music present in script tattoos. Mora et al. (2016) discover that the script tattoos found in Mexico were mainly of rap music and prayers, in this corpus there were two tattoos inspired by the rapper Eminem and no tattoos containing prayers. The years of the known songs can be seen in Table 82.

Table 82 Song Lyrics and Release Year

Song	Year
<i>Smile, Charlie Chaplin</i>	1954
<i>I walk the line, Johnny Cash</i>	1956
<i>(You're The) Devil in Disguise, Elvis Presley</i>	1963
<i>All You Need Is Love, The Beatles</i>	1967
<i>San Francisco, Scott McKenzie</i>	
<i>Blackbird, The Beatles</i>	1968
<i>Let It Be, The Beatles</i>	1970
<i>Dream On, Aerosmith</i>	1973
<i>No Woman, No Cry, Bob Marley &amp; The Wailers</i>	1974
<i>Magnolia Forever, Claude François</i>	1977
<i>One Love, Bob Marley &amp; The Wailers</i>	
<i>Don't Stop Me Now, Queen</i>	1978
<i>Still Loving You, The Scorpions</i>	1984
<i>There Is a Light That Never Goes Out, The Smiths</i>	1986
<i>Where is My Mind, Pixies</i>	1988
<i>Don't Worry, Be Happy, Bobby McFerrin &amp; Linda</i>	
<i>Somewhere Over the Rainbow, Israel Kamakawiwo'ole</i>	1990
<i>Enjoy the Silence, Depeche Mode</i>	
<i>Are You Ready?, AC/DC</i>	
<i>Wonderwall, Oasis</i>	1995
<i>Barbie Girl, Aqua</i>	1997
<i>The Burning Red, Machine Head</i>	1999
<i>Lose yourself, Eminem</i>	2002
<i>Hailie's Song, Eminem</i>	
<i>Chaos is My Life, The Exploited</i>	2003
<i>Breathe on Me, Britney Spears</i>	
<i>In The Shadows, The Rasmus</i>	
<i>Defying Gravity, Kristin Chenoweth</i>	
<i>Where do I belong, Anastacia</i>	2004
<i>Lonely day, System Of A Down</i>	2005
<i>Rehab, Mark Ronson</i>	2006
<i>Moving for the Sake of Motion, Underoath</i>	
<i>Lead Sails (And a Paper Anchor), Atreyu</i>	2007
<i>Snuff, Slipknot</i>	2009
<i>Zoom Into Me, Tokio Hotel</i>	
<i>Firework, Katy Perry</i>	2010
<i>Nothing Stands in Our Way, Lacuna Coil</i>	2014
<i>The Nights, Avicii</i>	
<i>Ocean Drive, Duke Dumont</i>	2015
<i>Rise, Katy Perry</i>	2016
<i>Understand, Shawn Mendes</i>	
<i>Ascension, Epica</i>	
<i>Million Reasons, Lady Gaga</i>	
<i>One More Light, Linkin Park [x2]</i>	2017
<i>Dates taken from Genius.com</i>	<i>A span of 63 years</i>

The release date of the song lyrics and song names cited by the participants span from 1954 to 2017, a total of 63 years. The decade from 2000 to 2010 was the most popular, seven years were cited in the survey for 13 songs. The second most popular decade was from 2010-2020, there were five years cited by the participants and 11 songs in total were written in the survey.

A further 17 script tattoos are from unidentified songs as the name was not given - the lyrics were either too common: *'one day'* or because the text that the tattoo bearer had written did not correspond exactly to any of the songs that were found. For example, tattoo bearer 256 has the tattoo *'Tell me what do you think when you looking at me'* yet the closest song lyrics were *'Tell me what you see when you look at me'* by Christina Milian. To avoid errors, I have categorised these script tattoos as unknown in the music category.

Image 295 Tattoo Bearer 347



Tattoo bearer 347 has a tattoo in homage to the late singer Amy Winehouse on his arm: it includes her portrait and part of the chorus of one of her songs. The tattoo was completed in London, so there is also a geographical connection to the language used as well as the song being in English, from a British singer. Eleven other tattoo bearers also chose a tattoo in connection to a place, see section 5.6.2.1: Travel.

The tattoo bearers have often chosen a song that they connected with during a period of their lives. Tattoo bearer 79 explains that she chose the song *Firework* because it helped her at a difficult time in her life. Other tattoo bearers chose to have a tattoo of the favourite song of a loved one who had passed away - tattoo bearer 102 explains: *'C'est une chanson de Israel Kamakawiwo'ole la préféré de mon père, quand il est décédé j'ai décidé de me la faire tatouer.'* [It's a song by Israel Kamakawiwo'ole my dad's favourite, when he died I decided to get it as a tattoo.] By focusing on the favourite song of their father, the tattoo bearer can pay homage to a positive aspect of their father's life, rather than focus on the sadness of losing him. Tattoo bearer 110 gives a similar reason for her tattoo: *Still loving you* by the Scorpions.

*'Car c'est le titre d'une musique, groupe préféré de mon père décédé. Lien entre mon père et ma mère et moi, chaque mot a une topographie différente*

*pour représenter les 3 personnes (une « carrée » pour mon père une « enfantine » moi et une « ronde » ma mère)'*

*[Because it is the title of a song, my late father's favourite group. The bond between my father, mother and myself, each word has a different topography to represent the 3 people (a "square" for my father a "childish" me and a "round" my mother)]*

In the survey she writes *topographie* but her following explanation suggests that she may have meant *typography* (font) and that each word is in a different font to represent the members of her family. The same family unit can be seen in tattoo bearer 163's tattoos: *Dad, i love you* for her late father and *Mom, i love you* for her mother. She explains that her tattoo is:

*'Pour mon papa c'est un hommage car il est décédé Pour ma maman c'était pour qu'elle ne soit pas jalouse :P non c'est pour lui montrer qu'elle est encrée en moi quoi qu'il arrive'*

*[For my father it's a homage as he died For my mother it's so she isn't jealous :P no it's to show her that she's inked in me no matter what happens]*

The loss of one parent seems to inspire some tattoo bearers to commemorate only the lost parent and encourages others to have a tattoo for both parents. As the lost parent is unable to see the tattoo, there could be some comfort knowing that the remaining parent can see the tattoo.

Not all script tattoos related to music contain song lyrics. Some contain song titles and others are about music in a more general sense. There were nine tattoos that referred to music in general, including a festival name, references to musical movements, and genres. For example, tattoo bearer 17 has *WHERE WORDS FAIL Music speaks* which refers to his musical project with a Californian that he has been working on for 10 years. The original phrase is accredited to Danish author Hans Christian Andersen.

Image 296 Tattoo Bearer 17



Other tattoos that are connected to music in general rather than specific lyrics are: *Not in this lifetime* which refers to a band that is very important to tattoo bearer 96, the

tattoo represents hope, a personal change '*rapport à un groupe de musique très important pour moi, cette situation représente un Espoir, un changement personnel...*'

Tattoo bearer 339 has the words: *Good vibes* which refers to his style of music and the use of powerful speakers. Tattoo bearer 384 has the tattoo *Music is life* and is apt for the conclusion of this section. For some people, music is a very important part of their life, and this is a motivating factor for having a tattoo dedicated to a certain song or band. As songs are generally not translated, the tattoo bearer would have heard the song in English and therefore the emotions linked to that song would be linked to those English words and their sounds. The sounds of English will be explored in section 5.7.1: English Aesthetics.

### 5.6.1.2 Books, Comics and Plays

The previous section focuses on listening to music in English, this section focuses on reading in English. There are several literary texts cited by the participants (n = 28), when tattooed they can be referred to as literary tattoos (Chassagnol 2018). There are five tattoos of Shakespeare quotes including: *to be or not to be* and *our doubts are traitors and make us lose the good we might oft win by fearing to attempt*. There were three tattoos featuring words or a phrase from Edgar Allen Poe's work. Peter Pan was also cited twice. One script tattoo inspired by a comic book is cited: *Your kingdom is doomed*.

Harry Potter is the most referenced book (n = 9). The most frequent Harry Potter reference is the quote: *After all this time. Always* (n = 3). Table 83 shows the 9 script tattoos present in the corpus that reference the Harry Potter franchise.

Table 83 Harry Potter Themed Tattoos

Tattoo	<i>After all this time? Always</i>	<i>Mischief Managed</i>	<i>Always</i>	<i>Until the very end</i>	<i>Slytherin</i>	<i>Always dream</i>
Frequency	3	2	1	1	1	1

The presence of Harry Potter tattoos is in keeping with the age group represented in the data cohort. The first book of the series was published in 1997 and the last film was released in 2011. Tattoo bearer 362 has the tattoo: *Mischief Managed* and she explains that there was no decision to be made in terms of what language to use, her script tattoo would be in the original language of the franchise:

*'C'est la langue originale de Harry Potter, c'était évident que je n'allais pas choisir une autre langue'*

*[It is the original language of Harry Potter, it was clear that I wasn't going to choose another language]*

The tattoo bearers do not indicate whether they read the Harry Potter books or whether they only watched the films, nor did they indicate the language in which they read the books or watched the films. I have included it under literature because it is a well-known book and even if the person has not read the books, they probably are aware that the film is based on a series of books.

In some cases, as seen in other grief script tattoos, the content of the tattoo refers to a lost loved one. Tattoo bearer 67 lost her partner in a car accident and chose to have a line from his favourite book tattooed on her skin *Peace is a lie*. She explains that her tattoo is:

*'C'est une phrase tiré du livre préféré de mon compagnon décédé dans un accident de voiture. Elle reflète bien son état d'esprit. Et en anglais car il était anglais.'*

*[It's a phrase from my late partner's favourite book who died in a car accident. It reflects his state of mind. In English because he was English.]*

The above tattoo is an example of a grief tattoo whereby the language represents the nationality of the person, one of their pastimes, as well as representing the person's personality. The tattoo bearer does not write whether the book was written in English or whether it was a translation from a French book.

### **5.6.1.3 Television and Films**

There were 24 films cited by the tattoo bearers as being the theme of their tattoo. *Peter Pan* was the most frequently cited Disney film (n = 6). The film *Alice in Wonderland* is referred to once: *We're all mad here* but the quote appears a further three times in the corpus. I have categorised it once as literature as the tattoo bearer refers to the author Lewis Carroll, and the other three times as films as there is both the Disney animated version and the Tim Burton film and the tattoos are often accompanied by images of the Cheshire cat from either film. Three tattoo bearers did not give the film name and I was unable to find the corresponding films.

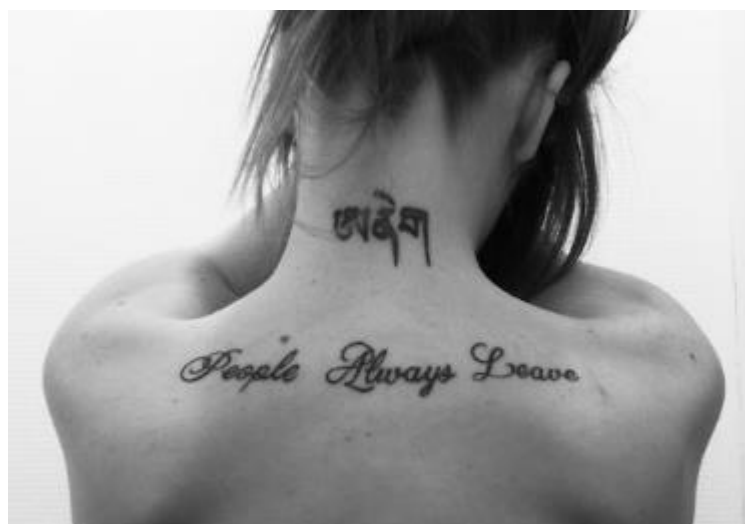
The North American television series *One Tree Hill* appeared in two tattoos both with the quote: *People Always Leave*. Tattoo bearer 312 explains that the phrase suits her well '*Car elle me correspond bien*', and tattoo bearer 194 gives more detail about the tattoo and its meaning for her:

*'Cette phrase vient d'une série enfin d'une fille dans la série et sa vie ressemble vachement à la mienne ( même si la sienne c'est de la fiction ) et cette phrase m'a marqué. J'ai d'abord regardé la série en anglais et cette phrase m'est resté.'*

*[This sentence comes from a series, well from a girl in the series and her life is very similar to mine (even if hers is fiction) and this sentence has stuck with me. I first watched the series in English and this sentence stayed with me.]*

The tattoo bearer relates to the fictional character and what she was going through and in particular the phrase *people always leave*. There could be a sense of solidarity for the tattoo bearer to know that she is not the only person that feels that way and has those types of life experiences.

Image 297 Tattoo Bearer 194



Two tattoo bearers have the name of a television series or film as their script tattoo: *breaking bad* and *The Sound of Music*. The remaining 36 tattoos referring to television series or films are quotes from the respective film or series. The use of quotes could be an indication that the person identified with a specific phrase or moment in the film or series rather than an appreciation of the film or series as a whole. Tattoo bearer 253 has the tattoo *The biggest fish in the river gets that way by never being caught* and wrote that the tattoo is a phrase from a Tim Burton film. The tattoo bearer explains that both Tim Burton as a director and the film have influenced and had a big impact on them. The tattoo bearer has two tattoos in English and writes that in their opinion it was *normal* to have the tattoos in the original language of the texts, the other tattoo is a quote from Shakespeare – *All the world's a stage*.

*'Phrase entendue dans le film Big Fish, de Tim Burton, réalisateur qui m'a fortement influencé et film qui m'a profondément marqué. A nouveau il me semblait plus normal d'inscrire la phrase dans la langue originale du film'*

[Phrase heard in the film *Big Fish*, by Tim Burton, director who has greatly influenced me and film which has profoundly impacted me. Once again, it seemed normal to me to write the phrase in the original language of the film]

The tattoo bearer explains that it was *normal* for her to keep the language the same as the original. This view is also reflected by tattoo bearer 410 who has the phrase *Never forget*. Even though the text is not an example of manifest intertextuality, the tattoo bearer writes that for her it was *natural* to have the tattoo in English:

*‘C’est venu naturellement ainsi, je voulais un tatouage pour exprimer un moment de ma vie et j’ai immédiatement pensé à cette phrase, à l’endroit où je l’ai fais. L’idée vient toute seule, d’elle-même il ne faut pas la forcer.’*

[It came naturally like that, I wanted a tattoo to express a moment in my life and I immediately thought of this phrase, where I did it. The idea came by itself, it didn’t need forcing.]

In this answer, the tattoo bearer explains that the tattoo decision process was in two steps. The first step was deciding that she wanted a tattoo to express a moment in her life, followed by the phrase to summarise the moment. There was no decision to choose the English language. It could be argued that this is again evidence of language flux, whereby the phrase *Never forget* is part of the tattoo bearer’s vocabulary and therefore on a par with the French equivalent. The phrases are synonymous to the bearer and it was the English version that came to her first.

### **5.6.2 Life Story and Self-Representation**

It has been noted that tattoos are often used as physical marks of life events (Blanchard, 1991; Fisher, 2002; C. Sanders, 1989) and also as markers of the bearer’s identity (Csesznek & Stemate, 2019). In this study, I refer to these themes as life story and self-representation. In Kirkland’s (2009) study, he describes the tattoos as a documentation of the tattoo bearer’s personal story and as a human act of literacy. The themes of life story (n = 82) and self-representation (n =64) refer to the script tattoos that are linked to the experiences of the tattoo bearer or that the bearers explain represent them as a person. The tattooed message, for example, could be about having overcome difficulties in their past. Tattoo bearer 181, explains that she chose two phrases in English: *Never back down* and *get up and fight* as they are linked to her past and present. Other participants go into more detail about the event that led them to being tattooed. The script tattoos that are categorised as life story are ones that describe events, whereas the self-representation category is for the script tattoos that the bearers feel represent them without a connection to a specific event. I have chosen to combine them in this category as some of the lines between *life story* and *self-representation* are not clear cut.



Tattoo bearer 301 has three tattoos in English that are examples of *life story* tattoos: *Stay Strong*, *My body my property*, and *My body my rules*. The three tattoos were pre-drawn by the tattoo artist (flash) and were chosen by the tattoo bearer as it was International Women’s Day. The tattoo bearer explains that two of the tattoos serve as a healing process after having been victim of rape and a reminder that she is the master of her own body and that she must not let herself be manipulated, *My body my property* and *My body my rules*. The third tattoo is linked to a period of self-harm when she was bullied at school, it is a message to herself that she is capable of overcoming obstacles.

*‘C’était des flash et c’était pour la journée des droits des femmes et parce que je me suis faites violée donc pour me rappeler que je ne suis pas fautive que je suis seule maitre de mon corps et que je dois pas me faire manipuler et pour stay strong depuis mon harcèlement au collège j’ai voulu le faire aux poignets car je le mutilais pour me rappeler de plus le faire car j’ai surmonter l’harcèlement donc je peux surmonter le reste’*

*[It was flash and it was for women’s rights day and because I was raped so to remind myself that I am not at fault that I am the sole master of my body and that I should not be manipulated and to stay strong after I was bullied at school I wanted to have it on my wrists because I was self-harming, to remind myself not to do it anymore because I have overcome the bullying so I can overcome the rest]*

The example above reminds the bearer that they overcame a negative life, however, not all the life experiences that the tattoo bearers mark their skin with are negative.

Tattoo bearer 179 has the words *STRAIGHT EDGE* tattooed on her lower back to represent the musical movement that has its own life philosophy and guidelines:

*‘Straight edge est un mouvement musical avec une « philosophie de vie qui obéit à plusieurs préceptes : dont drink, dont smoke, dont fuck. Ça correspondait à mon état d’esprit de ce moment’*

*[Straight edge is a musical movement with a life “philosophy” that follows several precepts: don’t drink, don’t smoke, don’t fuck. It matched my state of mind at the time.]*

Image 298 Tattoo Bearer 179



For tattoo bearer 179, her tattoo is like a photograph - it is a 'snapshot', or in this case 'ink shot', of how she was feeling and what she was doing at a period in her life. The tattoo serves as a physical reminder of this time of her life. She does not write whether it was a negative or positive time in her life, just that it was part of her mindset at the time.

An example of both a bro tat and a positive representation can be seen in tattoo bearer 457's tattoo. The bearer has the word *RISE* on her neck and her two sisters both have the same tattoo. She explains that it evokes the connotations of strength of mind and spirit. It was inspired by the song *Rise* which was covered by Stage of Mine but originally by Katy Perry.

Image 299 Tattoo Bearer 457



The tattoo of tattoo bearer 310 describes her tattoo as self-representative, but it could be argued that it is also a message to herself as it reads: *sometimes you need to let things go*.

*'J'ai choisi cette langue car je trouve qu'elle est magnifique, elle est universelle et ca parle à tout le monde. Et j'ai choisis cette phrase car c'est une phrase qui me représente maintenant'*

*[I chose this language because I think it's beautiful, it's universal and it speaks to everyone. I chose this phrase because it's a phrase that represents me now.]*

The quote above explains that the phrase is a representation of the bearer in the present; it also implies that the bearer was not able to let things go in the past. It could be argued that the tattoo is more of a message from the bearer to herself due to the use of the imperative and the pronoun *you*. However, the bearer describes their tattoo as a representation and therefore I have categorised it as such.

McCarty (2019) argues that in the context of counselling: *'the meaning assigned to the tattoo by the client is of greatest importance'* (p. 172), and it could be argued that this applies to all areas of the tattoo narrative. The bearer's meaning is the most important meaning to them, this does not mean that other people's interpretations are

not valid, just that in a counsellor setting, and my own study, the interpretation of an outsider is not the focus. McCarty (2019) explains that tattoos can have both meanings and functions, therefore it could also be argued that the meaning of the tattoo is to represent the bearer or a memory, but the function is that of a mantra or motivational message.

There is also an example of a potential repair mechanism in a script tattoo. Tattoo bearer 453 had the word *freedom* which referred to their toxic relationship with an ex-partner. The tattoo bearer then decided to add the words *is a state of mind* at a later date. This tattoo refers to both a negative past experience and a positive, present mindset.

**5.6.2.1 Travel**

It can be argued that tattoos related to travel can be considered a subcategory in life story tattoos. Travelling or living abroad are life events that for 17 tattoo bearers inspired a tattoo. For 11 tattoo bearers the tattoo reminds them of a past trip, for four of them the tattoo is a promise to travel in the future.

*Table 84 Tattoos Related to Travel*

<i>A Reminder</i>		<i>In General</i>	<i>A Promise</i>
<i>West ♡ side</i>	<i>If you're going to California</i>	<i>Wonderlust Pirate Sound travel</i>	<i>Free to fly wherever you want Right here Right now Go back to Japan</i>
<i>Detroit Lover</i>	<i>Punk's not dead</i>		
<i>Welcome to Paradise</i>	<i>It's about the journey, not the destination</i>		
<i>Hong kong</i>	<i>Silence</i>		
<i>Made in New York</i>			
<i>Bad Ass</i>			
<i>Trust yourself and be confident</i>			

As demonstrated in Table 84, in five script tattoos the name of the city or country is present, and in the remaining nine tattoos the meaning is not clear. For example, *Welcome to paradise* refers to a trip that the tattoo bearer took with his wife. Tattoo bearer 538 has the script tattoos *right here* and *right now* as a promise to herself to go travelling, she chose English as it is universal and explains that its universality represents her desire to visit several countries. Tattoo bearer 17 has the tattoo *Silence* following a trip to California where he climbed Mount Lassen. He explains that the silence on top of the mountain was majestic and therefore the tattoo captures this moment. The mountain can be seen behind the word and gives more context to the script tattoo.



In addition to the above tattoos related to travel, tattoo bearer 321 has the tattoo: *Made in France*, which is not related to travel, it is an identity marker of the tattoo bearer who is French. All six of his tattoos are in English: *I love you*, *Forever young*, *friends*, *family*, and *stronger than yesterday*. He writes that he speaks English and Elvish but only has tattoos in English because it is a language he has always liked. It could be argued that there is a certain irony in having the tattoo *Made in France* in English rather than French, but it could also be seen as being an additional layer to the identity of the tattoo bearer: 'in this global world I was made in France'.

### 5.6.2.2 Religion and Spirituality

It can be argued that religion and spirituality are also a part of a person's identity. However, I have chosen to separate them from the main category to focus on the contradiction between religion and tattoos. As seen in the literature review, it is written in the Bible and the Qu'ran that tattooing is forbidden (Brain, 1979; Larsson, 2011), and yet there is evidence to suggest that tattooing was a feature of some pilgrimages and the depth of a person's devotion (Plesch, 2002; A. T. Sinclair, 1908). This ambivalence can be seen in the comparatively few occurrences of religious tattoos.

Table 85 Religion and Spirituality

Religion		Spirituality
<p><i>THE DEVIL IS CALLING ME</i>  <i>Only God can judge me [x4]</i>  <i>Your beliefs don't make you a better person, your behavior does</i>  <i>Fallen</i>  <i>Little Devil</i>  <i>Fallen Angel</i>  <i>Demon; Angel</i></p>	<p><i>Lord, show me the way</i>  <i>Hell</i>  <i>Atheist</i>  <i>HELL RIDE</i>  <i>To hell</i>  <i>We are each our own demon and we create our own hell</i>  <i>Wrong side of heaven</i>  <i>Righteous side of hell</i></p>	<p><i>Serenity, courage, wisdom</i>  <i>Faith; Strong</i>  <i>Sacred Spirit</i>  <i>I put a spell on you</i>  <i>Faith</i>  <i>Faith hope love</i></p>

The tattoos can be divided into two categories: religion and spirituality. The first category contains the script tattoos that refer to religion or use language that is

associated with religion: *devil, hell, God, Lord, beliefs*, or the rejection of religion: *atheist*. The second category contains words associated with spirituality in general. Koller and Bullo (2019) suggest that the phrase *faith hope love* is from the Bible, but as the tattoo bearer has not specified this, I have classed it as spiritual rather than religion.

In the religious tattoos, the majority of phrases can be considered negative. Five of the tattoos contain the word *hell*, tattoo bearer 114 writes that her tattoo, *hell*, represents her 'dark' side. Tattoo bearer 196 explains that her tattoo *we are each our own demon and we create our own hell* is a quote attributed to Oscar Wilde and it summarises her mother's depression, tattoo bearer 300 also has a tattoo that was inspired by song lyrics: *wrong side of heaven; righteous side of hell* from the song *Wrong Side of Heaven* by Five Finger Death Punch.

The two tattoos *Fallen* and *Fallen Angel* refer to Lucifer the fallen angel in the Bible. Three tattoos use the word *devil* or *demon*. Tattoo bearer 256 has the words *demon* and *angel* as they both represent her; she writes that *angel* is her nickname but that she was often described as a 'little demon'. The tattoo: *I am the Devil, and I am here to do the Devil's work* is from the film *Devil's Rejects*, tattoo bearer 354 prefers the look and the length of the quote in the original language. She adds that as the words are in English, they will not be instantly read by the people around her, unless they take the time to read and understand the words. The tattoo bearer uses English to make the tattoo more private, this is also reflected in the reasoning she gives in the survey: 'la raison de cette phrase est personnelle (mais rien de démoniaque ou dangereux 🤪 je rassure)' [*The reason for this sentence is personal (but nothing demonic or dangerous 🤪 I reassure you)*].

There are five phrases referring to God or the Lord: *Only God can judge me* and *Lord, show me the way*. The first phrase verbatim is first accredited to the North American rapper Tupac featuring Rappin' 4-Tay (SMF, 2019), despite appearances it was not taken from the Bible – several verses mention judgement but these exact words do not appear in the scripture (Patterson, 2018). The phrase *Lord, show me the way* does not feature in the Bible either, similar to *Only God can judge me*, only variations of the phrase can be found. It could be argued that neither of these phrases are positive. The phrase *only God can judge me* suggests that the speaker is distanced from other humans and looks to their deity for their main connection. Similarly, *Lord, show me the way* suggests that the speaker is lost and is in need of guidance.

The script tattoos categorised as spiritual, rather than religious, can be considered less specific and more positive. For example, there is less context present in the one-word tattoos, yet, they are all positive: *wisdom, faith, strong etc.* The script tattoo *I put a spell on you* could be considered to have negative connotations, this would be in keeping with the majority of tattoo bearer 592's other tattoos: *bad luck* in English, *deo non fortuna* and *sic luceat lux* in Latin [*God is not lucky and so the light shines*], and *tu vas manger tes dents* and *et merde* in French [*you are going to eat your teeth and oh shit*].<sup>79</sup> Each language was chosen for a specific reason, he explains that he chose Latin in order to make his tattoos more personal, English because it is a musical language, and French because it is his mother tongue and often overlooked in the world of tattooing.

### 5.6.3 Family

There are 113 script tattoos that are related to the theme of family. People express their relationships to their families differently, in this study, there are examples of siblings sharing tattoos, tattoos for lost family members, and tattoos in honour of living family members. Within the theme of family, several different sub-themes can be observed. The hypernym *family* can be reduced to hyponyms: parents, siblings, father, sister etc. Tattoos relating to parenthood - both as a parent and about the bearer's parents, childhood, siblings, as well as tattoos about family as a whole. One script tattoo can contain a reference to more than one family member, for example tattoo bearer 47 has the script tattoo: *Dad & Mom* which counts as one tattoo but refers to two family members. Table 86 shows the breakdown of each subsection.

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<sup>79</sup> The phrase implies that one person will hit another so hard that their teeth will fall out.

Table 86 Family Themed Tattoos

Sub-theme	Family	Parents	Siblings	Parenthood	Grandparents
Frequency	24	Dad = 25 Mother = 21	Sister = 12 Brother = 12	Child(ren) = 9	Grandmother = 8 Grandfather = 7 Great-grandfather = 1
Script Tattoos	Rock	We are each our own on and we create our own hell.	2 386 Days	Warrior	Since you have gone to heaven angels have never been so beautiful.
Reasoning	The script tattoo represents the bearer's connection with their biological family.	An homage to the participants' mother during her fight against depression.	The tattoo refers to the difference in age between the tattoo bearer and her brother	For a daughter born with a congenital cardiopathy.	The tattoo is for a grandfather who passed away

The word *family* appears as a single word tattoo 14 times. It then features a further eight times in longer script tattoos such as *Honor your family*, and *Only God and my family can judge me*. There are two tattoos whereby the word *family* is not used but it is implied, for example in the tattoo *When you do not know where you're going look where you're from*.

Image 301 Tattoo Bearer 63



Just as with the tattoos about family in general, not all the tattoos about a family member contain the word *family*, or *mom* for example. Tattoo bearer 63 has the number of days between her birthday and her brother's birthday. Tattoo bearer 582 also has tattoos linked to birthdays, she has *dad* and *mom* with each of their birthdays.

All the family-related tattoos are out of love for their loved ones, even the grieving tattoos come from a place of love, except one. Tattoo bearer 478 has the words *Stay Strong* to represent the relationship they have with their parents who have refused to recognise them as their child for 15 years.

*'Pour la signification ça reflète ma vie antérieure et actuelle. En effet, ma vie n'a jamais été facile.... Du coup "never look back" car il faut avancer et laisser le passé derrière et Stay Strong pcq mes parents me renient depuis 15 ans du coup je dois de rester forte malgré ma peine'*

*[For the meaning it reflects my past and present life. In fact, my life has never been easy. So "never look back" because you have to keep moving forward and leave the past behind and Stay Strong because my parents have refused to acknowledge me for 15 years and so I have to stay strong despite the pain.]*

They also have the tattoo *Never look back* which also refers to the bearer's life and is a reminder for them to keep moving forward. Unlike the other family themed tattoos, these script tattoos are a permanent reminder of the difficulties the tattoo bearer has faced and the rejection from their parents.

The script tattoo *warrior* is worn by two people in this study, tattoo bearer 213 for his daughter who was born with congenital issues, and tattoo bearer 497 who has the tattoo for her late mother. Both of these tattoo bearers wear the word *warrior* for another person. In Koller and Bullo's (2019) study, the word *warrior* was worn as a script tattoo by an endometriosis sufferer in support of their own struggles.

#### **5.6.4 Mottos, Messages, and Mantras**

The fourth most popular theme seen in the tattoo corpus is that of mottos, messages, and mantras. In McCarty's (2019) study, most of the messages appear to be towards others: - in this study the messages are mainly for the bearer themselves. The script tattoos that are messages intended to warn, declare, or ask things of the readers and/or tattoo bearer can be considered act-constituting agency of language (Duranti, 2004).

The messages can be divided into two categories: either as a message for the tattoo bearer themselves (n = 73), for example: *Believe in your dreams 'pas utile que tous le monde comprend c'est pour moi c'est une sort de memo'* [not useful for everyone to understand it's for me a sort of memo] or for the people who read their tattoos (n = 2), for example: *Stay with me*. There were five messages where the intended recipient of the message was not specified.

I have only categorised the tattoos as being a message when the tattoo bearer has clearly identified that it is one in their survey answers: for example, by using one of the



following words: motto, message, mantra, remind(er), aspiration, inspiration, belief, philosophy, leitmotif, and memo. This means that the phrase *never give up* can be categorised as a motto by someone who describes it as such, and as unknown where the tattoo bearer has not indicated that it is a motto. I would argue that many of the tattoos in the corpus are mottos and messages from the tattoo bearers to themselves, but the bearers did not write it in the survey answers.

Most of the messages to the tattoo bearer from themselves are in the second personal singular and particularly in the imperative, for example: *love yourself*. This could be interpreted as the goal of the tattoo bearer, and at the moment of being tattooed they wanted to change the way they saw themselves.

Tattoo bearer 13 has the word *Joy* and she explains that the word represents her childhood, being positive, and that English is her second language: *'Il s'agit de ma seconde langue La phrase en rapport à mon enfance Le mot en rapport à un coup dur de la vie, qui me rappelle qu'il faut toujours aller de l'avant et rester positif' [It's my second my language The phrase related to my childhood The word related to a hard blow in life, which reminds me to always move on and stay positive]*. In this response the tattoo bearer is saying that the tattoo has a job - it is there to remind them to keep going. This idea of a tattoo reminding someone of something and/or to do something is repeated in the answers by other tattoo bearers.

In the case of tattoo bearer 16, the script tattoo is the word *Smile* and the tattoo bearer writes: *'Le mot smile pour me rappeler de sourire même si le cœur n'y est pas. En anglais car c'est le titre de la chanson de Charlie Chaplin qui est juste magnifique est représente bien ce que j'avais en tête. [The word smile is to remind me to smile even when my heart isn't in it. In English because it's the title of a Charlie Chaplin song which is beautiful and represents what I had in mind well.]* This tattoo combines a personal idea with a song that summarises those feelings. Tattoo bearer 343 has the tattoo *Happiness is not a destination, it's a way of life* and wrote that *'La phrase est clairement un petit mentra pour moi.'* *[The phrase is clearly a little mantra for me]*. In this phrase the tattoo bearer is also focusing on the present and not a past event.

Other tattoo bearers explain that the words in their script tattoo describe the way in which they try to live their lives. Tattoo bearer 12 has the tattoo *Never lose hope* and refers to it as her *'ligne de conduite'* *[course of action]* which is associated with future actions. This is echoed by tattoo bearer 380 who has the tattoo: *If you can dream it you can do it* which they describe as *'...une philosophie de vie.'* *[A life philosophy]*. The

use of a tattoo as a comment on the bearer's life has also been documented by Kirkland (2009), he refers to this as the 'philosophy of life' (p. 387).

There are also script tattoos that serve as a reminder of past events and achievements. The tattoo *Bloom* is a reminder to the tattoo bearer of a physical transformation of her body: '*Jaoni [sic] bras totalement floral et sudiste. Cela veut dire floraison. J'ai perdu 27kg ya presque 2 ans. Du renouveau pour mon corps.*' [*Jaoni is a totally flora and southern arm. That means blooming. I lost 27kg almost 2 years ago. Renewal for my body.*] The word bloom represents the renewal her body went through and is accompanied by a sleeve tattoo of flowers covering her arm.<sup>80</sup>

A second tattoo bearer also decided to get an English tattoo after losing 50kg. The tattoo reads: *you are your own limit*. The aim of the tattoos is to be a constant reminder that the bearer is capable of making changes: '*Je m'en pensais incapable mais je l'ai fait, et j'étais ma propre limit. Je l'ai tatouté pour ne pas oublier que si je veux, je peux*' [*I thought I was incapable but I did it and I was my own limit. I got it tattooed so I wouldn't forget that if I want it, I can do it*]. This reflects Kirkland's (2009) findings where tattoos represent a person's struggle, and that the struggle itself is also symbolic of the act of being tattooed: 'the flesh reveals the pain that gets experienced in life' (p. 328).

Image 302 Tattoo Bearer 226



The script tattoo: *Choose your scars* has two messages for two readers. Firstly, the placement of the tattoo, on the bearer's right fist is both a message of warning to

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<sup>80</sup> A sleeve tattoo is the term for several tattoos or a one-piece tattoo that wrap around a limb: leg or arm. There is generally a cohesive theme, style, or colour that links the tattoos on the limb if it is not a one-piece tattoo. Sleeve tattoos can be half, three quarter or full length.

any people who might start a fight with the tattoo bearer. Whilst the visible nature of the tattoo serves as a reminder for the tattoo bearer of the pain of being tattooed and living life. He sees the message as a means of encouragement as its placement is key for being present as a constant reminder that things happen in life, but how they scar you is your own choice.

*'Choose yours scars: pareil plusieurs raisons, il est sur mon point droit, pour la bagarre c'est un avertissement a celui qui est en face, c'est aussi un rappel de ce qui est pour moi la démarche du tatouage, enfin c'est un encouragement que je vois tout le temps, en gros tu ne choisis pas ce qui t'arrive mais tu choisis les cicatrices que ca te laisse (en anglais pour que la phrase soit plus concise.)'*

*[Choose yours scars: same several reasons, it's on the back of my right hand, it's a warning for fighting, it's also a reminder of what is for me a tattoo, well, it's motivational and I see it all the time, basically you don't choose what happens to you but you choose the scar that it leaves you with (in English to make the sentence more concise)]*

Some of the messages are to a tattoo bearer from a loved one. The tattoo bearer decides to have a loved one's phrase tattooed on them as a way of keeping that person close and remembering what they would say to them. This is the case of tattoo bearer 303, who has the phrase *follow your bliss* tattooed on them in memory of their grandfather as it was a phrase he would often say. Tattoo bearer 303 does not specify whether their grandfather was English-speaking or would say the phrase in English, but they provide the French translation: *suivez votre bonheur*.

The participants often explained that the tattoos were messages to themselves, tattoo bearer 22 wrote:

*'Le mot family pour ma famille qui represente beaucoup pour moi ainsi que strength qui signifie force pour l'histoire de mon passé très douloureux qui m'a mise en dépression y a 6 ans et celle ci dure encore. C'est pour me rappeler continuellement que malgré mes tentatives de suicide et ma dépression je reste "forte".'*

*[The word family for my family which represents a lot for me as well as the word strength which means strength for the story of my very painful past which led me to depression 6 years ago and is still the case today. It's to continually remind me that despite my suicide attempts I stay "strong".]*

This person has chosen this tattoo in relation to their past, depression and suicide attempts. Depending on its placement, it is conceivable that the tattoo could be seen daily. For example, if it is placed on a person's hands, they would almost constantly have the words or image tattooed in their line of vision.

This concludes the section on the themes and meanings. This study has highlighted the difficulties in determining a tattoo's theme or meaning when there is

limited information from the tattoo bearer. The most common themes were of manifest intertextuality whereby the phrase in the tattoo is taken directly from an existing text, such as a song or poem. The next section explores the reasons the participants gave for being tattooed in English.

## 5.7 Reasons for Being Tattooed in English

In the online survey the participants were asked why they had chosen to be tattooed in English. Of the 602 participants, 480 gave a reason for being tattooed in English. The 480 bearers gave one or more reasons per tattoo ( $n = 1,484$ ). The question was formatted as an open-ended question and required the participants to write an answer. This meant that each answer was unique and finding a coherent category to group the reasons together was not evident in each case.

Table 87 Main Reasons Given for Being Tattooed in English

<i>Reason</i>	<i>Number of times cited</i>
<i>English Aesthetics</i>	255
<i>Language Authenticity</i>	193
<i>Message Encryption or Comprehension</i>	105
<i>No Reason</i>	125

Table 87 shows the reasons given by the remaining 480 participants in more detail. Each category is accompanied by quotes from the survey. A translation is provided for each quote. The main reasons for being tattooed in English will be discussed in more detail with examples in the following sections. For the full survey and reasons see appendices.

### 5.7.1 English Aesthetics

One of four reasons for getting a tattoo according to Blanchard (1991) and C. Sanders (1989) is for aesthetic reasons. Mora et al. (2016) interview a tattoo artist who finds that some people favour English because of aesthetics: 'English is a stronger language in terms of pronunciation and what-not... I also think it's about phonetics; English phonetics seems to sound better than Spanish, then I think it's more tattooable... the way it sounds' (pp. 13-14).

In this study, the most frequent reason for choosing English was because the participants preferred their tattoo in English aesthetically ( $n = 255$ ). The word *prefer* suggests that the tattoo bearer could have hesitated between English and another language. This could be due to the sound of the word, the visual arrangement of the letters, or the content of the phrase itself. Table 88 details the aesthetic reasons given for choosing for English.

Table 88 Aesthetic Reasons Given for Choosing English

Reason	Frequency
The bearer likes English	77
The script tattoo 'sounds better in English' and 'it gives better in English' <sup>81</sup>	45 (39 + 6)
The script tattoo was 'prettier in English'	46
The script tattoo 'looks better in English'	30
The script tattoo was shorter in English	21
The tattoo bearer preferred it in English	20
The bearer likes the pronunciation	8
In order to modify the words	6
The bearer liked the script tattoo in English	2

As written in the table above, the tattoo bearers' top reason for choosing English is that the English language is aesthetically pleasing in general. Tattoo bearer 493 has the tattoo: *Every heart has a story to tell*; wrote that they chose English because: *'L'anglais est phonétiquement plus beau que le français. Plus courant également. Il apporte une symbolique plus avenante aux mots.'* [English is phonetically more beautiful than French. It is also more common. It brings a more appealing symbolism to the words.] Tattoo bearer 493 only has one tattoo in English, but from their response it would suggest that they like English in general rather than just liking this particular phrase in English, this is echoed by 75 other respondents including tattoo bearer 485.

Image 303 Tattoo Bearer 485



*'Et la phrase en anglais je les choisi car j'aime beaucoup la langue anglaise.'*

*[And I chose the phrase in English because I like the English language a lot.]*

In the survey, the sound of the words was given as a reason for choosing English: often using the French expressions: *ça sonne mieux* (n = 39) and *ça donne mieux* (n

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<sup>81</sup> « Ça sonne mieux en anglais » and « Ça donne mieux en anglais » were the actual phrases used by the participants and were understood as 'to sound better'. It is unclear if they meant to write 'donne' or if it was a typing error.

= 6). The French expression *sonner mieux* means to sound better. The use of the word *donner* also refers to the sound of the phrase, though it is less common as an expression. The pronunciation of the script tattoo was also cited 8 times as the reason for having the tattoo in English.

Tattoo bearer 76 has the tattoo *live laugh love* and she explained that she liked the consonance of the words in English. Tattoo bearer 109 also chose an English phrase because of the way it sounded: '*La consonance est plus jolie à l'oreille et celebre phrase inscrite sur le tee shirt d'Harley quinn. Fan de ce personnage je voulais faire une dedicace à mon papa*' [*the consonance is more pleasing to the ear and the famous phrase is written on Harley Quinn's shirt. I'm a fan of the character and wanted to do it in homage to my dad.*] Tattoo bearer 76 does not specify *what* the English phrase is prettier than. Tattoo bearer 384, who has the tattoo *Music is life*, also wrote that it was phonetically prettier in English: '*phonétiquement plus joli*' without specifying *what* it is prettier than. It could be one of the three other languages he speaks: French, Spanish, and Italian. Tattoo bearer 591, who has the tattoo *Fight like a girl*, also chose English because she found the phrase to be both more aesthetically and sonorously pleasing without specifying the other options. The phrase *fight like a girl* is shared by a female with endometriosis seen in Koller and Bullo's (2019) study. Kosut (2000) writes that despite being written text, interactions between tattoo bearers and others may prompt a verbal exchange whereby the tattoo is read aloud. This may be one of the reasons why the above tattoo bearers chose words and phrases for their sounds. This also further reflects the multimodality of these written texts whereby the oral production of them is important to the tattoo bearer.

The use of the words: *consonance*, *sonority*, and *phonetics* in the reasons for having an English tattoo, implies that for these tattoo bearers, the idea of their tattoos being read aloud was a possibility and they wanted the written texts to be pleasing to the ear. This is evidence of the multimodality of tattoos. Despite being written texts, the pronunciation of the script tattoos when read aloud is often very important to the tattoo bearers, as demonstrated by the 53 participants in the survey.

As well as the vocal aspect of the script tattoos the visual aspect is also important to the tattoo bearers. As explored in section 2.4.3 of the literature review, tattoos can be considered a form of art. The visual aspect of a tattoo is often very important to the tattoo bearers, it was cited by 30 participants. The shape and positions of the letters can affect the choice of phrase and tattoo. Some tattoo bearers choose certain words, and languages, because of the way they look. For example, tattoo bearer 512 has the

tattoo *alone against the world* in English and she writes that she chose English because of its visual and vocal aesthetics: *'L'anglais pour l'esthétique visuelle et vocale'*.

A level of ambiguity is present in the 37 responses where the tattoo bearer said it was prettier in English without always specifying whether this was visually or audibly, or in comparison to another language. Seventeen tattoo bearers wrote that their script tattoo was in English because the phrase or words were 'prettier', 13 specified that the phrase or words were prettier in English than French, eight participants wrote that the phrase or words were 'pretty' or 'beautiful', 'cooler', 'more elegant', 'more poetic' or 'nicer'. The same ambiguity is seen in the 29 responses whereby the participant states that they preferred their tattoo in English, again without specifying the alternative options. Ten participants stated that they preferred English and nine explained that they preferred English to French.

In the survey Tattoo bearer 1 gave three reasons for choosing English. He wrote that his tattoo sounded better in English, fit better in the intended space, and also finds English to be prettier than French:

*'La phrase donnait beaucoup mieux en anglais qu'en français, ça passait mieux dans le cou et je trouve que l'anglais est nettement plus jolie que le français'*

*[the phrase sounded better in English than in French, it fit better on my neck and I think that English is much nicer than French]*

Image 304 Tattoo Bearer 1



He does not specify whether he thinks that English in general sounds prettier or looks prettier than French. Tattoo bearer 2 is also vague as she writes that she chose English because she thinks it is pretty: *'Et j'ai choisi l'anglais car je trouve ça plus jolie.'* One tattoo bearer just wrote *'plus jolie'* [prettier] with no further indications. Tattoo bearer 555 wrote that she chose to have the script tattoos *believe* and *true love never dies* in English because she found the phrases to be prettier in both written and spoken

in English than in French: *‘Je trouvais l’écriture et la façon de le dire beaucoup plus jolie qu’en français’.*

These responses, although vague, suggest that there was a decision made by the tattoo bearers between English and another language, the choice was not as direct as when the tattoo bearer took a phrase from the English-speaking world. In this case, the tattoo bearers could have started with the idea of their tattoo before choosing the phrase and language, rather than starting with a direct quote.

### 5.7.1.1 Canvas Constraints

One of the common reasons for choosing a phrase in English given in the survey is that the phrase was shorter in English, Graph 10 tentatively supports this view as there is a negative correlation between length and frequency of tattoos in English. Previous research explains that during the tattooing process there is a lot of attention paid to how the tattoo will look after completion. Peck and Stroud (2015) spent time in a tattoo parlour and observed the client and artist checking the position of the tattoo before application (p. 3). This suggests that the overall aesthetics of the tattoo can be more important than the language for some tattoo bearers, this is supported by some of the tattoo bearers in this section.

Table 89 contains a list of 13 tattoos that were chosen in English as they were shorter than in French as well as their French translations according to the tattoo bearers. There were two more bearers who gave length as the reason for choosing English, their tattoos are discussed below the table.

Table 89 Script Tattoos by length in French and English

<i>English Script Tattoo</i>	<i>French translation by tattoo bearers when provided</i>	<i>Length Difference</i>
<i>FUCK 2020</i>	<i>Putain de 2020 / Nique 2020*</i>	<i>1 word</i>
<i>We re all mad here</i>	<i>Nous sommes tous fou ici</i>	<i>1 word</i>
<i>True love Nevers die</i>	<i>L’amour vrai ne meurt jamais</i>	<i>2 words</i>
<i>Love is pain</i>	<i>L’amour es peine</i>	<i>1 word</i>
<i>Love hurts</i>	<i>L’amour fait mal</i>	<i>2 words</i>
<i>Basketball changed my life</i>	<i>Le basket a changé ma vie*</i>	<i>2 words</i>
<i>Pretty hurts</i>	<i>difficulté qui font grandir</i>	<i>2 words</i>
<i>Trust no one</i>	<i>Ne fais confiance à personne</i>	<i>2 words</i>
<i>Good time</i>	<i>les bon moment</i>	<i>1 word</i>
<i>No pain is forever</i>	<i>Aucune souffrance n’est éternelle</i>	<i>1 word</i>
<i>No regret</i>	<i>Pas de regret</i>	<i>1 word</i>
<i>You see all my light</i>	<i>Tu vois toute ma lumière</i>	<i>16 letters vs 20 letters</i>
<i>I am the Devil, and I am here to do the Devil’s work</i>	<i>Je suis le diable et jsuis sur Terre pour accomplir son œuvre</i>	<i>40 letters vs 50 letters</i>

\*Translations provided by researcher

Table 89 shows that of the 13 phrases, all of them were longer in French than in English. Five tattoos were 2 words longer in French, six were 1 word longer, and two



were the same number of words but 4 and 10 letters longer. The translations given were written by the participants except *Le basket a change ma vie* and *Putain de 2020*. The latter tattoo will be analysed further at the end of this section.

One tattoo bearer chose the phrase *Work Hard* rather than the French *Travailleur Dur* because both English words are four letters long and therefore fit on his knuckles. The same reasoning is given by tattoo bearer 226 who has *ANTI HERO* on his knuckles, and tattoo bearer 27 who chose *hope* rather than *Espoir* also on his knuckles.

Image 305 Tattoo Bearer 226



The *ANTI HERO* tattoo was inspired by Charles Bukowski, as well as the bearer's opinion that villains are often the most interesting characters in a story, and finally in the sense of the silent everyday hero:

*'Anti hero: pour la polyvalence du sens, les méchants sont souvent les personnages les plus intéressants des récits, mais aussi pour la figure de l'anti héros façon Charles Bukowski, ou l'anti héros dans le sens du héros du quotidien que personne ne remarque mais qui fait ce qui doit être fait. (en anglais pour le nombre de lettres sur les phalanges)'*

*[Anti hero: for the versatility of meaning, villains are often the most interesting characters in stories, but also for anti hero figure in the sense of Charles Bukowski, or the anti hero in the sense of the everyday hero who nobody notices but who does what needs to be done. (In English for the number of letters on my phalanges)]*

One of the differences between English script tattoos and French translations is the absence of articles. The articles *le*, *la* and *les*, are necessary in French in order to have a grammatically cohesive sentence, whereas English does not always require an article. In the sentences in Table 89, only the English definite article *the* is present and it appears twice in the same tattoo. Whereas in the French translations there are six instances of the French article *le*.

Verb constructions in French also make the phrases longer. The past historic in French is mainly used in literature and it is often replaced by the present perfect in

everyday texts. The verb *change* in the past simple and present perfect in English are *changed* and *has changed*, and the words are *changea* versus *a changé* in French. Another verb translation that is shorter in English is *hurt*, the verb *hurt* is translated by the tattoo bearer to *faire mal*.

Another grammatical element that lengthens the French phrases is the use of prepositions. In the phrase *no regrets*, there is no need for a preposition in English, however in French the equivalent negative construction is 'pas de' (not of) and the preposition cannot be dropped. Negations in French are often formed by two words whereas in English the words *no*, *not*, or *never* is often enough. The same can be seen with the interjection *putain de* in French which is translated into English with the single word: *fuck*. The word *fuck* is used in 12 tattoos.

<i>Tattoos with the word 'fuck'</i>	
<i>Fuck 2020</i>	<i>I have a fucking brain</i>
<i>Fuck love</i>	<i>Bad mother fucker</i>
<i>Fuck you and love you</i>	<i>Fucker peace [UNCHK]</i>
<i>FUCK</i>	<i>Queen of fucking everything</i>
<i>Fuck me</i>	<i>But on the good days, I'm charming as fuck</i>
<i>Fuck Coriander</i>	<i>Nobody dies Virgin. Life fucks us all</i>

Tattoo bearer 470 also felt that their tattoo(s) were better in English than in French: *Queen of fucking everything* instead of *la reine du putain de tout*. Tattoo bearer 17 has three tattoos in English, *where words fail music speaks*, *silence*, and *FUCK 2020*. This could suggest that the use of English was in keeping with his other tattoos. He explains that in the tattoo *FUCK 2020* the phrase is shorter and has more impact in English.



One tattoo bearer has the words *faith* and *strong*. The reasoning behind the choice of English, according to tattoo bearer 48, is that the words are shorter in English than

in French and are more powerful in English. There are three options for *faith* in English: *confiance*, *foi*, and *fidélité*. The word *strong* has many possible translations in French including *force*, *puissance*, *fermeté*, *intensité*, and *solidité*. With further information from the tattoo bearer, I learnt that *faith* was used to encompass both *foi* and *confiance*. Whilst *strong* was used to translate *force*. This is evidence that the connotations of a word are very important to the tattoo bearers, not just the translation. The French words were not only the wrong length for the tattoo, but they were lacking strength and power for the tattoo bearer despite sharing the same meaning as the English translations. The tattoo bearer also reiterated that for her, the words were linked to the images alongside her tattoos and that her choice of language was a part of that decision.

Image 307 Tattoo Bearer 48



One participant explains that they wanted the tattoo on their chest and therefore chose English as a matter of aesthetics and length. For tattoo bearer 361, the shorter English phrase '*Love Never Dies*' was more aesthetically pleasing on their chest than the longer French translation: '*l'amour ne meurt jamais.*' The English phrase contains two fewer words than the French equivalent if we count *l'amour* as two words. The English phrase is 13 letters long versus the French phrase which is 19 letters long.

*'Parce que la phrase est plus courte en anglais et voulant le faire sur le torse je ne voulais pas trop de mot (c'est un avis esthétique pour ma part). Je l'ai fait au suicide de mon père, tout d'abord c'était un hommage (car il aimait le tatouage) puis au fil du temps j'en ai fait une philosophie que je mets en place sur tout un tas de sujet'*

*[Because the sentence is shorter in English and as I wanted to do it on my chest I didn't want too many words (it was a question of aesthetics for me). I did it after my father's suicide, at first it was a tribute (because he liked tattoos) then over time I made it a philosophy that I put in place for a lot of subjects.]*

This tattoo bearer also explains that a tattoo is, and can become, a motto or mantra for the bearer. It is often a phrase that is part of their life and helps guide the person through difficult times, either linking them to a person, in this case a lost father, or to a

feeling. Tattoos as mantras and mottos is discussed further in section 5.6.4: Mottos, Messages and Mantras.

Choosing English for a tattoo for aesthetic reasons is not restricted to French speakers. Mora et al. (2016) also find that some people favour English because the equivalent translation is often shorter than the Spanish alternative:

*'Sometimes in Spanish, the text looks too big, so to speak. In English, they shorten a lot of the words [...] also saving skin space... for example, if you're going to make a really big text in Spanish, that would cover a lot of space, so one has to start reducing the font size, and that with time will begin to look like a blot. So, one has to find shorter phrases and also look that words are more visible and larger so that, in a few years, that can still look good aesthetically...well that's something that has appeared recently because other people didn't use to think about that...'* (pp. 13-14)

This one extract from a tattoo artist highlights the challenges tattoo artists and tattoo bearers face. It is not just a question of finding a phrase, but also a font, a size, a placement, and maybe an accompanying image. Tattoos can be spontaneous or well-thought out, but both require many decisions on the part of the tattoo bearer and/or artist.

#### **5.7.1.2 English is Simpler than French**

Following on from the idea that English uses fewer words than French, four tattoo bearers wrote that their phrase was simpler or that the English language itself is simple(r). Tattoo bearer 53 explains that the English language is both simpler and prettier than French because the French language has too many adjectives and conjugations. The tattoos in question are *sister* and *just like you*, which can be translated to *sœurs* and *juste comme toi/vous* in French.

When asked to translate their tattoo into French, many respondents give a much longer and more detailed explanation in French. This is demonstrated in the tattoo *work hard*. Tattoo bearer 257, who has *work hard*, wrote that the phrase sums up that if you want to succeed in life, you must work hard: *'Sa rentrais pile sur mes deux poignet Phrase qui résume un peu la vie travaille dur si tu veux réussir'*. [It fitted perfectly on my two wrists [the] phrase sums up life a bit: work hard if you want to succeed].

These tattoo bearers support the Sapir-Whorf theory seen in section 2.7.1 of the literature review. The tattoo bearers have an idea for their tattoo and use the tool of English rather than French to form the words to describe the message they would like for their tattoo. The preference for English rather than French, or another language,

could also be due to the grammatical structure of the language. Ahearn (2001) explains that speakers, and in this case writers, 'are constrained to some degree by the grammatical structures of their particular language' (p. 120), this may be one reason for tattoo bearers and graffiti writers choosing English, or hybrid words and phrases, to convey messages that they are unable to within the constraints of French.

Mora et al. (2016) interview a tattoo artist who explains some of the reasons why people favour English over Spanish: 'English is a stronger language in terms of pronunciation and what-not... I also think it's about phonetics; English phonetics seem to sound better than Spanish, then I think it's more tattoo-able... the way it sounds' (pp. 13–14). Once again, it is interesting that the sound of a purely written text is a focus point for the tattoo bearer and tattoo artist. This suggests that tattoos are meant to be read.

### 5.7.1.3 Modification and Hybridity

Twenty participants chose English as they believe English is easier to modify. These modifications included replacing individual letters with shapes or numbers, or combining the text with an image. These modifications were either for aesthetic reasons: combining the text with the accompanying drawings. In this corpus there were four examples of hybridity in the script tattoos. There were two examples of hybridity using symbols. One example of hybridity is between two words in English, and an additional three examples of script tattoos that contain both English and French.

Three tattoo bearers chose words based on the form of the letters in English. Tattoo bearer 273 has two script tattoos, one in French and one in English. The English script tattoo reads: *Never forget*. The tattoo bearer chose English because she wanted to change the letter *f* into a treble clef. The fact that the tattoo bearer did not choose French suggests that she believes that the modification was not as easy with the French translation *n'oublie pas* or that the proposed modification was less aesthetically pleasing.

The same style of modification can be seen in the tattoo *M♥M* whereby the *O* has been replaced with a heart. Tattoo bearer 75 explains that the choice of English was based on this modification: '*J'ai choisi cette langue car je pouvais remplacer le O par un cœur tout ça intégrer dans un électrocardiogramme.*' [*I chose this language because I could replace the O with a heart and fit in into an electrogramme*]. This indicates that the tattoo bearer believed that this was not possible, or at least less aesthetically pleasing than modifying the French equivalents *mère* and *maman*.

Tattoo bearer 209 also chose the English word *family* because of the positioning of letters in the word. She explains that in her tattoo the word *family* can be read as *one love* in reverse: *family 'en anglais parce que avec un certains style d'écriture sa faisait one love a l'envers parce que pour moi c'est la famille d'abord'*. This reasoning would suggest that the word play was not possible with the French equivalents: *famille* and *un amour*. This could also be because the phrase *one love* is not used in the same way in French. In English, it is the title of at least six songs.

Two of the four examples that contain both **English** and French, and are not examples of potential auto-correct or typing errors are: *Le mort ne remplace pas l'amour mom* and *Pichouline forever*. There are also the script tattoos: *Maman, toi know I love toi, you're thé Queen if m'y Heart* and *un life, one chance* which both belong to tattoo bearer 153. As I do not have a photograph or a means to contact the tattoo bearer, I do not know if the responses she gave to the survey are tattooed the same way on her skin or if this is interference by the auto correct. In any case, the script tattoos contain both English and French words and are examples of potential hybridity.

Three tattoo bearers chose English as they explained that the wording was 'softer' than the French translation. Two tattoo bearers described the English translation as being '*plus doux*' [*softer*]. This was echoed by tattoo bearer 438 who wrote that the phrase *hurt me* seemed softer in English: *pour qu'il paraisse plus 'doux' [so that it seemed softer]*. Tattoo bearer 189 has the script tattoos: *Childhood, To the moon and back, self love, and girl power*.

*'J'ai choisi ces mots en anglais car ils étaient importants pour moi, je préfère parfois la version anglaise des mots car ça sonne plus doux ou c'est plus joli, c'est aussi parfois moins long à écrire (des fois on manque de place)'*

*[I chose these words in English because they were important to me, I sometimes prefer the English version of the words because it sounds softer or it's prettier, it also sometimes takes less time to write (sometimes we run out of place).]*

As seen in the quote above by tattoo bearer 189, some people give more than one reason for having a tattoo in English. This suggests that for some tattoo bearers, the script tattoo must comply with various conditions when being chosen and prepared. For example, body placement and tattoo length are crucial on heavily tattooed people or when tattooing a specific area like the phalanges. Then there is the personal preference for the visual and vocal aesthetics of the tattoo, as well as the content of the script tattoo itself.

Two tattoo bearers describe the English translation as being preferable to the French. Tattoo bearer 353 has the script tattoo *SLOTH* and the bearer explains that they found the word *sloth* to be prettier than  *paresse* in French as well as being less stigmatising in English: '*je trouvais ça joli et moins stigmatisant que de l'écrire en français*'. This is evidence of words having varying connotations despite being translations of one another.

Tattoo bearer 570 also found that the English phrase: *sink or swim* was '*less violent*' than the proposed French equivalent: *marche ou crève*.<sup>82</sup> The words in the English expression are less morbid than the French translation which translates word for word to: *walk or croak*. This example highlights how translations of idiomatic expressions can convey the same message but using different words and this ultimately can change the tone or the severity of the phrase.

In contrast to the above examples, there is one tattoo bearer who appears to use English to 'strengthen' the message. Tattoo bearer 487 has the tattoo *But on the good days, I'm charming as fuck*, she gives the translation '*Dans les bons jours je suis plutôt charmante*'. In the French translation she omits the structure *as fuck* and uses the French equivalent for the word *rather*. The two expressions are fairly synonymous but *as fuck* is stronger and contains an expletive which can be considered more vulgar and aggressive than the use of the word *rather*.

The translations she gives for her two other tattoos are much closer to the English: *without the dark we'd never see the stars* is translated to '*sans la pénombre, on ne verrais jamais les étoiles* and *child of the universe* is translated to *enfant de l'univers*.

### **5.7.2 Language Authenticity**

As seen in the literature review, language expression and agency are connected (Baynham, 1995; Duranti, 2004). The use of manifest and constitutive intertextuality is an example of the freedom of words and phrases and a demonstration of that freedom: 'speakers never are the sole owners of their own words, in this view, and so they are unlikely to be sole authors or the intentionality the words communicate' (Woolard, 2004, pp. 87–88). The most popular reason for having a tattoo in English was language authenticity. Language authenticity is defined as deciding to keep the phrase in the

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<sup>82</sup> *Marche or crève* can also be translated to *do or die* but this message is not as soft as *sink or swim*.

tattoo in the same language as its original content. For some tattoo bearers the language and the content of a script tattoo are intertwined, in the same way that language and identity / culture are interdependent (Denissova et al., 2019; Tinker, 2011). To change the language would be to change the nature and identity of the quote.

A total of 166 participants had a tattoo citing or referring to an element of popular culture. The participants explained that they decided to keep the text in English as the original citation was in English. Language authenticity was also the motivation for keeping phrases in English that were inspired by English-speaking countries or established English phrases. Phrases such as *keep calm* (n = 1), or *made in Brazil / France / New York* (n = 3) were kept in English.

One hundred and ninety-one of the participants chose to have a tattoo in English because the tattoo bearer and/or their tattoo(s) had a link with the English-speaking world. This is the second most common reason for having, or in this case *keeping*, a script tattoo in English. This category also combines the participants whose tattoo was linked to them living in an English-speaking country, the participants who chose a tattoo for an English-speaking friend or family member, or chose a phrase from the English-speaking world, which is otherwise called manifest intertextuality. Most examples of manifest intertextuality can be seen in section 5.6.1: Popular Culture.

The reasons for choosing English based on language authenticity given by the participants were often very straightforward: they kept the phrase in the original language. For example, tattoo bearer 560 has a quote from the Disney film *Peter Pan*: *never grow up* and gives the following reason:

*'Fan de Disney c'est une phrase de Peter Pan... Je voulais qu'elle soit dans la langue original de disney'*

*[Disney fan it's a phrase from Peter Pan...I wanted it to be in the original language of Disney]*

Examples of tattoos which are linked to the English-speaking world in an abstract way include tattoos that are linked to places and people. For example, the tattoo *Made in New York City* is categorised as an abstract link to the English-speaking world and language authenticity because the bearer was tattooed in New York and the phrase *made in* is a standard phrase found on the bottom of many household objects.





The expression *made in* is seen with two additional countries: France and Brazil. Tattoo bearer 571 writes that the phrase *made in* is well-known and that they have always liked the phrase. In addition to France, the United States of America and Brazil, three tattoos are connected to the country of Ireland. These tattoos are an indication that the tattoo bearers use their tattoos as a way of connecting to a certain time and place. The *made in* phrase could be considered an example of constitutive intertextuality as it can be adapted, or manifest intertextuality as the phrase exists in most forms already. Whether it is constitutive or manifest would depend on if the bearer has copied (manifest) or adapted (constitutive) the phrase.

In the case of script tattoos which are examples of manifest intertextuality, it appears to be more an absence of a decision to change the language: they took an English phrase and kept it in English. This is in contrast to the following categories whereby the tattoo bearer has decided to write in English, for a variety of reasons, and explains in the survey the thought process behind that decision. The *decision* to keep the tattoo in the original language appears to be evident for the tattoo bearers through the way they describe the choice of language. Tattoo bearer 575 gave the following reason:

*'J'ai choisi cette langue et ce tatouage tout simplement car c'est tiré d'une série américaine adorée depuis des années par la meilleure amie et moi-même. Nous nous sommes donc fait le même.'*

*[I chose this language and tattoo simply because it's from an American series that my best friend and I have loved for years. So we got the same one].*

In this example the tattoo bearer starts by saying that they 'chose this language and tattoo' it could be argued that this tattoo bearer saw the language as an integral

part of the phrase and therefore the two are mutually linked. She gives the same reason “it comes from an American series” for both the content of the tattoo and the choice of language.

This is echoed by the tattoo bearers who have quotes for tattoos. There are quotes from Nelson Mandela, Walt Disney, Oscar Wilde, and Kurt Cobain. In this study, quotes are defined as being credited to a person but outside the context of a song or book. Tattoo bearer 566 has the tattoo: *Nobody dies Virgin. Lire fuck us all* which is attributed to Kurt Cobain, and he gives the reason that the original was in English, so the tattoo was in English: *‘J’ai choisi l’anglais car la phrase original est dans cette langue’*. The tattoo bearer chooses English as the original phrase was in English, which suggests that the tattoo bearer distinguishes and identifies the boundaries between named languages (García & Kleifgen, 2019).

### 5.7.3 Message Encryption or Comprehension

The universality of the English language is linked to its understandability. As explored in the literature review, section 2.6.1, English is considered a global language. This view is reflected in the responses in the survey: 31 people wrote that they chose to have their tattoo in English because English was a universal language. This suggests they wanted their tattoo to be read by more people, unlike those people who chose English to hide the message from their fellow French speakers. A similar ambivalence towards North America was noted by Kuisel (1993), he writes that ‘perhaps most perplexing is that admirers and adversaries often use the same images but attribute opposing values to them’. This study includes tattoo bearers choosing English for two polar opposite reasons: to be understood and not to be understood.

I have grouped people who said English was a universal language with those who said they chose English to be understood. One tattoo bearer wrote three words to explain why they chose their script tattoo: *‘Anglais langue universelle’* [*English universal language*]. Similarly, tattoo bearer 580 wrote: *‘J’ai choisi l’anglais car je la considère comme la principale et la meilleure langue de cette planète.’* [*I chose English because I consider it to be the main and best language on this planet.*] This is once again evidence that the choice of the language does not always start with the choice of the phrase or concept, English can be the intended language from the beginning. Tattoo bearer 580 viewed the globality of English as a positive trait.

Other participants combined the concept of a universal language and the ability of others to understand the message. For example, tattoo bearer 195 cited both reasons

for having an English tattoo. The tattoo reads: *Stop Animal Cruelty* and the tattoo bearer wrote: *'Je suis contre toute forme de maltraitance et cruauté animale et l'anglais étant une langue presque universelle. Je voulais que cette phrase soit compris par tout le monde.'* [I am against all forms of animal cruelty and English being an almost universal language. I wanted the phrase to be understood by everyone.] In this case, the tattoo bearer has a message that they wish to share with as many people around them: animal protection. Ten participants chose to have a tattoo in English because they wanted their tattoo to be understood by lots of people.

This is contrasted by 50 participants who chose English and explained that it is a way to hide the message from the people around them. One person wrote that it was to hide the message from a specific person: *'Pour qu'une certaine personne ne puisse pas la comprendre'* [so that a certain person can't understand it]. One tattoo bearer explained that she likes being able to explain her tattoos to the people who do not understand English.

Whereas another bearer (TB22), with the words *family* and *strength*, wrote that she chose English because in her opinion not many people understand or speak English correctly: *'L'anglais pour la simple et bon raison que peu de personnes le comprennent ou le parle correctement ainsi que la beauté des mots écrits en anglais.'* [English for the simple reason that not everyone understands or speaks it properly and for the beauty of the words written in English.] However, it could be argued that the two tattoos tattoo bearer 22 has chosen are not the most difficult for people to understand. Firstly, *family* is not that dissimilar from the French word *famille*, and secondly, both phrases are short and therefore this reduces the complexity of the phrases to be understood as they are unlikely to be idiomatic, metaphors, or jokes for example. This suggests that tattoo bearer 22 does not believe the people around her have a basic level of English.

This disparity between the two groups indicates that some people are surrounded by people who speak English and therefore see it as a universal language. Whilst others are surrounded by people who do not speak English; therefore, for them the language is a means of obscuring and hiding the message. This reasoning demonstrates that the linguistic landscape of the tattoo bearers is strongly influenced by the people around them.

#### **5.7.3.1 Language Ability of the Tattoo Bearer**

The reasons above were associated with other people reading the tattoos, but there were also people who chose English in relation to their own ability to read their

tattoos. Fourteen participants wrote that they were bilingual in English: *‘L’anglais est comme une seconde langue natale pour moi’* [English is like a second native language for me]. Ten participants wrote that they chose English because English is their second strongest language or that they spoke good English. Tattoo bearer 81 wrote: *‘L’anglais car c’est la langue que je maîtrise le plus après le français.’* [English as it’s the language I speak the best after French.] In addition, three people wrote that they wanted to be able to understand their own tattoo. This is in line with Hoffer’s (2002) view that ‘people who know another language well can use the items from the other language at will’ (p. 4). Tattoo bearer 153 wrote:

*‘Convictions et histoires personnelles. J’aime la sonorité de l’anglais et je souhaitais comprendre et vérifier que ce n’était pas écrit n’importe quoi.’*

*[Personal beliefs and stories. I like the sound of English and I wanted to understand and check that it wasn’t written any old how.]*

Tattoo bearer 153, has two tattoos in English and in the survey they are written in the following forms: *une life, one chance* and *maman, toi know I love toi, you’re thé Queen if m’y Heart*. The bearer did not send a photograph or leave a contact detail, but she did provide the following translations: *une seule vie, une seule chance* and *maman, tu sais que je t’aime, tu es la reine de mon Coeur* which translate to *only one life, only one chance* and *mum, you know I love you, you are the queen of my heart*. Without a photograph or contact it is unclear whether the text written in the survey is the same text written on her skin, or whether it was the result of typing errors and auto-correct. It is interesting, that as someone who wished to understand her own tattoos and check them, that she did not double check when typing them in the survey or potentially when getting them on her skin.

#### **5.7.4 ‘Parce qu’en français c’est moche !’ [In French it’s ugly !]**

Some of the answers in the survey give the impression that English is the default language after French.<sup>83</sup> The tattoo bearer chooses a French phrase and if they do not like the way it sounds, they default to English without giving more reasons. For eight tattoo bearers the choice was clear: anything but French. The title of this subsection is a quote from a tattoo bearer who has the tattoo *Family, where life begins and love never ends* instead of the French phrase *La famille, là où la vie commence et l’amour*

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<sup>83</sup> This was also seen in the literature review focusing on language education in France and the government’s own website.

*ne finit jamais*. Görlach (2002) writes that ‘the very fact a loan is “foreign” determines its special status, thus contrasting with the normal, everyday usage in the source language’ (p. 11), here the use of English words can be considered ‘exotic’.

Tattoo bearer 199 speaks French, Spanish, and English and has the tattoo *Let it be*. There is an indication of a hesitation between the languages she speaks before choosing English. ‘*La phrase sonnait mieux en anglais qu’en espagnol et je ne la voulais pas en français.*’ [*The phrase sounded better in English than Spanish and I didn’t want it in French.*] Tattoo bearer 278 also chose the phrase *Love me or leave me* in English instead of the French *Aime moi ou quitte moi* but does not indicate whether she considered having it in the other two languages she speaks which are Italian and Greek.

Tattoo bearer 404 has two tattoos in English: *Tomorrow is another day* and *Ride to live*. He explains that he did not see himself with French tattoos:

*‘parce que c’est une langue que j’apprécie et je ne me voyais pas me tatouer en français. Ce sont des phrases qui caractérisent ma vie’*

*[because it’s a language that I like and I didn’t see myself being tattooed in French. These are phrases that characterise my life.]*

It is interesting that as a French person, he did not see himself with French tattoos, and he describes his tattoos as being phrases that characterise him. It could be argued that he identifies with English as part of his self-characterisation as that is the intention of these phrases.

Tattoo bearer 4 has five tattoos in English: *Shit happens*, *Scandal*, *Credence is blindness*, *science is awareness*, *D.M.D.R.* and each of the Seven Deadly Sins. *D.M.D.R.* stands for *Dead Men Don’t Rape*. The tattoo bearer explains that he chose English:

*‘Parce que c’est la langue internationale, que ça beauf en français et que certaines expressions n’ont pas de traduction exacte (exemple “shit happens”)’*

*[Because it is the international language, it’s trashy in French and some expressions don’t have an exact translation (example “shit happens”)]*

In the above quote, tattoo bearer 4 gives three distinct reasons for choosing his tattoos in English. He starts by explaining that he chose English because it is international and that the phrase was ‘trashy’ in French, this could suggest that he hesitated between the two languages. Whereas the final reason: ‘no exact translation’ suggests that there is no French option and therefore no decision between French or

English – at least for one of his tattoos. Rather than a choice between two languages, it is a choice of concept, and the language is part of the essence of the phrase. This is also evidence to suggest that in some contexts, Sapir's theory was correct, in that certain world views and expressions are linked to a specific culture and language.

Another example whereby the choice of language is removed for the tattoo bearers can be seen when tattoo artists propose a flash. A flash is a tattoo design that is pre-drawn, is in the tattoo artist's portfolio, and it therefore reflects the artist's style and choice. Ten of the participants in the survey chose a flash tattoo that contained English. Tattoo bearer 324 wrote that they chose the word *Free* because it was a flash tattoo in which the tattoo artist had chosen to write the word in English. The tattoo bearer responded to the word *free*, not the language:

*'C'était une vente flash. L'écriture me plaisait, ce tatouage collait avec le tournant que m'a vie venait de prendre. Ça aurait été en français, en allemand, en finois (tant que c'était l'alphabet européen) , c'était pareil... Ce n'est pas l'anglais qui m'attirait en particulier'*

*[It was a flash sale. I liked the writing, this tattoo was in keeping with the turn I had just taken in life. It could have been in French, German, Finnish (as long as it was the European alphabet) it was the same... It wasn't English that I was particularly attracted to.]*

Not unlike tattoo bearer 324, tattoo bearer 189 also chooses tattoos based on the flash and not the language: 'Pour certains, il s'agit d'un tatouage flash qui était déjà en anglais ou en français et je l'ai adopté tel quel.' *[For some [of my tattoos] it was a flash tattoo that was already in English or French so I kept it as it was].* In the case of flash tattoos, the tattoo bearers consider the tattoo as a whole and the language is not a separate entity. They accept the whole tattoo and any words on it or they choose another design with other words and/or another language.

In these examples, the use of English is secondary to the choice of the tattoo. It is either to avoid having French or to select a pre-drawn tattoo. This in contrast to the tattoo bearers who choose to modify the words in order to suit their message or to create word play.

### **5.7.5 Hybridity and Word Play**

Despite there only being four examples of hybridity and word play in English, in the corpus, I believe that they are worth commenting on. Not only are they all unique in my corpus, but they demonstrate the tattoo bearers' understanding of the English language.

The first example of hybridity can be seen on tattoo bearer 183, who has the tattoo *Beyoutiful* which is a play on the word *beautiful*. The French translations *beauté* for beautiful and *sois toi / soyez vous* for *be you* do not lend themselves to the combined message the way English does. In order to hear this word play, the reader must understand how to pronounce the word *beautiful*.

Image 309 Tattoo Bearer 183



The second tattoo that contains word play is *No Body Loves Me*. Tattoo bearer 264 chose this phrase because she wanted to play on the word *nobody* to mean no one and no body. She wrote:

*'Pour faire un Jeux de mots entre no Body (aucun corps) et nobody (personne). Choisi car j'ai l'impression que personne ne m'aime d'un amour vrai et que je trouve aucun corps à serrer contre le mien'*

*[In order to have word play between no body and no one. I chose this because I have the feeling that no one will love for real and that I'll never find a body to hold close to my own.]*

The play on words represents the emotional and physical relationship she is looking for and believes that she will not find. The third example of word play also focuses on romantic relationships. Tattoo bearer 602 has the phrase *dure à queer* which is a play on the French expression *dur à cuir* which is used to refer to someone who is cold and hardened, *queer* is a slang word used for homosexuals. The tattoo bearer writes:

*'Dure à queer est le seul qui porte un message politisé. Les queers sont mal acceptés, dans mon travail, je ne suis pas out. C'est une manière de ne pas oublier'*

*[Dure à queer is the only one with a politicised message. Queers are not accepted, in my work I am not out. It's a way of not forgetting.]*

This tattoo is not only an example of word play but also of hybridity, containing both French and English words. It could be argued that the word *queer* is an example of language flux and is now a part of the French vocabulary.

The final tattoo that contains word play is *WAKE UP*.<sup>84</sup> It encompasses three elements of tattoo bearer 601's life: wake boarding, being *woke* in regard to political activism, and going far, which they explain in French as '*aller très haut*' which they translated as going *up* high.

Image 310 Tattoo Bearer 602



There is also a nod at their LGBTQA+ involvement through the use of rainbow colours in the lettering. The rainbow has been the symbol of gay pride since 1978 (Swanson, 2015). The use of colour is an example of multimodality as it adds an extra layer of expression to the tattoo (Kress 2010).

#### **5.7.6 'Je ne parle pas l'anglais' [*I don't speak English*]**

This section focuses on the participants that did not write that they spoke English in the survey. This group has been analysed as it represents a minority in this survey (under 30%) and a minority in France if we consider that most people would have received English classes from 3 or 6 years of age, see section 2.7.3 in the literature review. According to a study by a language school named ABA English, most French people are incapable of speaking English fluently (express.be, 2016). This survey suggests that only 4% of the French population can hold a conversation in English, while 55% believe they have an intermediate level of English, and 41% describe themselves as weak at English or have no English at all. This data is not present in the survey as I did not ask the participants to assess their English level and I am therefore, unable to fully compare the results. Use of a language that a person omits or claims not to speak, could be considered a type of multilingualism, whereby the speaker is not bound to using only the 'conventionally named languages' they are comfortable

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<sup>84</sup> This tattoo was feature in an article by the researcher with other examples of tattoos that are linked to gender (Carrere & Peake, 2020).



using, and is able to extend their linguistic repertoire without learning, or believing, that they speak another language (García & Kleifgen 2019, p. 2).

Out of the 602 participants, 178 did not list English as a language that they spoke and yet they have a tattoo in English. This is evidence that tattoo bearers do not need to speak the language to have it tattooed. The following paragraphs aim to analyse the reasons why the 178 participants chose English for their tattoos despite not speaking English.

Fifty-six participants did not give a reason as to why they chose English for their tattoos, or the reason given could be applied to either the content or the language. For example, one participant wrote '*signification personnelle*' [*personal meaning*]. One of the explanations for using English given is that the participants were asked two questions in one text box on the survey and this meant that some people only replied to why they had chosen the phrase not why they had chosen the language. In further studies, I will separate all questions into separate text boxes to avoid this issue.

The reasons for choosing to be tattooed in English given by the remaining 114 participants who wrote that they did not speak English will be explored in the following paragraphs. I have opted to focus more on the participants themselves using qualitative methods rather than quantitatively analysing this group.

The participants often wrote that the tattoo was '*better*' in English but did not specify what it was better than (n = 14). One participant wrote that the phrase they have tattooed *No Goodbyes* is much better than their native language which is *pas d'adieux* in French: '*Ça rends beaucoup mieux que sa langue natale.*'

Some participants specified what was better and wrote that their tattoo looked better in written English. This removes the need to understand the word as their choice was based solely on the look of the written word. For example, one participant has the words *Stay true* rather than *reste vrai* and explains that they chose English '*par choix de beauté d'écriture*' [*for the choice of the beautiful text*]. Five participants wrote that it was a question of aesthetics or that it was '*prettier*' in English. Four participants do not specify whether it was prettier written or orally. One person writes that they chose *live laugh love* rather than *vivre rire aimer* because '*la langue anglaise est plus jolie écrite que le français*' [*The English language is prettier than French when written*]. This implies that they find English to be more aesthetically pleasing than French in general.

This view is supported by another participant, tattoo bearer 285, who has the tattoo *Where there is love, there is life*. The participant writes that they chose English because *'L'anglais est une langue que je trouve magnifique, autant à la prononciation qu'au visuelle.'* [English is a language that I think is magnificent, spoken as much as written]. This suggests that people can appreciate the sound and visual aspect of a language without understanding the language.

One participant explained that their tattoo *Forever trusting who we are and nothing else matters* is from their favourite song *Nothing Else Matters* by Metallica and they chose to keep it in English because in their opinion it sounded better in English. Three of the participants wrote that their tattoo *'ça sonnait mieux en anglais'* [sounded better in English] implying that they considered the way the words are spoken aloud when their tattoos are read. This is an indication of the public nature of tattoos, for some bearers they are phrases and words that are meant to be read, and read aloud, by the people around them.

One of the most popular reasons for having a tattoo in English is that the original was in English (n = 168 in the whole corpus and n = 21 in the reduced non-English speaking corpus). Taking a phrase from a song, television show, or film does not require the tattoo bearer to invent the phrase and therefore removes the tattoo bearer from the process of language creation. Being able to copy a phrase from another language gives tattoo bearers the ability to choose any language they wish and removes the need to learn the language. The phrases that came from English-speaking culture include song lyrics, quotes from films, television series, films, books, and politicians. None of the non-English speaking participants write that they watch series in the original version or read the book in English. It is therefore unclear whether they liked the phrase in French and sought out the original wording or saw the English phrase first. Due to the facility of copying the sentence it could be expected that this reason would be more present in the restricted non-English speaking corpus, but the contrary is true. This reason represents 12% of reasons given in the restricted corpus and 34% of the reasons given by English speakers. This could be because the English speakers engage more with English language content, listening to English language music and watching films or TV series, in the original language.

For example, one participant chose the phrase *All i need is your love* which was inspired by a song from the musical film *Moulin Rouge* and modified the phrase to make it more personal, making it an example of constitutive intertextuality, *'Cette phrase sort du film moulin rouge 'all you need is love' que j'ai modifié légèrement pour*

*me correspondre et pas avoir la meme phrase que beaucoup de personnes' [This phrase comes from the film Moulin Rouge 'all you need is love' which I modified slightly to suit me and not have the same phrase as lots of other people].* This person chose an English phrase and was able to modify it to suit their needs despite claiming that they were not able to speak English.

Other popular culture references included: *Remember who you are* which is a quote from the participant's favourite Disney film *The Lion King*: *'Je voulais me rappeler d'où je venais pour en arrive la et c'est une phrase également de mon Disney prefere le roi lion' [I wanted to remind myself where I came from to get to this point and it is also a phrase from my favourite Disney film the lion king].* One participant chose the phrase *Everyone's a whore* which is a quote from the series *Peaky Blinders* as they liked the series. A second participant also has two tattoos that are references to a Disney film *Peter Pan*, inspired by the book written by J.M. Barrie. The two tattoos are: *Neverland* and *todos los niños crecen... Excepto uno [All children grow up except one].* They explained their choice of tattoos:

*"Neverland car je vis beaucoup dans ma tête et dans les univers que j'imagine ou que je couche sur le papier quand j'écris. Le deuxième car j'ai le syndrome de Peter pan et veut rester une enfant pour toujours. Je suis d'ailleurs très enfantine. Le tout sont des références au dessin animé Peter pan qui est mon disney préféré pour toutes les raisons évoquées dessus. J'ai choisi l'anglais pour le premier car j'adore ce mot dans cette langue. Et l'espagnol pour le deuxième qui est ma langue préférée et que je parle presque couramment."*

*[Neverland because I live in my head a lot and in the worlds I imagine or put on paper when I write. The second because I have Peter Pan syndrome and want to remain a child forever. I am very childish. The whole thing is references to the cartoon Peter Pan which is my favourite Disney for all the reasons mentioned above. I chose English for the first one because I love this word in this language. And Spanish for the second one which is my favourite language and which I speak almost fluently.]*

This participant chose to keep one word in English because they liked the word itself in English. It is noteworthy that the name of the imaginary world is much longer in French and Spanish than in English. In French the translation of *Neverland* is *Pays Imaginaire* and in Spanish it is *El país de Nunca Jamás*. Tattoos are restricted in size and length to the size and length of the desired area of the body on which the bearer wishes to have the tattoo; this is discussed more in section 5.7.1.1: *Canvas Constraints*.

The tattoos that refer to elements of an English-speaking context are evidence of the English songs, films, and books that are present in the lives of the tattoo bearers.

Despite writing that they do not speak English, the bearers that wrote that their tattoo comes from the English-speaking context and have interacted with English either through watching or reading the English language, or by searching the original text after hearing or reading the French translation.

Tattoo bearer 424 has the tattoo *Dream your music* and explained that they chose the phrase because it resembles them and that they chose English for ‘*understanding*’. ‘*C’est une phrase qui me ressemble et l’anglais pour la compréhension*’. They did not give further explanation as to what ‘*understanding*’ refers to. When asked if they spoke another language the participant wrote ‘*no*’, therefore it was less likely to be a typing error or a missed question. This suggests that it was not for them to understand the message, or they believe that a message can be understood without speaking the language.

This theory is supported by another participant who also indicated that they did not speak another language in the survey. Yet, the participant has three tattoos, one in Spanish and two in English: *Solo Dios puede juzgarme* [*Only God can judge me*], *To be or not to be*, and *Dream and hop*. The participant explains that they chose these languages because they like the consonance in Spanish and English. This is more evidence to suggest that for some of the participants the sounds of the words are more important than the language or the words themselves.

Following on with this line of inquiry, the idea of liking a language that someone does not speak is very present in the responses. The participants repeatedly write that they like English, both those that speak and do not speak English according to their responses in the survey (n = 76 and 22). One example of this could be the participant who does not speak English and has the words *Breathe on me, just put our lips together and blow* from a Britney Spears song tattooed on their body. The participant explains that they love English and find it sexy.

*‘J’adore l’anglais je trouve ça sexy et c’est une phrase tirée d’une chanson de Britney Spears que j’adore. A la fois sensuelle et sexuelle’*

*[I love English I think it’s sexy and it’s a line from a Britney Spears Song that I love Both sensual and sexual]*

This suggests that it is the sound of English that appeals to some of the tattoo bearers. In this instance, the tattoo is from a song – and in songs the sound of the words is more important than the visual aspect of a word – which one could argue does not feature in the song writing process. In the total corpus, 76 participants explained that their tattoo was inspired by a song, and nine of the participants with song lyrics

did not indicate that they spoke English. This suggests that the appeal of the song, and the eventual tattoo, was enough for the tattoo bearers to have that phrase permanently inked into their skin despite not speaking the language.

In addition to an appreciation for music in English by the participants who do not identify as English speakers, there are also participants that appreciate the connotations that are associated with the words chosen for their tattoos in a certain language. Tattoo bearer 483 has the tattoo *Hurt Me*; she explained that she chose the English phrase as there are more connotations to the words *hurt me* in English than in French. She listed the mental sense, the romantic sense, the imperative usage, and the literary sense. She also explained that it seemed softer in English.

*Parce que je trouve qu'en anglais il y a plusieurs connotations. « Blesses moi » dans le sens mental, dans l'amour, et « fais moi mal » au sens littéraire. C'était donc plus logique de le faire en anglais, pour qu'il paraisse plus « doux »*

*[Because I find that in English there are several connotations. "Hurt me" in the mental sense, in love, and "hurt me" in the literary sense. So it made more sense to do it in English, so that it sounds "softer"]*

This participant shows understanding of the phrase that she has tattooed. She has either researched the phrase or can understand English. As an English teacher I often find that the French students and friends around me underestimate their level of English. In the world of language teaching it is known that productive skills, speaking and writing, are often weaker than receptive skills, reading and listening, and acquired before productive skills (Masduqi 2016).

For one participant they chose English *'just like that'*, they gave no further explanation for the phrase or language. However, for their other tattoos they went into more detail:

Table 90 Participant Tattoo Bearer's Reasons

Language	Tattoo	Reason
English	<i>'Perfectly imperfect'</i>	<i>'En anglais juste comme ça'</i> [In English, just like that]
French	<i>'Avec lui tout devient beau même même quand on fait des trucs degueus'</i>  <i>“J'ai fais l'erreur d'écouter les conseils d'une personne qui me disait comment être, comment m'habiller, comment attacher mes cheveux... Je sais ce qu'il me reste à faire faire : tout simplement arrêter d'être quelqu'un d'autre !”</i> <i>cendrillon'</i>	<i>'En français, car la langue française est belle.'</i> [In French, as the French language is beautiful]
Hindi	<i>पापा / मामन / मेरी परी</i> <i>Papa / maman/ mon ange</i> [Dad, mum, my angel]	<i>'en hindi pour que ce ne soit que moi qui sache ce qu'il y a écrit'</i> [In Hindi so that only I understand what's written]

Not all the participants gave a reason as to why they had a tattoo in English. Fourteen out of the 602 participants wrote nothing in the box and gave no reason for choosing the phrase or the language. Eight of the participants who gave no reason for using English, did not list English as a language that they speak. One participant repeated their tattoos in the box asking for the reasons why. One participant wrote that there was no particular reason for choosing English. This suggests that for some people the language is not an important part of the decision-making process when choosing a tattoo, or that they are not able to or do not wish to write out the reasons for an online survey.

There is a paradox present in the data in both the entire corpus and the group of non-English speakers. Thirteen participants in this study chose English as they believe it is a universal language to be read by many ( $n = 44$  in the whole corpus), and at the same time nine people also chose English to hide the message of their tattoo ( $n = 48$  in the whole corpus). This demonstrates a divide in the manner in which people see English and also the social groups that they move in. For some people, English is a means to communicate with the people around them and their choice of entertainment (films and songs etc.), and for others it is a foreign world that is not accessible to everyone. One non-English speaking participant chose the script tattoo *We are all mad here* because English is *'...une langue universelle'* [A universal language]. Whilst

another non-English speaking participant wrote that they chose the phrase *Never Again* because *'En anglais, ça me semblait mieux et moins compréhensible qu'en français'* [In English, it seemed better and less easy to understand than French.] Either the non-English speaking participants have omitted the question or underestimated their level of English, or English is so present in French lives that people associate it with universality and understanding whether they speak it or not.

What makes this group particularly interesting to study is that they have chosen these words to be tattooed purely on their origin, look, or sound. By declaring that they do not speak English, we can assume that they do not read the words as words and see them more as drawings or ideas. The participants found a word or phrase that they liked in English and chose to use it even if they do not speak the language. The response of one of the participants could explain the appeal of the English language to many people, including those that are less comfortable speaking it: *'Une langue facile à traduire mais pas forcément lisible de tous'* [An easy language to translate but not necessarily readable by everyone].

### 5.7.7 No Reason

Of the 602 participants, 125 did not explain why they had chosen English. Tattoo bearer 345 has four script tattoos, three in French and one hybrid tattoo containing both French and English. The bearer explains that there was no reasoning behind choosing English: *'aucune idée, comme ça'* [no idea, just like that]. Tattoo bearer 210, who has the script tattoo *I love you to the moon and back*, explained that they chose the phrase *'En anglais pour les mots comme l'espagnole'* [for the words like in Spanish]. The bearer explained that they chose English but the reason is not clear. Tattoo bearer detailed the process through which she chose her tattoos:

*'Je vois une phrase quelque part qui me plait beaucoup je la note et quand une phrase ressemble à ce que je ressens ou ce qui me blesse je me l'a tatoue'*

*[I see a phrase somewhere that I like a lot and I write it down and when a phrase resembles what I'm feeling or what hurts me I get it tattooed]*

This is once again an indication that choosing a tattoo sometimes is not about the individual parts of the tattoo but rather the tattoo as a whole. The choice of a language is not a key decision for each tattoo bearer.

Souladié (2012) writes:

*'Le corps n'est pas seulement le support de l'irréfléchi ou du spontané, mais un lieu de médiation de la pensée, un site de constructions culturelles.'*  
(p. 166)

*[The body is not only the medium for the reckless and the spontaneous, but also a place of meditation of thought, a site of cultural constructions.]*

This quote summarises the two groups, those who spent time finding the right words to embody their thoughts and feelings, and those who just chose English without giving it much thought. Both mindsets have their place in tattooing and reveal the state of mind and feelings of the bearer. L. F. Dickson et al. (2015) find that the tattooing process is often well thought-out, whereas Fisher (2002) writes that 'the vast majority of clients never research the process of tattooing nor the reputation or skill of the tattooist' (p. 101), therefore it is not unsurprising that sometimes the tattoo bearer does not research the content of the tattoo either. However, Fisher (2002) adds that despite the spontaneity of many tattoos, the tattoo often conveys multiple meanings for the tattoo bearer. During his study, McCarty (2019) finds that even the tattoos that the bearers claimed were meaningless gained meaning through conversing with other people, meaning could be hidden in the script tattoos all along or that meaning could emerge over time. This study, however, focuses mainly on written survey answers rather than narrative interaction. Examples of narrative interaction can be seen in the interviews in section 5.9: Interviews.

This concludes the analysis of the reasons why L1 French speakers chose to have a tattoo in English. Most script tattoos were chosen for their aesthetic quality in English, this included the visual and audible aspects of the words. Other script tattoos were chosen or translated into English to place the tattoo on specific body parts, such as the bearer's knuckles or wrists. As with the themes, many phrases were taken from English language content such as films and songs and turned into script tattoos by the bearers. There is also a division between the participants as to whether the use of English allows more people to read the message or hides the message, this depends greatly on the entourage of each tattoo bearer. The next section compares my personal corpus with three other corpora.

## **5.8 Corpus Comparison**

In most corpus-orientated research, the target corpus is compared to a reference corpus to highlight unusual language use. In this study the short nature of tattoos means that tattoos greatly differ from other language texts. Therefore, I have decided



to compare the main words and phrases with three other corpora:- one French corpus, derived from my survey, the combination of the two online datasets into a corpus, by Killian and the University of Zagreb that I converted, and an American English corpus (AmE06). I have chosen not to use the convict corpus in all my comparisons for three reasons: one, it was created a long time ago and language has since changed, two, it is unreliable as it was written by two or more parties several times, and three, its size is considerably bigger than my personal corpus.

The French corpus will allow me to see if certain words and phrases are more popular with the French participants, be it in English or in French. The combined public script tattoo corpus will allow me to compare the script tattoos from my French speaking group with a group of tattoo bearers with a non-specified nationality. This will again highlight any words or phrases that are particularly popular with this group of French tattoo bearers over script tattoos in general.

Finally, the use of the traditional corpus will focus on the differences between all texts and tattoos. I have chosen to use an American corpus as the tattoo bearers reference Northern American culture more than British culture and therefore this would reflect their language usage more accurately. The AmE06 was also used in the graffiti inscription chapter and therefore it is more consistent to use the same corpus. The AmE06 contains over 1,000,000 published, written texts in general American English.

There is a lack of public databases with tattoos for academics to study and compare with their own data. M. Martin et al. (2017) had this issue and created their own database WVU-MediaTatt to analyse datasets. They cited the NIST (National Institute of Standards and Technology) Tatt-C dataset as the only other public collection of tattoos that they could access. The Tatt-C dataset was the first of its kind created to study tattoo recognition for law enforcement (Ngan & Grother, 2015). Neither of these databases are currently available to the public. After searching for public datasets, I found three datasets of tattoos: one dataset from the University of Zagreb, one from the University of Sheffield, and another on Kaggle.com created by Eric Killian.

Killian's dataset is comprised of 1,054 photographs of people with tattoos including celebrities, screenshots from viral videos, photographs from television shows, images from online collections that are available for download and others whose origin is not disclosed. The photographs contained 309 script tattoos (Killian, 2023).

The second dataset I was able to access was created in the United Kingdom and holds the information about criminal convicts between 1793 and 1925 (University of Sheffield, 2020). The initial corpus contains information about 58,002 criminals. I extracted all the script tattoos, minus names and initials, and this created a total of 4,358 tattoos bearers with 6,755 script tattoos. I then counted all the lengths of the phrases, and this allowed me to compare this corpus with my own.

The final corpus, created by the University of Zagreb, contains 1,452 photographs of people with tattoos. From this initial database I reduced the data to 112 photographs containing script tattoos. This in turn led to a corpus of 121 script tattoos (University of Zagreb, 2023).

In addition to the three English script tattoos corpora, I created a fourth corpus using French tattoos that were listed by the participants in my online survey. By revisiting the data, I was able to extrapolate 222 French script tattoos and create a fourth corpora to further my comparison.

*Table 91 Comparative Corpora Sizes*

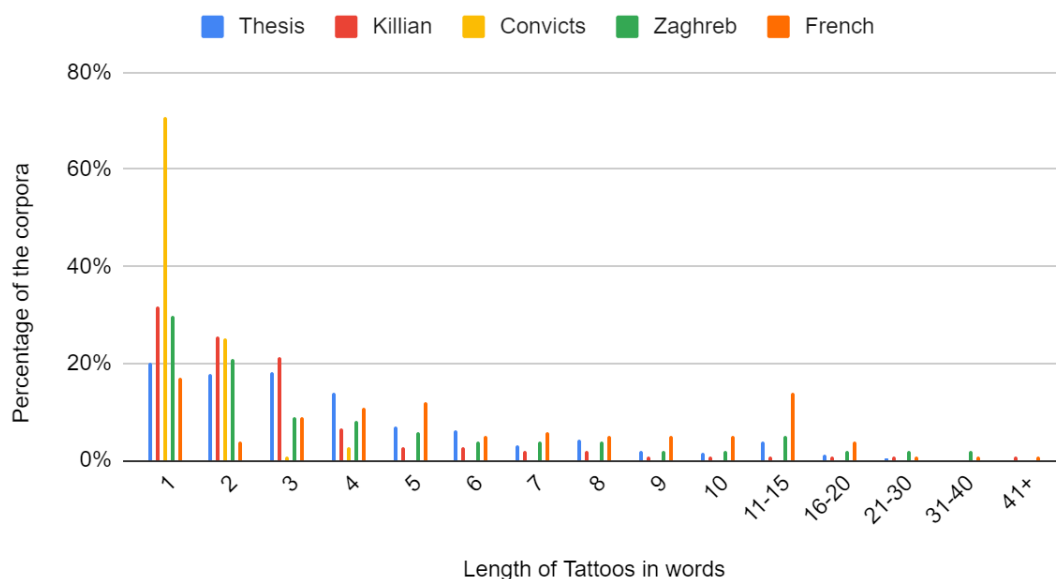
<i>Corpus</i>	<i>Personal Corpus</i>	<i>French Script Tattoos</i>	<i>Killian's Corpus</i>	<i>Convict Corpus<sup>85</sup></i>	<i>University of Zagreb</i>
<i>Number of Script Tattoos in English</i>	825	222	309	6755	121

Table 91 demonstrates the range of size between the five corpora. In order to compare the corpora relative percentages were used to create Graph 12.

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<sup>85</sup> There are many problems with this corpus due to its age. It is not known if the criminals were recorded more than once, if the spellings of the tattoos were correct, or even if all tattoos were recorded. This database has served as a basic corpus.

## Tattoo Lengths Across 5 Corpora



Graph 12 shows the tattoo word lengths of the five corpora in graphical form. In each of the five corpora, one-word tattoos are the most frequent and there is a clear downward trend in each corpus that is evidence to suggest that shorter tattoos are more common and longer tattoos are less common. This supports the findings in my own corpora that most tattoos are one to four words long. There is, however, a peak of tattoos in the 11-to 15-word bracket. This is in part due to the grouping of 11- to 15-word tattoos together. Despite the groupings there is still a clear downward trend of longer script tattoos. The French corpus is more consistent than the English corpora, but the decrease is not as sharp as the other corpora.

It must be said that all four of these supplementary corpora are full of interesting data that I would relish the opportunity to further explore in the future. However, due to the aims of this thesis and the focus on my own database I have chosen to use these corpora in a limited fashion as merely comparative corpora.

To further compare the corpora, I have chosen to focus on the three most popular single word tattoos in my corpus: *family*, *hope* and *love*. Followed by the three most popular phrase tattoos: *stay strong*, *believe in your dreams*, and *never give up*. These words and phrases include the two most used words in the corpus: *love* and *never*. As the starting point is my own corpus, I will be focusing on the words in their most frequent form, for example I will be analysing the use of the word *love* in all the corpora, but not the words *loving*, *lovely*, *loved*, *loves* etc. as they are not as present in my tattoo

corpus. In further analysis I would like to explore more words, but for this thesis I will focus on the selected words.

Each word or phrase is compared in context to the other corpora and a table is provided in each section with a summary of the information: the combined relative frequency for the word on its own, indicated by the speech marks, and as part of a sentence, indicated by the ellipsis. The relative frequency is calculated to 10,000 tokens as my biggest corpus is 3,409 tokens in size. I have also decided not to include the decimal integers for the relative frequency as the numbers are already significantly different, apart from where necessary with the AmE06 corpus. I was not able to read every text offered by the AmE06 corpus and therefore have not given a value for some of the categories, this is represented by a dash.

**5.8.1 Family**

In my English script tattoo corpus, the word *family* appears on its own as a single word tattoo 11 times. *Family* is also a part of a further six phrase tattoos: *Honor your family, love-life-family, family, always and forever, everywhere I go my family is my strength, family, where life begins and love never ends, and just god and my family can judge me.* There is no repetition in the phrases.

Table 92 ‘Family’ Corpora Comparison

Relative Frequency	Personal Corpus	Combined Public Corpus	AmE06	French (famille)
Total	46	25	4	39
‘family’	32	6	0	13
...family...	17	19	4	26

Table 92 shows that in the combined graffiti corpora the word *family* is tattooed almost twice as much as a single word tattoo than as part of a longer phrase in my personal corpus. The contrary can be seen in both the combined and French tattoo corpus. No instances of the word *family* on its own were found in AmE06. There are considerably less results for *family* in the AmE06, therefore *family* is used more often in a tattoo context than in other written texts. This suggests that in my dataset the usage of only the word *family* as a tattoo is a unique element of the group.

**5.8.2 Hope**

In the combined graffiti corpora, the word *hope* is slightly more popular in single word tattoos than in phrases, being used 11 times on its own and a further 10 times as a part of a phrase, which is not dissimilar to the results found for *family*. It is only used

once as a verb: *hope for tomorrow*. In the remaining 20 tattoos it is a noun, e.g. *there is still hope, faith hope love*.

Table 93 "Hope" Corpora Comparison

Relative Frequency	Personal Corpus	Combined Public Corpus	AmE06	French ( <i>espérer &amp; Espoir</i> )
Total	61	6	1	0
'hope'	32	6	0	0
...hope...	29	0	1	0

The word *hope* was much more present in my corpus than in the other three corpora. There was only one tattoo with the word *hope* in the combined corpus and very few entries in the AmE06. The limited results in the AmE06 show the importance of the word *hope* in the tattoo corpus. Most interesting of all is that there was not a single tattoo in the French language corpus for *hope* either as a verb or a noun. This could be a sign that L1 French speakers associate more with the English word *hope* than with the French word *Espoir*.

### 5.8.3 Love

As explained earlier, the word *love* was not only one of the most popular one-word tattoos but it was also one of the most used words in the corpus (n = 68). This is reflected in the results in the corpus search.

Table 94 "Love" Corpora Comparison

Relative Frequency	Personal Corpus	Combined Public Corpus	AmE06	French ( <i>amour &amp; aimer</i> )
Total	205	275	3	221
'love'	26	76	0	6
...one love...	20	0	0	0
...I love you...	20	38	0.3	39
Love as a verb	82	95	-	117
Love as a noun	117	179	-	104

Table 94 shows that word *love* is slightly less common in my corpus than in the two comparison tattoo corpora. However, it is much more present in all three of the tattoo corpora compared to the AmE06 corpus. This suggests that the usage of the word *love* is more frequent in tattoos than in other texts. In both English tattoo corpora, the word *love* as a noun was tattooed more frequently than the word *love* as a verb, however, it is the opposite in the French corpus. This could be due to the aesthetics of the words *amour* and *aime(r/s/ent)* or because the tattoo bearers associate more with

the English words. There is one script tattoo found in the comparative combined corpora that is also found in my own corpus: *where life begins and love never ends*.

#### 5.8.4 Stay Strong

As phrases cannot be searched for in the corpus in the same way as single words, I will focus on the variations of the word *stay* in each of my corpora: *reste* and *restez* in the French corpus. *Stay* is often used with an adjective: *strong*, *true*; and *wild* (n = 12, 2, 1 respectively). There is one tattoo in my corpus where *stay* is followed by a prepositional phrase, in this case: *stay with me*.

Table 95 "Stay Strong" Corpora Comparison

Relative Frequency	Personal Corpus	Combined Public Corpus	AmE06	French ( <i>reste / restez</i> )
Total	46	31	0.01	19
'Stay strong'	34	6	-	0
'Stay true'	5	19	0.009	0

The word *stay* has a higher relative frequency in both English corpora than in the French corpus. However, due to the variance in language the phrases *stay strong* and *stay true* do not appear in the tattoo corpus. This is in part because *rester* can also be translated as the word *remain*: *le temps qui reste [the time which remains]*. The closest tattoo in French is « *reste toujours près de moi* » [*Always close to me*]. The sibilance in *stay strong* may be one of the reasons for the preference French speakers have for the phrase. Sibilance was not cited in the reasons, but assonance and consonance were, as well as '*it sounded better*'. This is discussed in more detail in section 5.7.1: English Aesthetics.

#### 5.8.5 Believe in Your Dreams

As with *stay strong*, I have searched for the word *believe* and analysed the collocates. There is more range in the usage of *believe* in my tattoo corpus, and most of the phrases start with *believe*.

Table 96 "Believe in your dreams" Corpora Comparison

Relative Frequency	Personal Corpus	Combined Public Corpus	AmE06	French ( <i>croire</i> )
Total	41	3	2	13
<i>Believe in your dreams (and variants)</i>	26	0	-	0
'Believe in yourself'	5	0	-	0
'Believe'	5	0	-	0

There are few examples in the AmE06 of the word *believe* in the target phrases. The word *believe* itself accounts for a small percentage of words in the AmE06 corpus and the combined corpus. The word *believe* is present in the French corpus, but not with the corresponding themes of dreams or oneself or as a single word tattoo. Finally, the word *believe* is consistently present in my corpus.

Table 97 Script Tattoos Containing 'believe'

<i>Script Tattoos Containing 'believe'</i>
<i>Believe in/on your dream(s) [x9], always believe in yourself, be strong and believe in yourself, believe in hope, Sometimes I forgive, I never forget – always believe, Believe [x2], Think Dream Believe Dare</i>

Table 97 contains the script tattoos from the personal corpus. It can be theorised that L1 French speakers associate positively with the word *believe* and that is why it is chosen more often in English for a tattoo than in French. All of the tattoos in the table are positive apart from tattoo bearer 356 who has the tattoo: *Sometimes I forgive, I never forget- always believe*, this script tattoo appears to be more of warning towards the readers, asking them to respect the tattoo bearer. The words *Sometimes I forgive, I never forget* can be seen as the tattoo bearer asserting themselves and giving clear boundaries between them and other people. However, the tattoo still finishes with the positive message: *always believe*, which could be considered an override of the '*sometimes I forgive*' and opposes the '*I never forget*', therefore it could still be considered a positive phrase.

**5.8.6 Never**

The word *never* is used in 64 phrases in my corpus; it is never written as a single word tattoo. There are 10 collocations which are repeated in the corpus at least twice in addition to 15 phrases where there is no repetition.

Table 98 "Never" Corpora Comparison

Relative Frequency	Personal Corpus	Combined Public Corpus	AmE06	French (jamais)
Total	187	38	6	91
... never die(s)...	23	0	0.01	0
...never give up...	26	0	0	0
'Never grow up'	17	0	0	0
'Never a failure always a lesson'	14	6	0	0
..never forget...	14	0	0.07	0
'Love never dies'	5	0	0	0
'never again'	5	0	0.03	0
'where life begins and love never ends'	5	6	0	6
'never look back'	5	0	0	0
'Never lose hope'	5	0	0	0
...never surrender...	5	0	0	0
'BABE NEVER DIE'	2	0	0	0
'WE'LL NEVER DIE'	2	0	0	0
'Artists never die'	2	0	0	0
'The hope never dies'	2	0	0	0
'True love never dies'	2	0	0	0
'Never stop dreaming'	2	0	0	0
'Never stop Fighting'	2	0	0	0
'Never stop growing'	2	0	0	0
'Soulmates never die'	2	0	0	0
'never back down'	2	0	0	0
'never be afraid to be afraid'	2	0	0	0
'Since you have gone to heaven angels have never been so beautiful'	2	0	0	0
'The biggest fish in the river gets that way by never being caught'	2	0	0	0
'There is a light that never goes out'	2	0	0	0
'Tomorrow never happens'	2	0	0	0
'You never know how strong you are strong until being strong remains'	2	0	0	0
'never leave me'	2	0	0	0
'the heart never lies'	2	0	0	0
'princess princess never mine ques sa peut te foutre'	2	0	0	0
'Folies are the only things you will never regret' (s)	2	0	0	0
'Never say die'	2	0	0	0
'Without the dark we'd never see the start'	2	0	0	0
'You only live once than it's Never too late'	2	0	0	0
'Never in my heart'	2	0	0	6



The word *never* is the most frequently used word of negation in the script tattoo corpus. It is much less present in the other three corpora. Unlike in my own corpus, the word *never* appears on its own in the combined corpus once as a single word tattoo. The French corpus reflects the use of the word *jamais* and how single word translations (*never* and *jamais*) do not always translate to phrases easily. In English the adverb *never* is placed before the verb, in the French corpus it is placed at the end of the sentence six times: *le temps ne s'arrête jamais [time never stops]*, in the middle of the sentences five times: *on n'oublie jamais on vit avec [we never forget we live with it]* and only once at the beginning of the sentence: *jamais deux sans trois [never two without three]*.

This concludes the section of the tattoos as tokens. Most of the script tattoos are one to four words long, this was corroborated by a comparison with other corpora of script tattoos. The most common single word tattoo was *family* and the most common phrase tattoo was *Stay Strong* (n = 14 and 11). The most common words overall, however, were *love* and *never* (n = 72 and 64) for example: *Love your madness* and *never give up*. The following section will focus on the interviews given by tattoo bearers and tattoo artists about their tattoos and the use of English in their tattoos.

## **5.9 Interviews**

In this section, I present the interviews with four tattoo bearers and three tattoo artists about tattoos in English. Each interviewee has been assigned a pseudonym to protect their anonymity. All four tattoo artists interviewed in this study were male, which is in keeping with Fisher's (2002) study where she writes that 85% of tattoo artists in the United States are male. Interviews from both the tattoo bearers and the artists allow for an analysis of the tattoo narratives from both angles: bearers and artists. The interviews took place in either French or English, in person, by telephone, or over video conferencing software. All the interviews were recorded and then transcribed. The full transcripts are available in the appendices.

### 5.9.1 Sara – Tattoo Bearer

Image 311 Tattoo Bearer 604



Fall down seven times  
Stand up eight

Sara is an acquaintance of mine and she asked me to check the English in her tattoo before she went to the tattoo parlour. It was this initial contact that inspired the tattoo portion of my thesis. After she had finished the tattoo, we met and discussed her reasons for the phrase and why she chose English. Sara is in her 40s, an L1 French speaker, and she has one tattoo in English.

*'Tout simplement parce que la phrase me correspond. Il m'est arrivée certaines choses dans la vie, un tatouage ça doit être personnel, ça doit être symbolique et voilà, cette phrase en tout cas, la signification c'est quoi qu'il arrive voilà, tu tombes autant de fois que tu veux et tu te relèveras toujours.'*

*[Simply because the sentence corresponds to me. Certain things have happened to me in my life, a tattoo has to be personal and has to be symbolic, and this sentence, in any case, the meaning: 'No matter what happens, you can fall as many times as you want and you will always get back up']*

For Sara, the tattoo is a message to herself. It could be argued that it is a mantra - not unlike the tattoos seen in section 5.6.4: Mottos, Messages and Mantras. When asked about the language choice, Sara explains that she chose English because she found the message to be stronger and shorter in English.

*'Alors la question, donc, même si je suis française que j'aime ma langue, euh, je trouve que déjà le message était beaucoup plus percutant en anglais. Après aussi peut-être un choix esthétique. Le message est véhiculé avec*

*euh... bah beaucoup moins de mots... qu'écrire la phrase en français, bah ça faisait déjà un texte beaucoup plus grand'*

*[So the question is, even though I'm French and I love my language, ah, I find that the message was much stronger in English. And then maybe it's an aesthetic choice. The message is conveyed with... err.... far fewer words... that writing the sentence in French already made the text much bigger.]*

She explains that she has German rather than British origins. But she still preferred to choose English as it was 'easier', she also describes English as the international language:

*'Ah, bah, après je crois que c'est surtout par... je vais pas dire la facilité, l'anglais c'est la langue mondiale quand même. Tous les textes, enfin, tout ce qui percute... tout ce qui est utilisé pour véhiculer des messages ce soit lieu à la télé et etcetera... euh, souvent les slogans sont en anglais et les musiques sont en anglais. Euh, après, moi je suis maman d'ados, donc elles écoutent aussi que des musiques en anglais. Euh voilà tout ce qui véhicule beaucoup, c'est souvent des choses gaies, de l'espoir ou autre chose dans toutes les chansons qu'elles écoutent. On est quand même beaucoup entouré par la langue anglophone.'*

*[Ah, well, I think it's mainly... I'm not going to say easy, English is the world language. All the texts, well, all the ones that have impact, ah, all the ones that are used to convey messages are on TV and so on. Ah, often the slogans are in English and the music is in English. Ah, well, I'm a mother of teenagers, so they only listen to music in English. Oh, they all convey a lot, it's often happy, hope or something else in all the songs they listen to. We are surrounded by the English language.]*

In this utterance there are two points that are interesting. First, that Sara describes English as a 'vehicle' to convey a message, and secondly that she is 'surrounded' by English. The idea of English being a tool or vehicle suggests that the experience or message is separate from the language, or even all languages and that Sara, and the other tattoo bearers, choose the best tool, in this case the English language, to convey that message. This bears resemblance to the findings of Lal et al. (2015) who write that 'experienced meanings are filtered through language, how people want to present themselves to the listener' or in this case reader (pp. 12–13). In their paper, Lal et al. (2015) are referring to the use of narrative inquiry, however, I would argue that the above citation can also be used to describe the process of being tattooed with a phrase or word. Jamaledin and Lashkarian (2016) view language as an instrument 'which uniquely describes similarities and differences among people in terms of their differential language use' (p. 53). The same could also be argued of some graffiti inscriptions, the writer is using a language to express their feelings about an experience and the meaning is conveyed and filtered through the chosen language.

In the second point, Sara explains that as well as hearing English all around her she uses approximately 10-15 English words a day.<sup>86</sup> However, she does not tend to use the words featured in her tattoo daily. Therefore, her tattoo is not a representation of *words* that she uses, but rather the language as a whole that she uses. Sara describes English as a language vector of communication and says that everyone sees themselves in the language and identifies with English: *‘Oui, c’est ça, cest se positionner au sein d’une communauté. Ils sont vecteurs d’un langage communautaire. Et tout le monde se reconnaît dedans.’* This suggests that despite not having a blood or geographic connection to English, it is accessible, and therefore people associate with the language.

It could be argued that Sara is referring to syncretism, a view whereby human beings are citizens of the world and the lines between cultures become blurred, these blurred lines allow for the inhabitant to choose the symbols, values, and beliefs that appeal most to them and not having to choose only the ones from their country of origin (Müller, 2012). It could be argued that syncretism would bear true for many of the tattoo bearers in this study.

### 5.9.2 Louisa – Tattoo Bearer<sup>87</sup>

<p><i>Image 312 Tattoo Bearer 599</i></p> 	<p><i>Image 313 Tattoo Bearer 599</i></p> 	<p><i>Image 314 Tattoo Bearer 599</i></p> 
<p><i>Never forget your freedom</i></p>	<p><i>Cry baby</i></p>	<p><i>Handmade</i></p>

Louisa is a female tattoo bearer aged between 26 and 30 years of age. She has five tattoos, three of which are in English. The other two are drawings that represent her parents. She speaks French as her first language and English as a second language. In the survey she gave the reason *‘cela résonne mieux’* for having chosen

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<sup>86</sup> Sara and I have always communicated in French, from my experience and the brief discussions we have had in English I would categorise her as a lower intermediate English speaker (B1 on the CEFR scale)

<sup>87</sup> Louisa’s tattoos featured in an article by the researcher with other examples of tattoos that are linked to gender (Carrere & Peake, 2020).

English *[it sounds better]*. By interviewing Louisa, I was able to ask more questions and find out more about her and her tattoos.

Louisa starts by telling me the origin of her first tattoo: *Never forget your freedom*. It was a phrase her mother said to her often when she was a child. She confirms that her mother spoke French and that it was Louisa who translated it into English. Louisa described the phrase as a mantra, whereby her mother advises her not to get tied down in life and to follow her dreams. When asked for the exact phrase her mother used to say, Louisa gives an approximative translation and explains that it was not very pretty in French. This supports the tattoos seen in other sections where the idea translated into English is not always very close to the French original phrase.

*'C'est une phrase que ma mère m'a donc c'est « Never forget your freedom ». Et c'est en gros, ma mère quand j'étais petite, qui m'a toujours à peu près répété cette phrase. Elle me l'a toujours dit en français, mais en gros c'était comme un genre de mantra pour me dire : t'accroche pas de boulet au pied, t'as des rêves, suis-les. Euh... t'empêche de rien juste parce que t'as, t'as des accroches quelque part ou quoi. Enfin, vis tes rêves, vis-les à fond, et, et t'empêche pas de les faire pour quoi que ce soit [...] C'était quelque chose du genre, ben euh... ne t'accroche jamais de boulet au pied, donc c'était pas très joli à écrire en français [...] Mais en gros c'est elle me disait toujours de, de, de ne pas oublier ce qu'elle me disait exactement, ce que c'était, qu'il fallait pas que j'oublie que la chose la plus importante que j'avais dans ma vie, c'était ma liberté et qu'il fallait que voilà, que je m'accroche pas de boulet aux pieds moi-même et que...'*

*[It's a phrase that my mother would say 'never forget your freedom'. And basically it's my mother who always repeated this phrase to me. She always said it to me in French, but basically it was like a mantra to say don't hang your ball and chain on your foot, you have dreams, follow them [...] Erm... don't stop yourself from doing anything just because you've got some ties somewhere or something like that. Live your dreams, live them to the fullest, and don't get in the way of anything. It was something like: don't ever get attached to a ball and chain, so it wasn't very nice to write in French [...] but basically, she was telling me to, not to forget what she was telling me exactly, that I shouldn't forget that the most important thing I had in my life was my freedom and that I shouldn't get tied down by a ball and chain.]*

When asked for the French version Louisa offers various translations with slight differences. It is interesting that the direct translation *n'oublie pas ta liberté* is not offered as the mantra her mother repeated; this suggests that the English to French translation does not produce a phrase that French speakers would use. It could be argued that this is evidence of Louisa's English ability<sup>88</sup> as she has found an English

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<sup>88</sup> Louisa is very reserved about her level of English around me, but she is a capable English speaker when she feels comfortable, from my experience she is an upper-intermediate speaker of English (B2 on the CEFR scale).

translation that is not word for word but rather emblematic of her mother's advice. This is also demonstrative of a need to express concepts that do not exist in the speakers first language and therefore a second language is used to fill that gap (Hock and Joseph, 1996). In Louisa's case, four words in English symbolise and convey the advice her mother gave her growing up. This supports Diez-Arroyo's (2016) hypothesis that English is favoured as it can be more precise and accurate, in this case Louisa is the 'expert' of the message she wishes to convey.

Figure 34 Linguistic Process of Louisa's Tattoo (TB599)

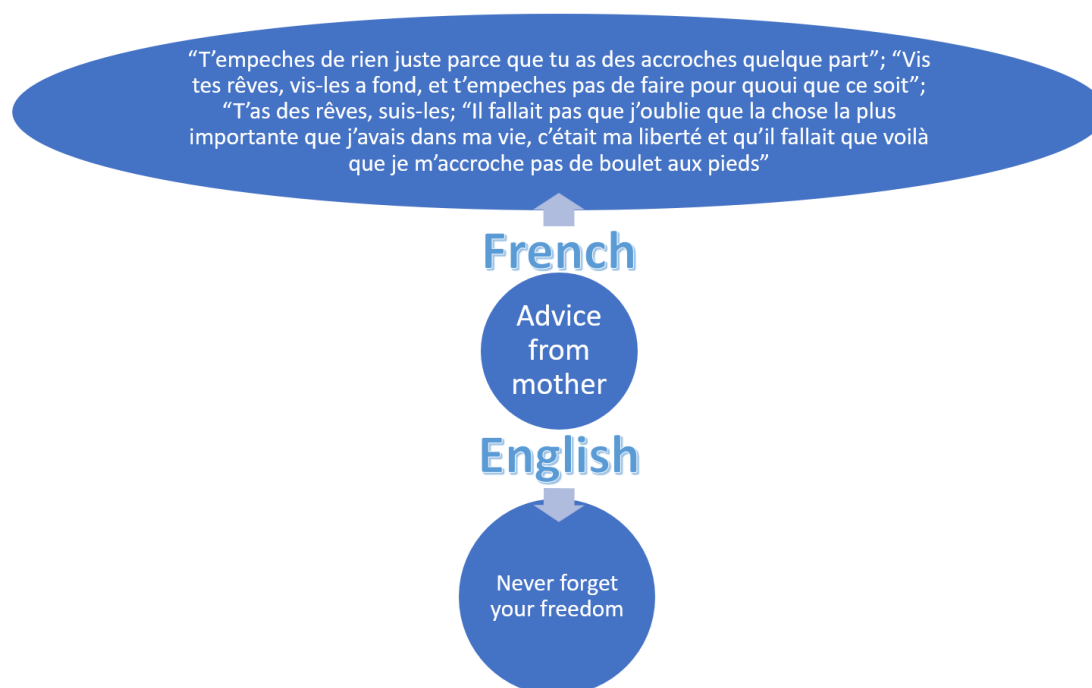


Figure 34 represents the thought process of Louisa through Sapir's theory of languages. The stimulus, the advice from her mother, takes a different form when passed through English and when passed through French. The experience/advice expressed in French and English is not the same despite the fact that it came from the same source. Therefore, the understanding of language could be that it is a 'tool of self-expression' (Rabiah, 2012, p. 5).

Louisa views all her tattoos as little messages to herself and she uses the second person singular *you / tu* to refer to herself. She explains that in the past she never cried because she felt that she was not allowed to as other people suffered worse than her and this led to health problems. Doctors made her realise that she needed to let go and embrace her emotions and she has become a self-proclaimed *cry baby*. However, just as in the first script tattoo, there is a much greater message hidden behind the two words:

*'...c'est comme des petits, des petits messages enfin, en disant par exemple le Cry Baby c'est plus en disant : lâche prise, lâche prise parce-que t'as, t'as, t'as toujours tout retenu dans ta vie, t'as toujours minimisé la manière dont tu te sentais, tu t'es toujours dit qu'il y avait pire ailleurs, donc toi, t'étais pas légitime de te sentir comme ça et de te sentir blessé. Mais lâche prise, lâche prise. Même si c'est pour pleurer, c'est pas grave de pleurer, mais si ça te fait te sentir mieux, fais-le. C'est, c'est juste plus un lâche prise qu'autre chose.'*

*[...It's like little, little messages saying for example the cry baby is more saying ah, let go, let go because you, you have always held back in life, you have always minimised the way you feel, you always told yourself that there were worse things elsewhere. So you weren't legitimate to feel like that and to feel hurt. But let go, let go. Even if it's to cry, but if it makes you feel better, do it. It's just more of a let go than anything else.]*

In this extract, Louisa explains that *cry baby* is a message to herself and is in fact a reminder that it is good to cry and that she should let go more often. The words *cry baby* represent both the emotional state that she now has and her ability to cry as well as functioning as a reminder to let go and cry.

When asked why she chose English for her tattoos Louisa gives the following answer:

*'C'est quelque chose qui m'a plus souvent résonné. Tu vois, c'est des choses qui me... j'ai pas réfléchi, c'est quelque chose qui est venu tout naturellement comme un truc bête. Là, je suis en train d'essayer monter une marque et le nom de ma marque porte un nom anglais alors que je suis française. Mais je comme je l'envisage potentiellement à l'international ou quoi, et c'est des choses, à mon oreille, ça sonne mieux.'*

*[It's something that has often resonated with me. You see, it's things that I..if I didn't think about it, it's something that came to me naturally, like a silly thing. I'm in the process of setting up a brand and the name of my brand has an English name even though I'm French. But I, as I'm potentially looking at it internationally, and it's something to my ears, that sounds better.]*

In this extract, Louisa explains that the use of English was *natural* for her, and it represents internationality which will be useful for her as she is starting a business. The fact that Louisa says that using English is *natural* for her and that she uses it without thinking, is an indication of personal language flux. The English words that Louisa uses can be considered synonyms to the French equivalents.

When describing her relationship to English and how she learnt English, she explains that she learnt most of her English through songs. In the following extract she talks about English accompanying her through life almost as if it were a childhood friend:

*'Euh moi j'ai grandi euh... ce qui m'a beaucoup apporté en anglais, c'était les chansons. J'ai eu, en fait... Depuis que je suis petite, j'adore la musique et c'est particulièrement la musique qui m'a appris l'anglais. À chaque fois*

que j'entendais une chanson que j'aimais bien, qu'elle sonnait bien à mon oreille. Ah, je me disais, mais attends, tu peux pas apprécier cette chanson sans savoir ce qu'elle dit. Donc à chaque fois, j'allais chercher les paroles sur internet et ça me parlait encore, encore plus après. Et en fait, c'est, c'est des mots qui m'ont tout le temps accompagné depuis que, depuis que j'écoute de la musique. Donc l'anglais m'a toujours accompagné, quelque part.'

[I've grown up... euh... what really brought me English were songs... Since I was little I've loved music and it's music in particular that taught me English. Each time I heard a song I liked that sounded good, I'd say you can't like this song without knowing what it says. So each time, I'd search for the lyrics online and they spoke to me more, even more afterwards. And in fact, they're words, words that have always been with me, since I started listening to music. So, English has always been with me somewhere.]

This extract suggests that the presence of English-speaking music is one of the reasons for the presence of English in the lives of French speakers. This supports the findings of Toffoli and Sockett (2015), who explain listening to a song in English is considered by language users as a leisure activity. In Louisa's case she has fond memories of listening to music and her curiosity led her to research the words and meanings afterwards. For Louisa, English is a part of her linguistic and sound landscape, the evidence of this language flux is that it is inked into her skin.

### 5.9.3 Danny – Tattoo Bearer



Danny is a French male in his mid-thirties. I met him after having closed my online survey on tattoos. He agrees to an interview to discuss his English script tattoo: *WE'RE ALL MaD HERE*. Danny confirms that the tattoo was inspired by the Tim Burton film adaptation of the book *Alice in Wonderland*, it could be described as a literary tattoo (Chassagnol, 2018). Danny has not read the book, it was the draw of the director rather



than the author that inspired the tattoo. Danny says that he saw the film in both French and English. He explains that the choice of tattoo was instinctive: he liked the visual aspect of the cat and felt it needed a phrase to accompany the drawing: ‘...*je trouvais le chat d’Alice très joli et euh, je me suis dit, il faut que je rajoute une phrase avec et c’est celle qui m’a le plus marqué...*’ [I found the cat to be very pretty, and I, I told myself, I need to add a phrase and that’s the phrase that affected me the most]. He already had three tattoos dedicated to Tim Burton and his films and this tattoo was in keeping with them.

When I ask Danny for the reason why he chose English rather than French, he explains that he studied English at university, achieving a C1 level in English, and that he prefers an English accent to a French accent:

*‘L’accent... je préfère l’accent anglais à au bon accent français [...] Je trouve que le... l’anglais chante un peu plus. L’anglais est un peu plus suave, il y a plus de nuances. Le français, selon les régions, est plus, plus dur.’*

*[The accent... I prefer the English to a good French accent [...] I think that...English sings a bit more. English is a bit more suave, there are more nuances. French, depending on the region, is more, is harder.]*

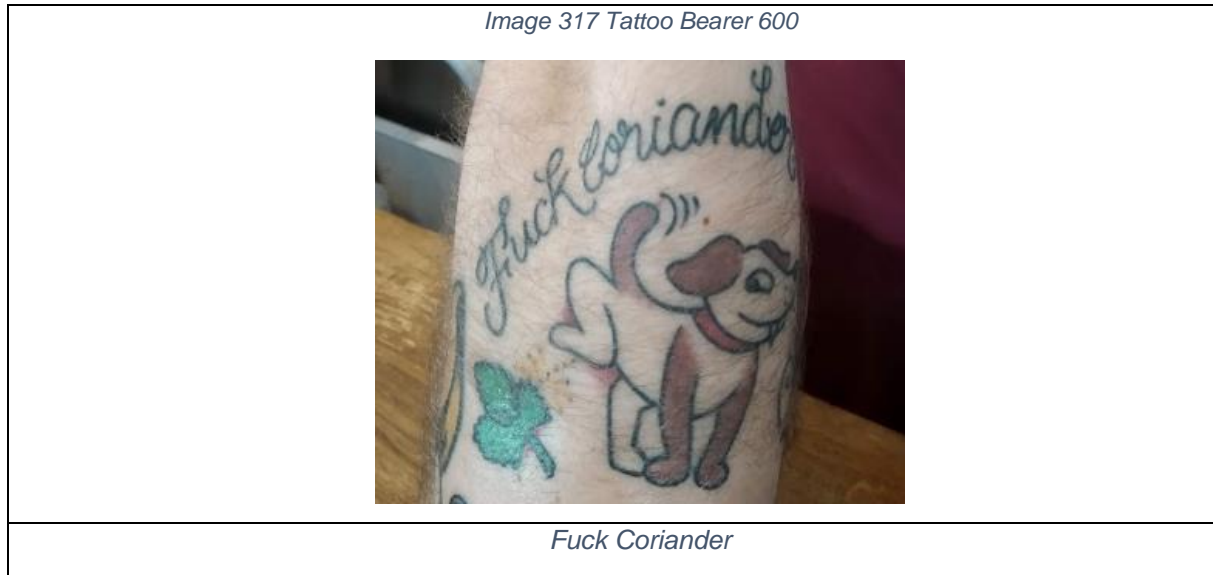
When pressed for further information, Danny adds that he preferred the phrase itself in English to French: ‘*je trouvais que ça rendait moins bien.*’ [I thought it didn’t look as good]. I ask him what he meant, was it the letters or the words he replies: ‘...*pas forcément les lettres. La phrase, la phrase, l’écrit, l’écrit de la phrase je la, la préfère en anglais.*’ [not necessarily the letters. The sentence, the sentence, the writing, the writing of the sentence I, prefer it in English.] I ask him whether he hesitates between French and English and he replies that he chose both the cat and the English phrase instinctively: ‘*Le chat et la phrase en anglais. C’était instinctif.*’

The English language is part of Danny’s past university education and part of his present through watching films in English. Danny is also a fan of heavy metal and listens to several bands that sing in English. The use of the word *instinctive* is indicative of the presence of English in his life. This could be in general after doing a degree in English or mainly in association with the director Tim Burton and his work. Either way, the choice of a tattoo in English is instinctive for Danny, this could be an example of Duranti’s (2004) description of unconscious but careful linguistic choices.

Danny agrees to reread his interview and makes the following clarifications. He explains that when he said the French accent was *harder* he meant that in his opinion French accents, and particularly those from the north east of France, are a lot less

stylish than the English accent. He also reminds me that as part of his degree in English he lived and worked in Doncaster in the UK. Danny adds that he feels that British pop-culture is a part of his everyday life, in particular music and films. Like Louisa, the English tattoos on Danny's body were a result of the presence of English in Danny's sound landscape (Yibokou, 2023) and this also corroborates Sara's opinion that English belongs to everyone, for Danny, English is an important part of his daily life.

#### 5.9.4 Henri – Tattoo Bearer



Henri is in his 30s and has one script tattoo in English: *Fuck coriander* accompanied by a dog further displaying his feelings towards the herb. Henri works at a gourmet food hall and is passionate about food – as he makes clear through his rejection of coriander. When I ask why he chose this script tattoo, he gives the response:

*'Alors, parce que j'ai une haine viscérale pour la coriandre. Mais vraiment parce que la coriandre va ruiner absolument tous qu'elle va toucher pour moi, si, jamais dans un plat il va avoir un, un petit peu de coriandre ça va prendre le pas sur tout le reste. Et je... en fait... on se retrouve d'accord sur les gens qui n'aiment pas la coriandre on a tous cette euh, cette, cette même sensation, c'est surtout un goût de savon, du Pec citron. C'est hyper agressif et du coup ça vraiment ça prend tout la place sur tout le reste du plat et ça va flinguer le plat.'*

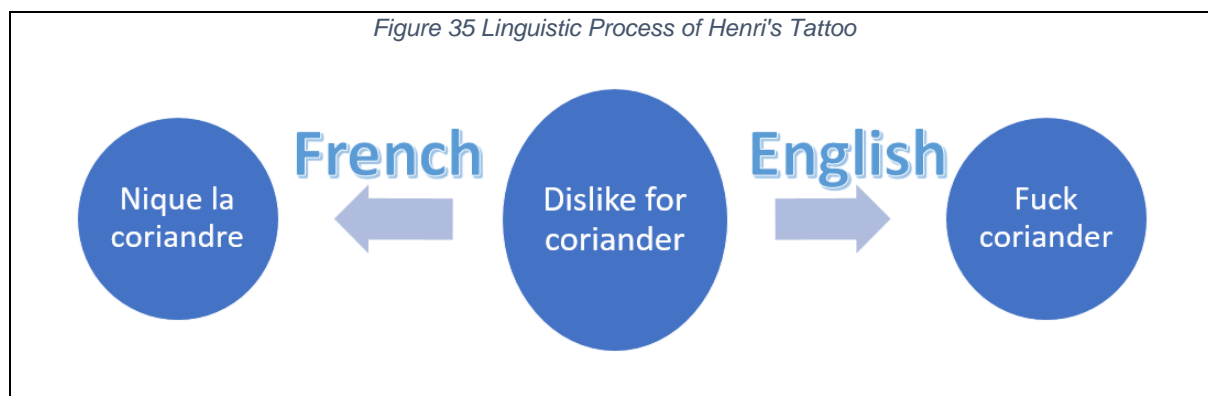
*[So, because I have a visceral hatred for coriander. But really because coriander will ruin absolutely everything it touches for me, if, ever there's a little bit of a coriander in a meal it's going to take over everything. And I...in fact... all the people who dislike coriander, we all have this euh, this, this same sensation, it's mostly a soap taste, lemony. It's very aggressive and it really overpowers everything else in the dish, and that is going to ruin the dish.]*

I then ask why he chose to have the phrase in English rather than in French and Henri replies that:

*'Et en anglais, parce qu'en français 'nique la coriandre' ça faisait un peu trop 'nique la police' quoi du coup et c'est... je trouvais pas ça terrible et 'fuck coriandre' je sais pas... il y avait... c'était plus clinquant pour moi, ça sortait mieux.'*

*[Because in French 'nique la coriander' sounded a bit too much like 'fuck the police' and that's, I didn't think it was very good and 'fuck coriander' I don't know it was flashier for me, it came out better.]*

Henri's preference for *fuck* rather than the politically loaded French equivalent *nique* could be an example of the cultural neutrality of English observed by Pennycook (2006, 2017).



Not unlike Louisa, Henri also started with an idea, his dislike for/of coriander, and had the choice between two linguistic tools: English and French, as shown in figure 35. As demonstrated in his answer, despite having the same original meaning, the connotations of the equivalent phrases in English and French are not the same. I took the opportunity to ask Henri why he chose English specifically and he replies that:

*'... après c'est juste parce que je parle français et l'anglais. Maintenant je ne parle pas allemand, je parle pas espagnol, je... voilà. C'était l'un ou l'autre, ouais.'*

*[Oh bah well, after, it's just that I speak French and English. I don't speak German or Spanish, that's it. It was one or the other, yeah.]*

As Henri demonstrated in the interview, there was a process when deciding on his tattoo, this would suggest that he thought about using the French expression and decided that the English wording fitted his tattoo better. Fernández Dobao (2006) studied the complexity of translation English swear words from the film *Pulp Fiction*, into Spanish and argued that the emotions associated with the swear word in the original language are more important than the literal meaning when translating, this could be the reason for Henri's preference for *fuck* over the French translation *nique*.

### 5.9.5 Steve – Tattoo Artist

*Image 318 Tattoo Artist 1*



*A Cover Up Tattoo by Steve*

Steve is a tattoo artist from the United Kingdom, he has also worked in Belgium as a guest artist and had been tattooing for 12 years at the time of the interview. He agreed to an interview to allow me to compare the tattooing behaviours of French and British people. He stressed during the interview that his responses were only based on his experiences and that tattooing is such a unique experience that no one can talk about generalities in tattooing.

Steve explains that most of his script tattoo work is in English (around 80%) and the second most tattooed language is Arabic as there is a significant Muslim population where he works. He explains that he only speaks English and so the onus is on the tattoo bearer themselves to check the spelling before committing to the tattoo. In Steve's experience, the people asking for tattoos in Arabic are not normally practising Muslims themselves but are descendants of Muslim parents or grandparents who choose to get a tattoo in Arabic to connect with their heritage. This is in keeping with my study whereby the tattoo bearers of English phrases are not English and connect to the language or elements of English-speaking context such as song lyrics or extracts from films.

We discussed tattooing in different countries around the world. Steve explains that in Japan tattoos are markers of identity that date back to the Samurai period. He adds that tattoos are taken very seriously in Japan due to their links to criminality, in particular the yakuza (gangsters). He explains that the yakuza would meet in bath houses so that their whole bodies were on display, displaying not only the tattoos as identity markers but also to ensure that neither person was wearing a wire. From a person's tattoos another member of the yakuza would be able to identify the area, ranks, and the section of the yakuza they were from. This has led to people with visible tattoos being denied access to public bath houses in Japan, and even some roads.

This suggests that in Japan tattoos are still closely identified with criminality despite their acceptance as being mainstream in other countries.

Steve explains that the reasons why people get tattoos are as varied as the tattoos themselves. He explains that people get tattooed for *'highly individual reasons'* apart from *'bro tats'* whereby two or more people have the same tattoo, for example: Steve and his friends all have the same Lamborghini tattoo following a stag do. He adds that:

*'...even though it's a very personal reason that they're getting a tattoo, it is inevitably a social message because you are putting it to be displayed on the body and by doing that it is gonna' be interpreted by other people even if the only other person who sees that tattoo is your partner and you don't display it socially, erm, people are going to interpret that and that it is part of it. It's not just self-identification, erm, and the body as image is also how that is interpreted by other people.'*

Steve gives the example of his chest tattoo to support the argument that all tattoos are social messages. To Steve, his tattoo is illegible as he cannot read it using a mirror, it is legible for other people when they look at him straight on. He explains that it is done that way because *'that's where it looks good and other people will see [it] and be able to read [it].'* He questions how much of a chest tattoo is for the bearer and how much is for other people, but concludes that *'to display imagery on your skin is to be social'*.

When asked about the rules around tattooing Steve explained that it depends on the tattoo artists and the tattoo parlour. An artist can refuse to do a piece they are not comfortable with due to the content, the placement, or the hygiene of the client. Fisher (2002), writes that tattoo artists can refuse tattoos on an ethical basis, particularly tattoos that are overtly racist. However, the owner of the tattoo parlour does not always agree with the personal choice of the artist, Steve remembers getting fired from one job because he refused to tattoo a 19-year old's knuckles for his first tattoo. Steve refused to tattoo the teenager's knuckles because he felt a moral obligation to protect the teenager from making a permanent and visible decision, whereas his boss was more interested in the financial gain to be made. Fisher (2002) would describe this as the *'long-term psychological and social welfare of the client'* (p. 98). This supports Peck and Stroud's (2015) findings whereby they witnessed a tattoo artist's refusal to *'inscribe the tattoo on the face therefore shows how spaces on the skinscape (due to gang norms and practices) potentially become no-go zones for one that does not form part of that community of practice'* (p. 6).

Steve explains that the *'duty of care'* varies between clients. Steve is more likely to ask a young person with no visible tattoos what job they do and why they want a

certain tattoo before committing to doing the tattoo than an older person who has many visible tattoos already or someone he has been tattooing for a while. However, Steve is very aware that there is only so much he can do to protect people from themselves: 'The thing that you've got to remember, is that I am providing a service, and if I don't do it, someone else will'. He adds that he does not feel it is his place to judge if a person is apt to have a tattoo:

*'If they want a tattoo on their neck, and in they're in a tattoo studio, and they're paying me a deposit and they're booking an appointment, it's almost insulting for me to be like "oh have you thought about it?" and they're like "Well, of course I've thought about it, that's why I'm here." So, you could say that our first interaction with that person is the last step to their thinking process.'*

Steve suggests that the significance of tattoos can vary depending on the place where the tattoo bearer lives. He gives the example of getting a racist tattoo such as a swastika in one of the most multi-cultural parts of the United Kingdom as a much bigger statement than in other areas of the United Kingdom that are less diverse. In this study, the same phrase worn by an L1 English speaker and an LX English speaker may not have the same weight and strength and impact on readers of the tattoo. It could be argued that the L1 English speaker could possibly have a greater understanding of the phrase but that the tattoo is more esoteric for an LX speaker that does not live in an English-speaking country.

I ask Steve about gender differences in tattooing and he explains that as tattooing has its roots in the punk and gay rights movement, tattoo artists and people with tattoos tend to be very liberal and open and accepting of women in the trade: 'being a woman is not a disadvantage in the industry and it never has been'. He states that they are 'all united by their love of the craft and were all there because of our artistic merit'. He explains that tattooing, at least in his experience, is open to everyone and he sees people from all socio-economic backgrounds coming into the shop. He adds that this diversity is also present in the tattoo artists themselves:

*'There's people like me who've got a degree and there's people, other people in the tattoo industry that have no education at all [...] everyone's got these different educational backgrounds, come from different socio-economic backgrounds, because we're there because we're united by our love of the art'*

Steve, like the other tattoo artists, is not entirely removed from the world of graffitiing. Steve has done some graffiti pieces in the past, but he did not take part in

tagging as he finds it too territorial, he begins by explaining how the two artforms are similar:

*'Unlike many other artforms graffiti actually works the same way technically as tattooing, because you work from dark tones to light tones, erm, and then you might realign everything or powerline everything with a heavier outline, erm, and uniquely graffiti and tattooing are the same like that, 'cos in most artforms you work light to dark in terms of illustration.'*

He adds that it is not uncommon for tattoo artists like himself to have previously been involved in graffitiing. He describes it as 'cross-training' he explains that:

*'...from an artistic point of view they are very similar [...] there's the fading of colours and things like that, there's like a huge gradient cross over from... it's not like using a computer where it knows like how far to fade into one colour from say peach to seafoam green which is a hard colour blend to do in tattooing, which I'm good at - haha! Erm but you see those sorts of high contrast images in graffiti all the time, that's why graffiti like it pops and it's loud and people see it, it's eye-catching. Erm, that's why you see a black spray can on a white wall and like a white spray can on black wall it's all about catching your eye.'*

Whilst discussing my research project he advises me to look out for windows in graffiti inscriptions. He explains that when libertarians find a swastika, they turn it into a window and over time the box window has become a symbol for the left. He also follows the works of Banksy and tells me about the flame war that the graffiti artist had with fellow graffiti artist King Robbo, in which the two artists adapted and covered each other's work until King Robbo died and Banksy created a tribute piece in his honour.

Steve's insights into tattooing as a tattoo bearer, tattoo artist, and amateur graffiti artist highlight the ways in which the two artforms are similar. Despite being personal private messages potentially hidden on the body or through anonymity, they remain social messages and are as such open to interpretation by others.

#### **5.9.6 Martin – Tattoo Artist**

After speaking to a British tattoo artist based in the UK, I spoke with an Australian tattoo artist who lives and works in France. He has worked in Australia, the United States, UK, Holland, and Germany. His shop had been open for 2 years at the time he gave his interview in the city of Bordeaux. His wife is French and is also a tattoo artist.

He explains that most of the script tattoos that he does are in English, on French speaking clients. He describes only 50% of the clients as being confident of the words or phrases that they have chosen. Martin explains that in his experience, lots of Chinese and Japanese people get tattoos in English. Martin admits that he is not very comfortable with English grammar and so if he has a doubt about the phrase, he

encourages the client to check before doing the tattoo and then again before starting. The most common words he tattoos are *ACAB, strength, beauty, perseverance*, as well as 'inspirational quotes'.

Not unlike Steve, Martin explains that he takes on as many clients as necessary to keep the shop running. However, he explains that he draws the line at overly offensive tattoos. He is not afraid to throw someone out of his shop if they ask for a racist phrase, and he does not hold back even when someone is covering a racist tattoo:

*'I just straight up will cut it out. I don't have any tolerance for that. I'll tell someone to get the fuck out of the shop. I've had people in the middle of getting a Nazi tattoo covered up and I'll stand there in front of them while they're getting it and call them a piece of shit. I've no shame in that at all.'*

This supports Steve's view, that tattoo artists and the tattooing industry is mainly dominated by people with liberal attitudes. Steve also suggests that the tattooing industry is equal for men and women, Martin runs this shop with his wife. He explains that they each have their own style, he does full body pieces and she specialises in traditional American tattoos, and this removes a certain level of competition between them as they focus on different areas of tattooing. When asked if there are differences in the phrases and tattoos chosen by men and women Martin suggests that it is more about personality than gender.

*'I think that euh... I think it's more down to the personality of the... of who's getting the tattoo and what suits them more. Someone might come in that's the biggest, brutish guy ever and then walk out with this beautiful, soft, feminine-esque style thing. I say feminine and masculine, but it... in the art world it really doesn't matter, to me. In my opinion it doesn't matter. It's what suits them more.'*

Studies in the 90s found that the two genders had specific areas of the body that were mainly tattooed in females and in males (Kjeldgaard & Bengtsson, 2005). Thirty years later this division is less apparent, as multiple genders are understood and becoming more mainstream, so are the lines between *male* and *female* tattoos are also becoming more blurred. This supports the findings in this study, there are few phrases that are restricted to one gender over the other. As seen in section 5.5.3, *stay strong* was favoured by female tattoo bearers whilst *always stay strong* was on the skin of one male tattoo bearer. This could suggest that alongside the blurring gender lines, colours, motifs, and phrases are no longer restricted to either gender.

Martin reveals that he has friends in the graffiti world and as a result has done some graffiti with them but does not consider himself a graffiti artist. His graffiti artist friends are not professional tattoo artists. However, he mentions that his favourite

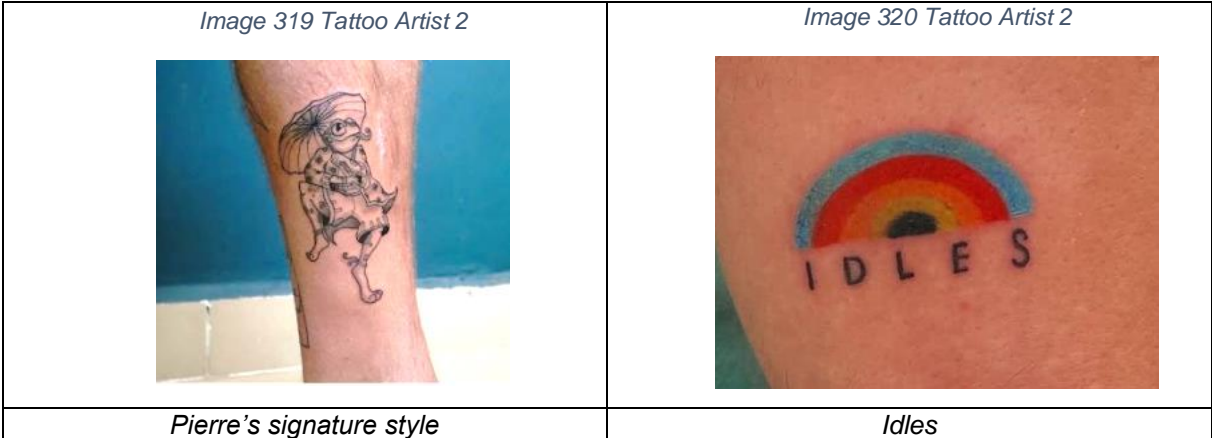


tattoo artist called Grime is heavily connected to the world of graffiti. Martin has a tattoo by a tattoo artist who was also a graffiti artist:

*'The guy that did, that's working on this sleeve was a graffiti artist as well, I think this tattoo comes through like the colours and the way he's designed everything comes through from showing that that his style, is, is definitely a big part of that.'*

As Martin explains, the tattoo artist doing his sleeve tattoo is influenced by his other creative outlet, in this case graffiti.

**5.9.7 Pierre – Tattoo Artist**



Pierre is a French tattoo artist based in Clermont-Ferrand but has also worked in India and Cambodia. He is in his early 20s and had been tattooing for around two years when the interview took place. Pierre speaks English and he explains that when a client asks for a phrase or word in English, he checks that the client likes the translation and they check the phrase together using Google just in case. He only remembers having to correct one person who had some words in the wrong order.

At the beginning, Pierre does not remember tattooing any specific phrases or words, but as the interview progresses, he is able to list several script tattoos including *art, love, stay strong, what doesn't kill you makes you stronger, live laugh love, and memento mori*. He describes these phrases as '*culcul*' which loosely translates to *stupid* in English. Pierre did one English script tattoo in Cambodia on a person's wrist which was *breathe*. The person explained that they suffered from anxiety and therefore decided to have the word *breathe* on their wrist as a reminder to breathe during their panic attacks.

Pierre himself has a Cambodian script tattoo which is a religious prayer, having Cambodian origins, he felt that he was able to have this tattoo without it being cultural

appropriation. When asked if he considers English tattoos on non-English speakers to be appropriation he says:

*'Par rapport à l'anglais, ça va être plus de la typographie, on est dans les lettres, donc il n'y a pas vraiment de... de... de... de... de... qualification, 'fin c'est... ouais je sais pas je trouve ça moins important.'*

*[In relation to English, it's more about typography, we're talking letters, so there's not really any...characterisation, yeah it's, yeah I don't know, I find it less significant]*

Unlike Sara's suggestion that English belongs to everyone, Pierre believes the alphabet belongs to everyone, regardless of the language used. Fisher (2002) suggests that tattooing can be considered cultural reappropriation of the tattoo bearer's body. S. Benson (2000) quotes a tattoo bearer who says that tattooing is 'a statement of ownership over the flesh' and potentially the 'only possession of the self' (p. 251). Fisher (2002) posits that tattoos can be viewed as 'cultural appropriation' whereby the individual can 're-establish control over their person' (p. 104).

He explains that most script tattoos that he does are *walk-ins* which refers to people that go to the artist with their own idea rather than choosing a flash that is pre-drawn in the artist's style. In his experience, many script tattoos were in French, followed by English. He has also tattooed in Arabic, Japanese, and Hebrew. The two people that had the Arabic tattoos explained that they liked the aesthetics of the Arabic characters. He explains that he does not often go into detail with the clients as to the origins or reasons behind the tattoos. Many walk-ins that Pierre sees are people who arrive with an image from Google or the site Pinterest; he explains that is often a lack of creativity or time on the part of the client and he sees it as his job to help them create a more unique image from that original drawing. This is much more difficult with a phrase, particularly one that comes from a song, in that case he tattoos the phrase without adapting it unless the person is open to the idea of adapting it. Pierre explains that he sees many tattoos repeatedly because people tend to follow the trends and look online. He agrees that this could be why there is more repetition in my tattoo corpus than in combined graffiti corpora as the tattoo bearers are often inspired by the same sources.

I ask Pierre about the public and private nature of tattoos. He explains that although a tattoo is a personal investment of time, money, and pain, there are certain rules in tattooing whereby the image or text should be legible to a person looking at the bearer, not from the bearer's perspective. For example, if a tattoo bearer has a portrait on their arm the portrait would be in the same direction vertically as the bearer.

I then ask Pierre about the presence of English around him. He had noticed some English tags or *blazes* as he calls them, and explains that the use of English in France is much more widespread than just in tattoos or graffitiing, he cites French musicians that sing in English. Pierre was surprised when I told him that my research suggested that people get tattooed in English because it *sounds better*. In his personal experience he has found that people are more drawn to French than English. He believes that the appeal of English at the moment is a cultural phenomenon following the war and the expansion of the United States of America, that English is seen as ‘cool’, and many French people were caught up in the ideals of the ‘*American dream*’.

The paradox between English as a means of communication and barrier is also alluded to by Pierre himself. He mentions that some people choose English to filter the people who understand the phrase after having earlier stated that English is the most spoken language in the world. He also explains that when he speaks English, his personality changes and that he will even choose to use certain English phrases when writing to his French speaking friends to adapt the message.

*‘C’est quelque chose que j’aurais pas dit en français, mais je le dis en anglais. [...] ça fait un petit peu plus de recul dans... dans ce qu’on dit [...] il y a des fran-chansons anglaises que quand on traduit en français c’est totalement ridicule, mais pourtant d’une certaine manière c’est plus facile, ‘fin, c’est à écouter... euh... c’est qu’on l’écoute enfin c’est pas gênant, je sais pas’*

*[It’s something I wouldn’t have said in French, but I said it in English [...] it creates a little bit more distance in what we say [...] there are English songs that when you translate them into French it’s totally ridiculous, but yet somehow it’s easier, so, to listen to it, it’s not embarrassing, I don’t know]*

This decision to change language to suit the context and message could be described as part of Pierre’s ‘secondary culture identity’ (Denissova et al., 2019, p. 22), he uses his ‘English culture identity’ to say things he does not feel comfortable expressing in French.

Pierre adds that some people may feel that the French translation is boring, ‘*banale*’ - he gives the example of the script tattoo ‘*stay strong*’ and the French translation ‘*restez fort*’, as these are everyday words, he understands that the English version could be considered different and less ordinary. Mora et al. (2016) describes these script tattoos as ‘cliché’, they give the examples of ‘infinity’ and ‘stay strong’ (p. 12).

I have decided to include Pierre in the tattoo artist section rather than the comparison section because he does not see himself as a graffiti writer; yet he did take

part in graffitiing for a while when he was younger. This is in keeping with Hampton et. Al. (2013), who find that most graffiti writers are young and/or start young. He did not continue writing because despite the adrenaline rush, he felt that the stress of being caught, and the cost of the materials was too high. Initially he did not see a connection between the two art forms. He lists all the differences: graffitiing takes place outside rather than inside, graffitiing uses the whole body whereas tattooing is done mainly with just the hands, and that graffitiing is often an activity that is done alone whereas tattooing requires an artist and a bearer. However, he mentions three colleagues who are both tattoo artists and graffiti writers, but he explains that the tattooing styles of his colleagues do not resemble their graffiti styles and therefore he does not consider it a true link.

I told him about my other interviews, and that a graffiti writer explained that he tattoos by day for a salary and practises graffiti by night because he is a *lover of letters*. Pierre thought about this and agrees that potentially tattooing represents the legal career that allows artists to earn a living and graffitiing is the illegal night time career. He describes graffitiing as *liberating*, it is the artist who chooses what to create rather than the paying client.

This concludes the interviews. The tattoo bearers explained their connection to English as they are immersed in the language, and they identify with the words and messages in their tattoos. The tattoo artists confirmed that English is a popular language to have tattooed. Not unlike the interviews with the graffiti writers, despite the interviews with tattoo bearers and artists being conducted separately, there were some elements that were mentioned in more than one interview (Uithol, 2020). For example, Steven, Martin, and Pierre all mentioned dabbling in graffiti when they were younger. Martin and Pierre (and Jean see section 4.12.3), as the artists based in France, both agree that they tattoo mainly in French and in English, and that there is a lot of repetition in the phrases being tattooed in English.

## **5.10 Concluding Remarks**

This chapter on script tattoos explores both the content of the tattoos as well as the stories behind them. The online surveys collected data to build a corpus and analyse the words and phrases worn by the tattoo bearers. The participants in the survey were mainly under 40, principally females, with under 10 tattoos each. Half of the participants cited English as a second language, and a total of 75% cited English as one of the languages that they spoke.

The most common one-word tattoo was *family*, and the most common phrase tattoo was *Stay Strong*. The most common words were *love* and *never*. The words were mainly found in phrases, 79 of these phrases were seen more than once in the corpus. This suggests that they were either inspired by the same source in English or that the phrase is an indication of the English level of the participants and language that they see as their own.

The most common themes present in this corpus of English script tattoos are often associated with positivity such as *popular culture* and *family*. This suggests that there is a positive connection between the bearers and the language. They choose to express their feelings for loved ones in English, bear mottos in English, and permanently bear references to their favourite English language songs, films, and series. Ireland and Mehl (2014) find that linguistic positivity, words such as *laughing* and *lovely*, are indicators of agreeableness. However, other frequent themes such as *life story and self-representation* and *mottos, messages, and mantras* are often about negative events but from a positive angle reminding the bearer of how far they have come and to *never look back* (Tattoo bearer 399).

The content of the tattoos themselves can reveal elements of the identity of the bearer. McCarty (2019) writes that ‘tattoos are both a creation and extension of people’s identity and personality’ (p. 22). Someone with a Harry Potter quote on their body is, or was, a fan of the Harry Potter books and/or film series. The bearers have all chosen a phrase that they like, be it a film, a book, or a motto.

The main reasons given for being tattooed in English revealed that the connection to English is as unique as the tattoos themselves. For some tattoo bearers the language was intertwined with the origin of the tattoo and therefore no decision was made about the language on its own. These script tattoos were often linked to trips to English-speaking countries or English language culture such as: poems, song lyrics, and quotes from celebrities, series, or films. The tattoos that come from English speaking films are evidence that the speaker watches these films in the original language or researches the original wording. Other tattoo bearers crafted phrases and word play to represent themselves and their life stories; they explained that the message they wanted to convey was not possible in another language. In the case of English-speaking music, it is a part of France’s linguistic sound landscape and therefore it becomes *natural* for the French speakers to use and incorporate these English words into their own personal vocabulary, this suggests that listening to music aids in the process of language flux.

Moreover, script tattoos are an example of text art; the aesthetic qualities of English were also cited by the tattoo bearers. According to the survey, the overall aesthetics of the English language, both visually and audibly, appealed to many tattoo bearers as well as the aesthetics of the individual words and phrases featured in the tattoos. Script tattoos can also be considered a means of communication, little messages that are worn on the skin. The survey also reveals that of the 105 participants who used English as a means of communication, 56 people chose English to make their message comprehensive to a wider audience or based on the universal quality of English, whilst 49 chose English to hide the message. This suggests that another element of language choice is for communicative purposes, even in a text that can be covered by clothing. By incorporating the English language that they hear, see, and use onto their bodies as a form of text art, the L2 English users create a visual representation of their English language use. These are words and phrases that the person has chosen to permanently fuse onto their skin and a part of their being.

Script tattoos in English can be seen and analysed in the same way as a European having a tattoo based on traditions from cultures in the Far East such as from Japan and Polynesia. In her thesis Müller (2012) writes:

*'Les tatouages et les signes de l'Ailleurs permettent un détournement. Ils autorisent à choisir, parmi la multiplicité des sources du Monde, les éléments que l'on souhaite y puiser pour se construire soi.'* (p. 223)

*[Tattoos and signs from Elsewhere allow for deflection. They allow us to choose, from the multiplicity of sources in the World, the elements we wish to draw from it to construct ourselves.]*

Müller (2012) explains that tattoos are a vehicle through which tattoo bearers can construct their identities, taking elements from the cultures around them. I would argue that this study supports that view and shows that tattoo bearers draw on the language around them to construct their identities in the same way as those with tattoos of ethnic origin do. The main difference between the two groups is that the English language belongs to the majority as it is a global language, and the ethnic tattooing traditions which feature in Müller's (2012) thesis are considered as belonging to minorities.

The interviews with the tattoo bearers and artists support the findings in the literature review that language is a creative tool which can be harnessed by the bearers (Kelly 1979, Delbecque 2002, Sunderland, 2006). The interviews also suggest that the debate between whether the examples of LX use and hybrid are translanguaging or code-switching depends on the bearer and their interpretation. Some tattoo bearers express a choice for a named language for a specific reason (code-switching), others

have a concept in mind and choose the words that best fit the message (translanguaging),

The next chapter will focus on a comparison of the two sets of data: script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions. The shared characteristics will be presented in relation to the literature review and the data in this study. The themes that are common to the two datasets are also presented and explored.





*Image 321 Graffiti D28*



## **6 Graffiti Inscriptions and Script Tattoos, Private Texts in Public Places**

## 6.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the similarities between script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions both in relation to their general forms as well as specifically to the data used in this study. Graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos have been defined in the literature as both being forms of text art (Jaworski, 2014). Both art forms have been associated in the past with subculture and have been moving into the public eye and mainstream art since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (Armstrong et al., 2004; Kosut, 2006; C. R. Sanders & Vail, 2008). As the script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions in this study are all written in a foreign language, I argue that they are examples of linguistic competence, whereby the writers or tattoo bearers display their language knowledge on their body or in their writings (Duranti, 2004).

## 6.2 Shared Characteristics

The combined graffiti corpora contain 1,237 inscriptions and the tattoo corpus comprises 825 script tattoos. According to AntConc, the combined graffiti corpora have 4,227 identified tokens and the tattoo corpus has 3,408 tokens. The programme AntConc includes every letter or combination of letters separated by a space as a word, for example, *EASYWeed33* from graffiti inscription C78 is counted as one word rather than two words and a number. This difference in corpus size is reflected in the range of vocabulary in the two corpora. As seen in the chapter on the graffiti inscriptions, the type-token ratio can be used to determine the lexical diversity of a corpus (Templin, 1957). Table 99 compares the two corpora used in this study.

Table 99 Graffiti Inscriptions and Script Tattoos in Tokens and Types

	<i>Combined Graffiti Inscriptions</i>	<i>Script Tattoos</i>
<i>Total Inscriptions</i>	1,237	825
<i>Total Tokens</i>	4,227	3,409
<i>Total Types</i>	2,072	1,177
<i>Type-Token Ratio</i>	0.49	0.34

As shown in Table 99, the lexical diversity in the script tattoo corpus is slightly lower than in the overall graffiti inscription corpus. However, it is more diverse than the

city corpus alone (0.006). This supports Pierre's comments during his interview where he highlighted a lack of originality in the script tattoos that he sees.

The mean average for the graffiti inscriptions was 3.41 words per phrase and the tattoo corpus had a mean average of 4.16 words. The modal average of both corpora was one-word inscriptions (n = 170 for the graffiti inscriptions and n = 165 for that script tattoos). The longest inscription in combined graffiti corpora was 58 words long and the longest script tattoo was 43 words long. Compared to other forms of written texts, such as songs, poems, books, etc. - the two corpora share a similar range in length, mean average, and modal average of the inscriptions. These similarities are some of the justifications for studying the two art forms in parallel.

In both the tattoo corpus and the combined graffiti corpora, the two main verb forms used in the inscriptions were the present simple and the imperative. In combined graffiti corpora, 31% of the phrases containing a verb were identified as being in the imperative form, and 30% were in the present simple. The percentages are not dissimilar to the percentages in the tattoo corpus: 44% of the script tattoos were in the present simple and 34% in the imperative. This adds to the similarity between the two mediums.

One difference seen in this study compared to other studies of linguistic landscape, in particular those that focus on public and governmental signs, is the lack of translation. The message is written in one language, or a combination, but there are no instances of a graffiti inscription or script tattoo that is written in both languages side by side or one under the other. In the case of tattoo bearers, it could be because the text is primarily for the bearer and therefore not to communicate a message to others. Whereas for the graffiti inscriptions, the writers could be writing for themselves or a target audience but do not have the time or willingness to translate. The writers may assume that their readers will understand *fuck le 17* or only be targeting bilingual speakers. Like the tattoo bearers, the writers could be leaving their messages for themselves as a cathartic practice rather than a means to spread a message. This would support the work of Landry and Bourhis (1997), who conclude that 'the linguistic landscape is a sociolinguistic factor distinct from other types of language contact in multilingual settings' (p. 45).

There were a few differences between the two datasets, the script tattoos tend to be whole phrases borrowed or written in English, there were more hybrid sentences in the graffiti inscriptions. This suggests that the tattoo bearers were 'copying' a sentence

or word from English, whilst the graffiti writers were ‘incorporating’ English words and structures into French. Graffiti also tends to be more demonstrative of code-switching whereby an English word (or number with English pronunciation) is used instead of the L1 alternative. The graffiti inscription data reflects Hoffer’s (2002) findings that replacing an L1 word with an English word is the most common form of English loan words.

### 6.2.1 Words and Phrases Common to both Datasets

When comparing the graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos as phrases rather than as words, there is very little repetition and few similarities between the two corpora, bar the functional words such as *I, you, the, a, etc.*

Table 100 Relative Frequency over 10,000 of Pronoun Use in the Two Corpora

<i>Subject Pronouns</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>You</i>	<i>He</i>	<i>She</i>	<i>It</i>	<i>We</i>	<i>They</i>
<i>Combined graffiti corpora</i>	246	165	4	4	61	54	14
<i>Script Tattoo Corpus</i>	727	630	36	12	84	290	48
<i>Personal Pronouns</i>	<i>Me</i>	<i>You</i>	<i>Him</i>	<i>Her</i>	<i>It</i>	<i>Us</i>	<i>Them</i>
<i>Combined graffiti corpora</i>	258	299	8	8	72	40	0
<i>Script Tattoo Corpus</i>	339	387	24	0	0	72	0
<i>Possessive Determiners</i>	<i>My</i>	<i>Your</i>	<i>His</i>	<i>Her</i>	<i>Its</i>	<i>Our</i>	<i>Their</i>
<i>Combined graffiti corpora</i>	218	169	16	0	0	40	0
<i>Script Tattoo Corpus</i>	763	593	24	0	0	60	0
<i>Possessive Personal Pronouns</i>	<i>Mine</i>	<i>Yours</i>	<i>His</i>	<i>Hers</i>	<i>Its</i>	<i>Ours</i>	<i>Theirs</i>
<i>Combined graffiti corpora</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Script Tattoo Corpus</i>	24	24	0	0	0	0	12
<i>Reflexive Pronouns</i>	<i>Myself</i>	<i>Yourself</i>	<i>Himself</i>	<i>Herself</i>	<i>Itself</i>	<i>Ourselves</i>	<i>Themselves</i>
<i>Combined graffiti corpora</i>	0	16	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Script Tattoo Corpus</i>	12	109	0	0	0	0	0

Pronouns are used significantly more in the script tattoos than in the graffiti inscriptions. This could be due to the personal nature of script tattoos; they are on the

body of a person and are directly linked to their identity as there is no anonymity. There are only two pronouns that are used more in the graffiti writing than in the script tattoos: *her* and *it*, both as a personal pronoun. There are 14 pronouns that are not present in either corpus: *them, her, its, their, his, hers, its, ours, theirs, himself, herself, herself, itself, ourself, ourselves* and *themselves*. The pronouns that are not present in either corpus are primarily in the third person plural, as possessive personal pronouns and reflexive pronouns. This suggests that both writers and tattoo bearers are writing more about themselves and talking directly to ‘you’ than they are using the third person pronouns *he, she, it, and they*.

In the tattoo corpus, there is more repetition of set phrases which are associated with positivity, for example: *family* (n = 14), *hope* (n = 11), *stay strong* (n = 11), and *love* (n = 10). In the combined graffiti corpora, there was less repetition of an exact phrase, or an overall association with positivity or negativity. The most frequent phrases were slightly different but included: *X was here* (n = 75) where the x represents the names written with the expression, *I love X* (n = 13); here the x replaces the various objects of love, and *fuck the x* (n = 9) where the x is used instead of the recipients of the phrase.

There are some words and phrases that appear in both corpora. The seven most frequent ‘complete’<sup>89</sup> phrases are shown in Table 101. There are more phrases and one-word inscriptions that appear in both corpora, but I have chosen to focus on the most common sentences as they are more representative of the corpora.

Table 101 Words and Phrases Common to both Corpora

Phrase (including slight variants)	Frequency in the Corpus	
	Tattoo Corpus	Combined Graffiti Corpora
<i>Hope</i>	11	1
<i>Love</i>	10	4
<i>Only God can judge me</i>	5	1
<i>Never give up</i>	7	1
<i>Love never dies</i>	4	1
<i>One Love</i>	5	1
<i>It always seems impossible until it's done</i>	1	1

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<sup>89</sup> *Hope* and *Love* are often written as a one-word inscription and therefore these examples are considered complete.

The words and phrases in the table all appear as complete script tattoos and complete graffiti inscriptions in the corpora, their usage as a part of longer phrases has not been included in the table above, but will be discussed in the following paragraphs. The total number of occurrences of the word *hope* as part of a phrase in the script tattoo corpus is 21, whilst *hope* only appears once in the combined graffiti corpora. The total occurrences of the word *love* is 72 in the script tattoos and 61 times in the combined graffiti corpora.

The word *love* was the most frequent word in the two datasets, it was the fourth most used word in the tattoo corpus and the seventh most written word in the graffiti corpora. The relative frequency of the word *love* was 205 in the tattoo corpus and 146 in the graffiti corpora. Four of the phrases have positive connotations of love and hope. One of the inscriptions has a religious element, and one phrase is motivational.

There were 48 clusters in both the graffiti inscriptions and the script tattoo corpus containing the word *love*. The AntConc programme allows you to search for one word, in this case *love* and its 25 collocates to the left and/or right of the word. In the tattoo corpus, the word *love* appears in the clusters *love you*, *I love* and *one love* seven times respectively. In combined graffiti corpora the same clusters can be seen, *I love* (n = 13), *love you* (n = 8), and *one love* (n = 1). The remaining clusters appear four times or fewer in combined graffiti corpora. There are nine clusters that appear two or more times in combined graffiti corpora and 10 clusters that appear three or more times in the tattoo corpus. This suggests that the word *love* is not only key to both corpora but is also used in similar ways by the graffiti writers and tattoo bearers in their respective art forms. Therefore, this word could be more representative of L2 English use in France rather than being specific to script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions.

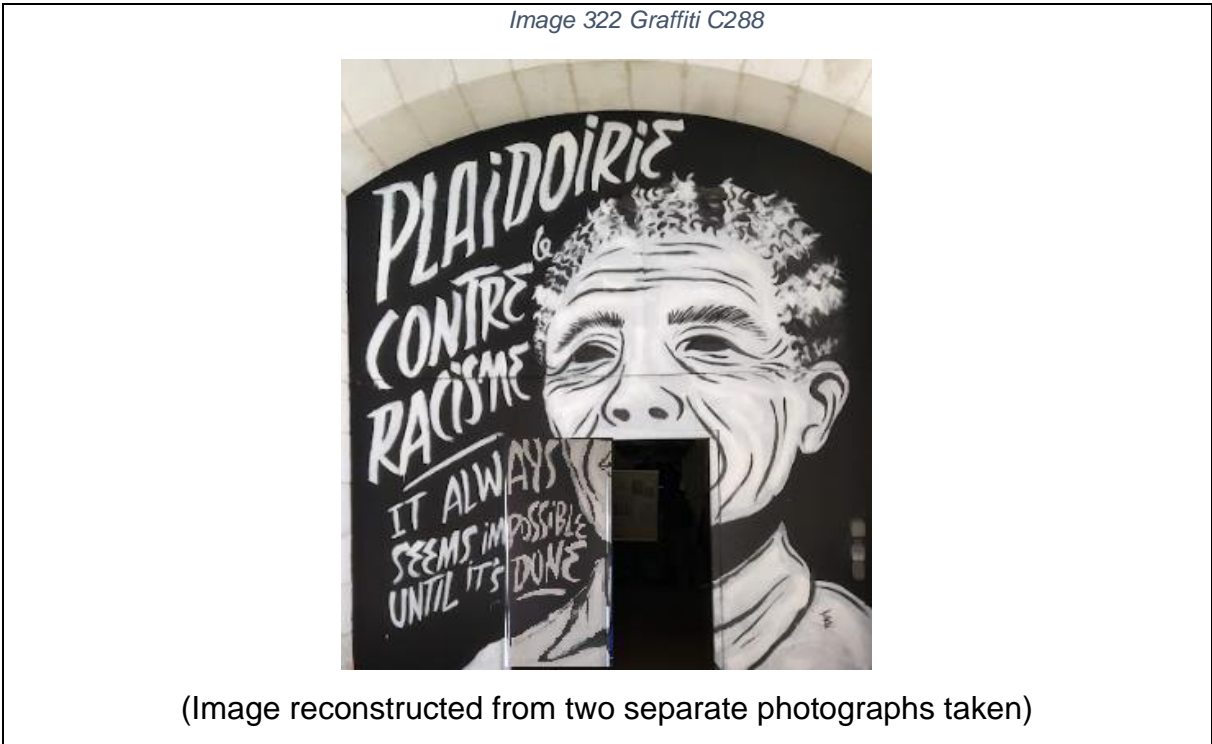
The word *fuck*, despite appearing 108 times in the combined graffiti corpora, only appears five times in the tattoo corpus. None of the five inscriptions using the word *fuck* share a cluster. The five script tattoos are: *fuck you and love you*, *fuck 2020*, *fuck coriander*, *fuck love* and *fuck me*.<sup>90</sup> In the combined graffiti corpora, the most frequent cluster is *fuck the* (n = 9); *fuck you* appears eight times but the other clusters found in

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<sup>90</sup> There are other script tattoos including *fuck* but they are either longer than the short clusters intended for comparison or are a conjugation of the word *fuck*, for example, *fucker peace*. I have chosen to focus only on script tattoos containing the word *fuck* as it was the most used conjugation in both corpora.

the tattoo corpus do not appear in the combined graffiti corpora. This suggests that the tattoo bearers and graffiti writers do not express negativity using the word *fuck* in the same way or about the same topics.

The same comparison can be applied to the word *never*, it featured in 67 script tattoos but appeared only eight times in combined graffiti corpora. In the script tattoos the word *never* is mainly used with the imperative in phrases that are motivational for the bearer: *never give up*, *never look back*, *never lose hope* etc. Whereas in the combined graffiti corpora the word *never* is used eight times, two of which are phrases which were also found in the tattoo corpus: *love never dies*, *never give up*. There is no repetition with the word *never* in the combined graffiti corpora.



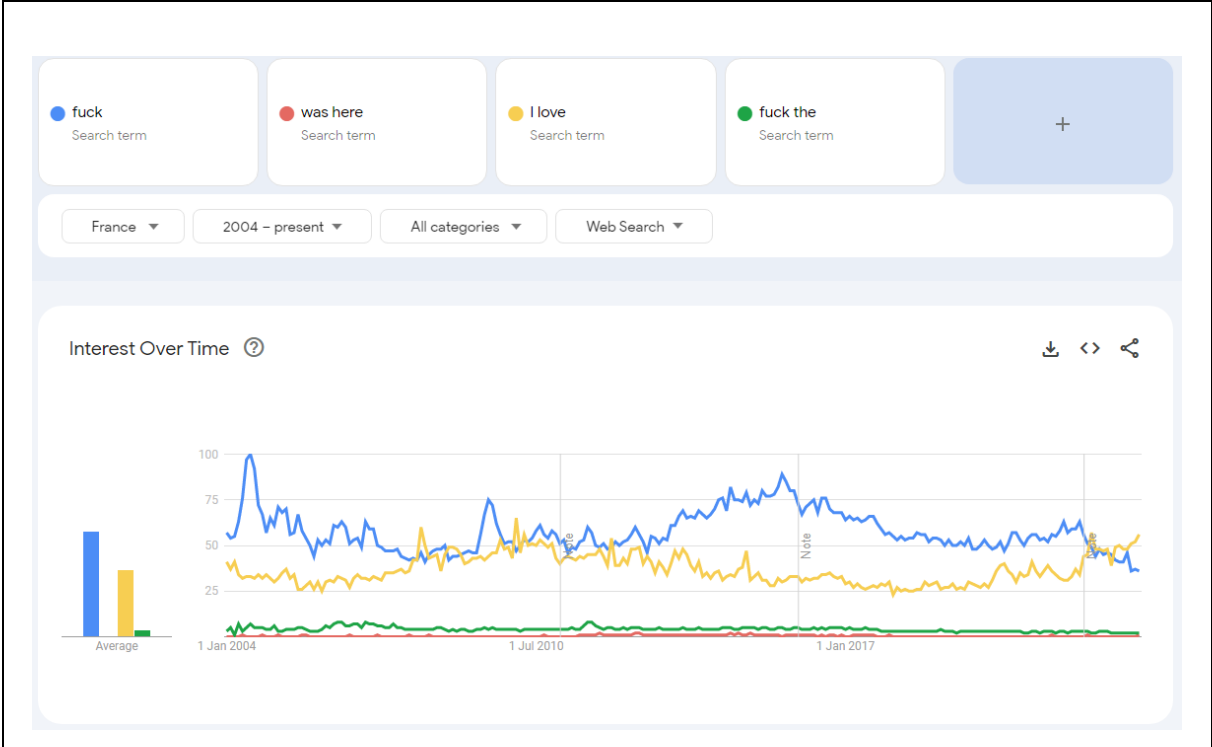
Tattoo bearer 54 has the script tattoo: *It always seems impossible until it's done* because they wanted to have the original phrase and not the translation. The quote is said to have come from Nelson Mandela (BrainyMedia Inc, 2023). This conclusion is supported by the graffiti inscription found in Bordeaux.

**6.2.2 Google Trends**

Google Trends is a tool managed by Google that allows users to see the relative popularity of specific search terms on the standard Google search engine (Franzén, 2023). In this section, the tool will be used to analyse the most frequently used words and phrases in both the combined graffiti inscription corpora and the script tattoo corpus, and their 'real-world' usage in France (Valdez 2021). In the case of the graffiti

inscriptions, the use of Google Trends replaces surveys and additional in-depth interviews with the writers, whereas it is used as an extra comparison of the data amassed on the script tattoos. I have chosen to focus on only the four most frequent words or phrases to avoid bias on the part of the researcher. In both corpora there were multiple words or phrases in joint position fifth most used phrase or word.

Figure 36 Screenshot 1 of Google Trends France Most Common Graffiti Words



In Figure 36, the data shows that the searches for the word *fuck* remain consistently high over the almost 20-year period. This could be due to the sexual denotations of the word and therefore linked to pornography searches rather than as a verb as seen in the combined graffiti corpora, and also as previous research suggests word *fuck* is a prominent loan word and used globally (Fjeld et al., 2019). There were 13 months in the total period where the phrase *I love* was searched for more than *fuck*, this is particularly true from the month of May 2022 where the searches for the word *fuck* steadily decline and the searches for *I love* rise. The use of *fuck the*, and therefore *fuck* as verb as seen in the combined corpora, is consistently low with a relative popularity ranging from two to eight.<sup>91</sup> The phrase *was here* is the least frequent term

<sup>91</sup> Google Trends gives results about searches containing those words but the searches can include other words. Therefore, the searches above would encompass all phrases with *fuck the ...*



searched for, this suggests that this phrase is associated more with graffitiing than being searched for on the internet.

Figure 37 Screenshot Google Trends 2 - Aquitaine Most Common Graffiti Words

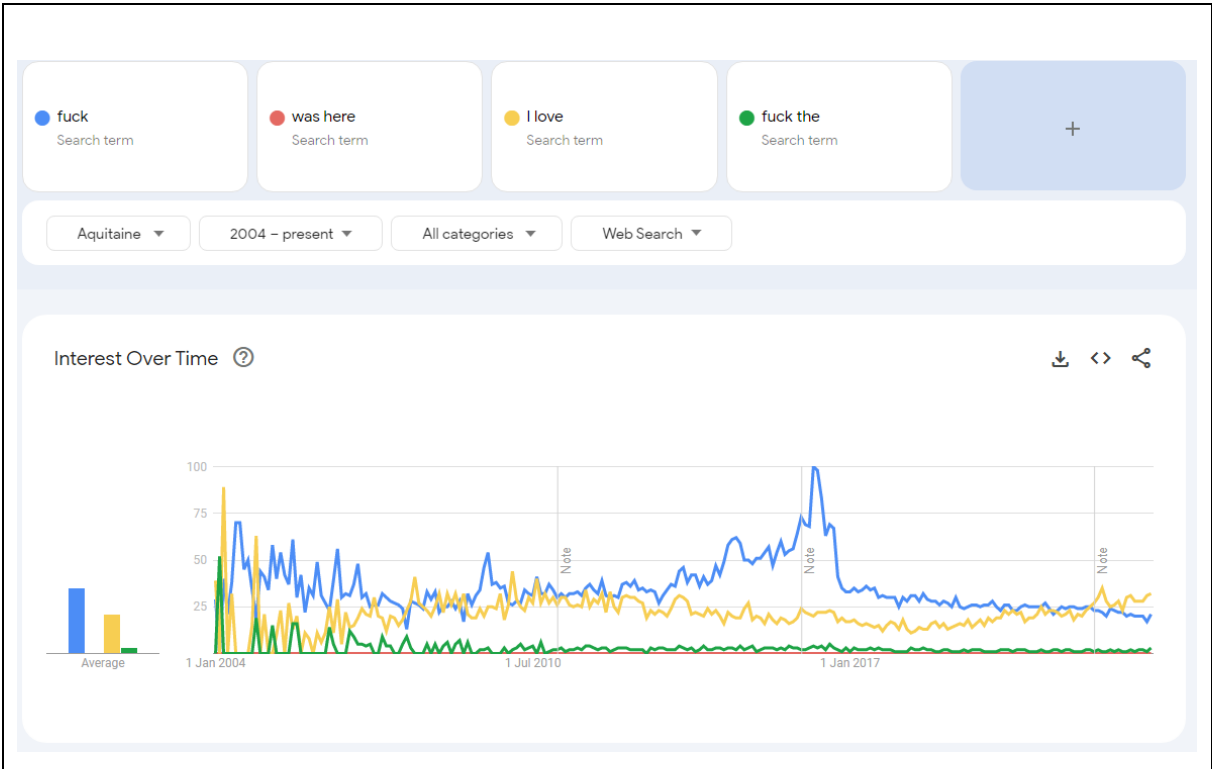


Figure 37 focuses on the Aquitaine region, even though my study focused on Bordeaux, the results for Bordeaux alone on Google Trends are too small to be studied. As seen in Figure 37, *fuck* is consistently the most searched for word and is surpassed by *I love* in 26 months. The graph also shows a significant drop in the searches for the word *fuck* in mid-2016 which then becomes a slight decline from January 2017. The searches for *fuck the* fluctuate from a relative popularity of zero to twenty-one during the time period whilst *was here* is measured at zero throughout.

Figure 38 Screenshot Google Trends 3 France Most Common Tattoos

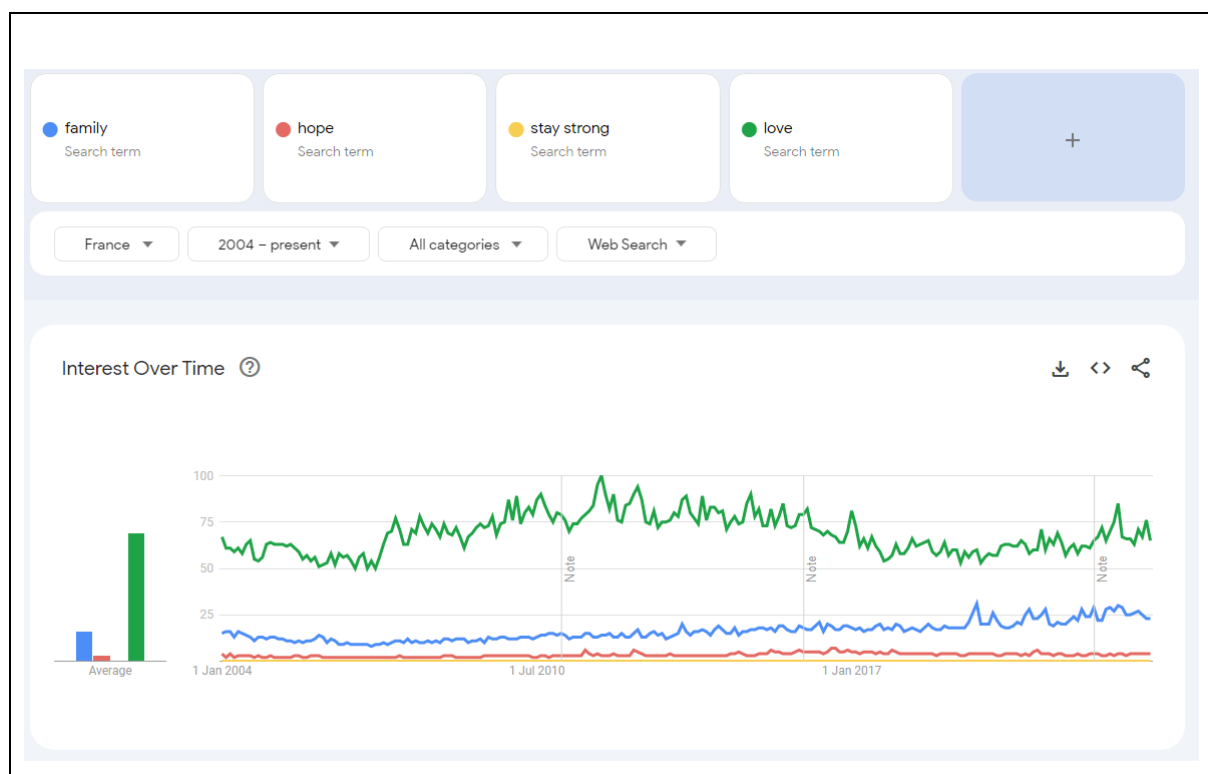


Figure 38 presents the Google Trends data for the four most common tattooed words in the script tattoos. The graph shows that in France, the word *love* is searched for the most in this group. The lowest recorded relative popularity for *love* is 50; it reaches 100 twice in this diagram. The word *family* has a relative popularity between nine and 32. Between 2004 and 2009 the relative popularity is constant and from 2010 it steadily increases. The search for *family* was at its highest in August 2019. The word *hope* has a constant relative popularity of three to six. The phrase *stay strong* is the least searched for, its relative popularity is between zero and one throughout the whole period. One of the reasons that *stay strong* could be the least popular is that it is a phrase compared to singular words and therefore the context is more restrictive.

Figure 39 Screenshot 4 Google Trends Aquitaine Most Common Tattoo Words

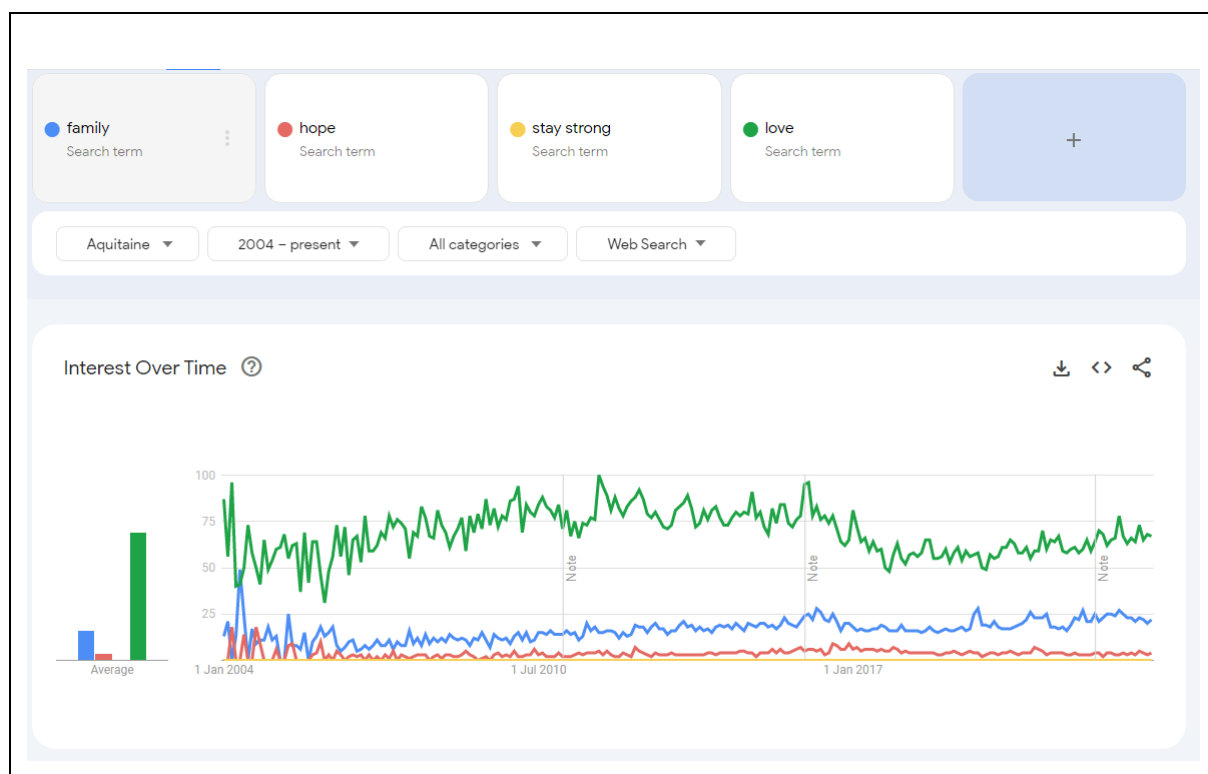


Figure 39 shows the same four words in the combined tattoo corpus but with a focus on the search results in the Aquitaine region only. As the survey of tattoo bearers was open to people outside of Bordeaux this graph is less important to the study but is still interesting to analyse in contrast with the most common graffiti words in the Aquitaine region.

The relative popularity of the word *love* remains high and it is only surpassed by the word *family* once in May 2004. The word *family* peaks in May 2004 and fluctuates in use until late 2008 before gradually increasing in use and levelling off mid-2016. It drops in relative popularity before gradually increasing in 2019 and 2020. The word *hope* fluctuates with a relative popularity between zero and 13, its use is steadier from 2011. The phrase *stay strong* does not have a relative popularity greater than zero, this is to be expected after the national results.

The results from Google Trends show that the words *fuck* and *love* are not only popular amongst graffiti writers and script tattoo bearers, but also amongst French internet users when compared to other words in the datasets. Figure 40 compares the usage of the two words in France to the French translations *putain* and *amour* to gauge whether these words are the preferred translations.

Figure 40 Screenshot of Google Trends Results French and English Words

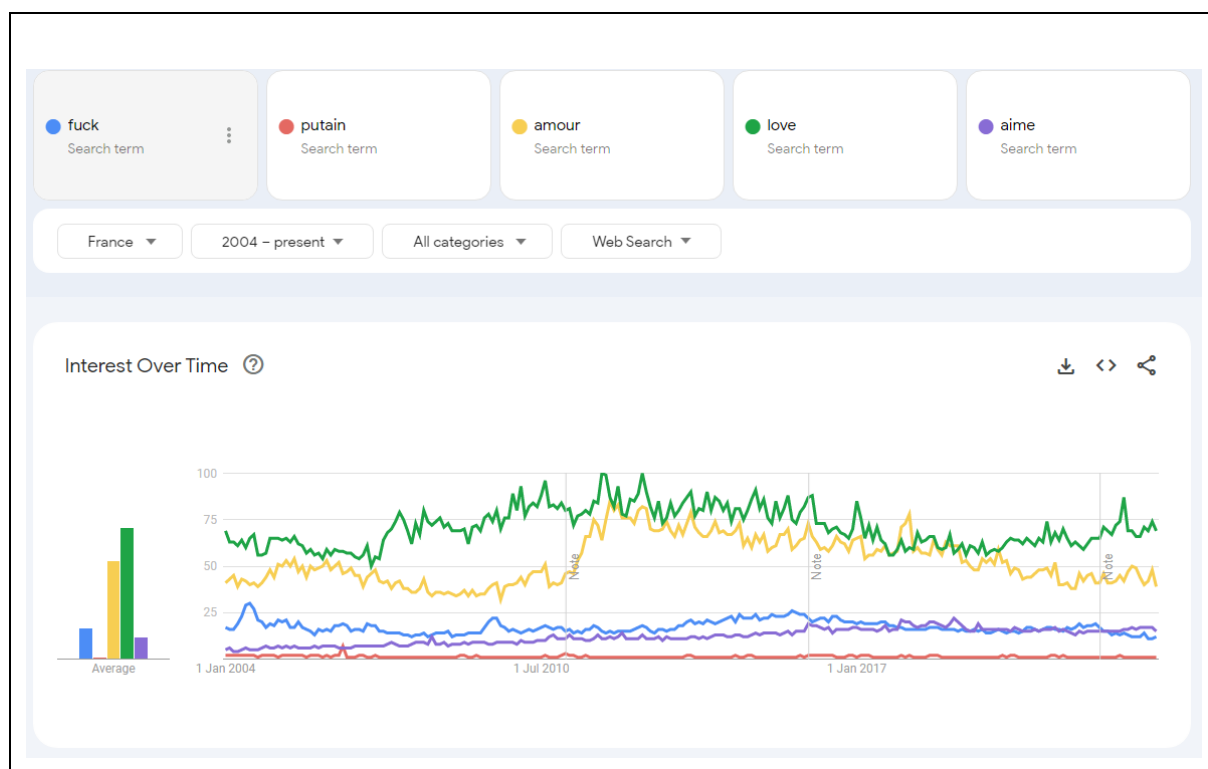


Figure 40 shows that both *fuck* and *love* are searched far more than their French counterparts *putain* and *amour*. The French swear word *putain* has a relative popularity between one and seven, peaking in January 2006, whilst the word *fuck* peaks at a relative popularity of 30 in July 2004. The word *fuck* has a consistent relative popularity between 15 and 25, dropping to 11 in February 2023. This decrease is in keeping with the previous findings.

The difference in relative popularity between *love* and *amour* is 42 at its strongest in October 2010. The relative popularity of the word *love* is consistently higher than *amour*. This could be because the word *love* in English can be used as both a verb and a noun, however with the addition of the word *aime*, *love* in verb form in the present simple conjugation,<sup>92</sup> the use of *love* is still significantly higher. During a three-month period, December 2017 to February 2018, the word *amour* has a higher relative popularity than *love*: 78-60 at its highest point. The word *aime* starts in 2004 with a low relative popularity of four to six and rises to 22 in 2019.

<sup>92</sup> Only five words can be analysed at a time, therefore I chose *aime* rather than other conjugations

These results further support the claim of this thesis that certain words, namely *fuck* and *love*, have been incorporated into everyday language use by (some) L1 French speakers and are evidence of language flux.

### **6.2.3 Brevity**

Graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos are both characterised by their brevity, or their use of very few words, which can be also described as laconic (Coupland, 2012), and language economy (Mora et al., 2016). Both the graffiti inscriptions and the script tattoos in this study are often short. This can be seen in their mean average length: 3.41 words per graffiti inscription and 4.16 per script tattoo, and in that both corpora had a modal average of one.

In their research, Mora et al. (2016) conclude that language economy was an important finding, it demonstrated that ‘language choices are not just the product of fads, but conscious decisions that follow affective, social, and sometimes political reasons’ (p. 20). Previous studies cite speech economy as a reason for borrowing (Zenner et al., 2017). Chesley and Baayen (2010) claim that shorter words could be easier to process. This study supports their findings, as the data shows graffiti writers and tattoo bearers using language to effectively, and concisely, give their opinions as political situations, summarise their life stories, and meaningful events. There are examples of conscious decisions to use English due to constraints in the writing process as well as to accommodate an aesthetic goal in mind. It could be argued that some of the occurrences of graffiti inscriptions are occurrences of the writers’ multimodal and linguistic repertoire in ‘spontaneous, impromptu, and momentary actions and performances’ (Wei, 2011, p. 1224), suggesting that English, or at least some words, are mixing with the writer’s French and becoming a part of their lexical repertoire.

One of the problems created by a corpus with very little context is the flexibility of meaning. This flexibility does not facilitate an objective analysis of the words (Billoti de Gage, 2012). Reppen (2022) writes that when the part of speech is known, there is less ambiguity. A set for five criteria has been proposed to aid in identifying the meaning of the lexical items:

1. The earliest recorded meaning
2. Predominance (the frequency of use)
3. Predictability
4. A sense that serves as a plausible cognitive antecedent

5. A sense that relates to concrete human experience (the concept is coherent with the lived experience implied by the lexical item)

Adapted from (Tyler & Evans, 2001, 2003).

The above criteria do not entirely resolve the issue of eliminating semantic polysemy in this study. As both the graffiti inscription and script tattoo corpora contain principally short phrases: 76% of the script tattoos were one-five words long and 87% were one-five words in the graffiti inscription corpus. This means that the context surrounding the words is very limited and instances of semantic polysemy are high. (Ireland & Mehl, 2014, p. 202) describe the lack of context whilst analysing as 'context-blindness' and they explain that this can make results 'noisy or difficult to interpret'.

Grammatical ambiguity around the meaning of the word decreases as the phrases lengthen. When the inscriptions are one or two-words long it can be impossible to know what the writer or bearer intended the phrase to mean. For example, *dream* could be a noun or a verb. The tattoo bearer could be referring to the concept of a dream or using the verb in the imperative to say "dream" as an action. This uncertainty is reduced with the addition of other words. In the tattoo: *Follow your dreams*, the context of the whole phrase makes it clear that the word *dreams* is a plural noun and not a verb in the present third person singular form. One tattoo bearer wrote that they have the tattoo *dreams* and gave the translation *rêver* which means *to dream* in French.

Similarly, the tattoo *cry baby* could be an imperative plus a noun or a noun modifier plus a noun. The tattoo *cry baby* appears twice in the corpus, one participant offers the translation: *pleurnicheuse* which is a noun in French and therefore would suggest that the intended translation is also a noun and not an imperative. The other participant does not offer a translation.

Another feature of brevity is ellipsis. It can be argued that almost all of the inscriptions in both corpora are examples of ellipsis. There are few complete sentences as the graffiti writers and tattoo bearers often use as few words as possible to convey their meaning. For graffiti writers, speed is necessary due to the illegality of their work. For tattoo bearers, the available space on the body is often a limiting factor for the number of words that a tattoo can have.

Table 102 Occurrences of Ellipsis through Punctuation

	Occurrences
<p>Graffiti Inscriptions (n = 15)<sup>93</sup> (rf = 121)</p>	<p>LAST NIGHT... I HAD A DREAM YOU HAVE NO CLUE... ...in The COLD NOVeMbeR RAIN... TOO MANY PAINTERS NOT ENOUGH WALLS... I will ...! iN the FutuR... See you SPACE COWBOY... Vous êtes Cool Sway ... Je sors avec un white c'est sympa ... I'm gonna ... eat yo ass B-A FASE... O &gt; 2019 "KeROZEN" RiTaLiNe *PoweR! I wanna Be a Billionaire... COME TOGETHER ... I WANNA HOLD YOUR HAND ... LOVE, LOVE ME DO ... GET BACK, GET BACK ... ALL THE LONELY PEOPLE ... HELLO, HELLO, YOU DON'T KNOW WHY YOU SAY GOODBYE I SAY HELLO \$ &gt; SUDO SUICIDE \$ &gt;GO COMMIT DIE ... DONE CiTY RPZzzz... THUG-&gt;</p>
<p>Script Tattoos (n = 2) (rf = 2)</p>	<p>Bad seed... ...to boldly go where no one has gone before</p>

Punctuation representing ellipsis was used more frequently in the graffiti inscription corpora. This could be because the graffiti writers would like to write more but are unable to in the short period of time they have to write. If a tattoo bearer wishes to have a longer phrase they can choose a different area of the body, font, or size to accommodate more of the phrase.

The use of clichés and set phrases are also common features of brevity. In this study, there are several examples of clichés and set phrases that are referred to as manifest intertextuality. According to Begimova (2019), clichés are set phrases, there is no distinction between the two:

*'the "cliché" type is a tendency, and this tendency has been progressing for a long time. The "cliché" is a so-called "finished" ("ready-made up") construction, a proposition which means speech stereotype, finished phrase, which is used as a standard reproduced easily in definite conditions and contexts.'* (p. 99)

The 'definite conditions and contexts' Begimova is referring to could be the flash tattoos created by the artists, or the repetitive nature of graffiti artists to write the same phrase in many places (this is one of the reasons for the use of stencils and stickers).

<sup>93</sup> This refers to the number of inscriptions rather than the number of occurrences.

Table 103 Occurrences of Clichés and Set Phrases

Graffiti Inscriptions		Both Corpora		Script Tattoos	
Cliché	Set Phrase	Cliché	Set Phrase	Cliché	Set Phrase
N/A	<p>MAKE EARTH GREEN AGAIN</p> <p>MAKE ART NOT WAR DO THE WRONG THING [x3]</p> <p>GLOBAL WARNING [x2]</p>	<p>Only God can judge me [x4]</p>	N/A	<p>Stay strong [x12]</p> <p>Believe in your dreams [x9]</p> <p>Never give up [x7]</p> <p>Never a failure, always a lesson [x5]</p> <p>Live Laugh Love</p>	<p>Once upon a time [x5]</p>

Clichés are often viewed negatively, during his interview, the tattoo artist Pierre showed some disdain for phrases that he considered to be clichés. Begimova (2019) however, gives five positive features of clichés:

*'a) cliché corresponds to psychological stereotypes (to the facts) reflecting the phenomena of a human's reality, the moments of his life (the facts) repeated frequently; b) cliché reproduces easily the finished speech formulas (discourse propositional structures – signs); c) cliché furthers to automate the process of reproducing any human's thoughts by propositional signs; d) cliché facilitates the process of communication; e) cliché spares any human's mental efforts, the energy and time of his power of abstract thought.'* (pp. 99-100)

Taking the features point by point, there is evidence in this study to support Begimova's features. There are instances of tattoo bearer's explaining that their tattoo represented their life story and personality. Tattoo bearer 391 has the tattoos: *never a failure always a lesson, freedom, my happiness, stay true* and *get rich or die*, he explains that he has these phrases as they are more beautiful than the French alternatives and that each phrase or word means something important to him or refers to him [*Je trouve ca plus beau que le francais. Et chaque phrase ou mot me désigne ou désigne quelque chose d'important pour moi.*]

Begimova's (2019) point B, is that clichés facilitate reproduction of speech formulas. The evidence of repetition in the two corpora supports this statement. In graffiti writing, the writers aim to repeat their message in as many places as possible to reach as many people as possible, clichés aid in their messages about society and politics. In the script tattoos, the use of clichés counteracts to a degree the brevity of the words, when the tattoo bearer has *live laugh love* the reader does not require further information to understand that this is the person's leitmotiv and personal philosophy. Point D adds that clichés facilitate communication, as a cliché is well known and well used it is easier to understand for more people. This was the goal of



some tattoo bearers who chose English so that their script tattoo would be understood by more people: tattoo bearer 460 has the cliché *stay strong* as a memo to herself and potentially others as she chose English because in her opinion it is the most common language and the first to be taught in schools: *[parce que cest la language la plus courante et la première à être pratiquée en école donc celle dont je parle le mieux après le français. I chose this meaning to erase my childhood (I did it for my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday) and to say to myself I've stayed strong, I've held on until I came of age and now I'm the only master of my life].*

Point C suggests that there is the process of choosing a cliché is automated, this is supported by point E – that clichés reduce the effort needed to create a phrase. As Pierre explained in his interview, many tattoo bearers look online for inspiration and as a result choose cliché phrases and images for their tattoo designs. As shown earlier, 178 respondents to the survey on script tattoos did not write that they spoke English yet all have a tattoo in English. Amongst this group of tattoo bearers, there were several script tattoos that can be considered cliché: *faith hope love, believe in your dreams, stay true, one love, hope, no failure just lessons [x2], only God can judge me, live laugh love, stay strong* and so on. This suggests that clichés are a means for people to use words and phrases from another language without necessarily being able to understand the language.

The use of set phrases and clichés in short inscriptions requires the writers and readers to share the same cultural knowledge, including but not limited to quotes or extracts of quotes, books, slogans and so on (Chauvin, 2015). For example, the writer of the phrase *MAKE EARTH GREEN AGAIN* relies on the readers being familiar with Trump's election campaign and the writer of *global warning* assumes that their intended audience will recognise the phrase 'global warming'. As Chauvin (2015) explains 'interpretation is a combination of co-textual and cultural clues, which will probably lead [readers] that belong to the same, or partly similar, cultural and linguistic backgrounds to reach the same conclusions' (p. 14), therefore it suggests that all of the graffiti writers who leave a message for an intended audience presume that they will understand not only the cultural context of the phrase but also the English words used in the inscription. As the script tattoos are often primarily for the bearer, rather than for others, it is less of a defining factor if the reference and the English are not understood by other readers.

One reason for the brevity could be that 'English borrowings are monosyllabic or disyllabic' as is found by Lazarev (2017, p. 191). The fewer syllables a word has the

shorter it is likely to be. This study supports Lazarev’s reasoning that most of the borrowed words are mono and disyllabic (n = 1,171, 87%).

Table 104 Distribution of Syllables in Words<sup>94</sup>

Monosyllabic (n = 701)	<i>The, but, will, that, there, hope, storm, mode, spell, soil, swim, sink, grows, eight...</i>
Disyllabic (n = 470)	<i>Only, believe, power, away, ever, yourself, nothing, freedom, really, inside, monsters...</i>
Three syllables (n = 123)	<i>Forever, family, beautiful, nobody, tomorrow, memory, memories, remember, happiness, another, clitoris, together, warrior, surrender, different, yesterday, everyone, energy, animals, destiny, universe, whatever, umbrella, somebody, suicide, everyday, tsunami, positive, cruelty, wherever, endlessly, solution, attitude, linear, subjective...</i>
Four syllables (n = 35)	<i>Everybody, society, reality, impossible, community, billionaire, notorious, revolution, infinity, destination, communism, actually, alcoholic, lobotomy, parabellum, depravity, academy, anybody, womanizer, motherfucker, duality, serenity, eternity, magnolia, forgettable, patriarchy, education...</i>
Five syllables (n = 5)	<i>University, possibility, communication, vegetarian, insecurities</i>
Six Syllables (n = 1)	<i>Heterosexual</i>

Table 104 shows that 52% of the English loan words used in the two corpora were monosyllabic, this decreases to 35% for the disyllabic loan words, 9% of the loan words were three syllable words, 2% of the loan words had four syllables, and 1% had five or more syllables. This does not reflect the distribution of English words by number of syllables and is therefore a good indicator of the language borrowing tendencies of the graffiti writers and tattoo bearers in this study.

Table 105 Comparison of Syllable Distribution with a Relative Frequency over 10,000

	1 Syllable	2 Syllable	3 Syllable	4 Syllable	5 Syllable	6 Syllable
Combined Corpora	5247	3518	921	262	45	7
English Language <sup>95</sup>	1336	3743	2763	1431	504	223

The number and percentage of occurrences decline gradually in both the combined corpora and in the English language. The difference in the two corpora is

<sup>94</sup> I have chosen to categorise the words following North American English pronunciation as the reference corpus was Northern American English due to the linguistic preferences and references of the writers. For example, *memories* and *different* are categorised as having three syllables. This table includes only words spelt correctly and no hybrid words.

<sup>95</sup> Figures taken from (Wiktionary, 2016), percentages based only on words containing 1-6 syllables to mirror the combined script tattoo and graffiti inscription corpora.

that the percentage of words with one syllable is significantly higher in the combined corpora. This is due to the nature of script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions which have a tendency to be short. Apart from the words with one and two syllables, the English language corpus has a significantly higher relative frequency than the combined corpora. This is evidence of the reduced lexical diversity in the script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions.

#### **6.2.4 Netspeak**

Despite the age difference, both pre-1960s and modern graffiti inscriptions share similar characteristics to netspeak. A study in 2017 on the graffiti found in Pompeii suggested that the markings were an early form of social networking and political campaigning - the majority were dated from 50s to 76 CE., (Viitanen & Nissin, 2017). Graffiti included phrases such as: *'The late drinkers ask you to elect Marcus Cerrinus Vatia edaile. Florus ad Fructus wrote this'* and *'All the deadbeats and Macerius ask for Vatia as aedile'* (Cartwright, 2012). Graffiti has also been associated with other alternative forms of communications such as social media pages; Gasparyan (2020) points out that 'the platform of self-expression still has the same name (personal social media pages are sometimes called "walls")' (p. 39). This suggests that rather than graffiti resembling netspeak, maybe it is internet speech that resembles graffiti. Another parallel between the two is that in social media, just as in graffitiing, the writers often express themselves freely (Schwartz et al., 2013). AbuJaber et al. (2012) suggest that the graffiti writers they studied in Jordan were probably influenced in the language use from 'chatting online with native speakers, a precursor to other more significant cultural influences' positing that 'the internet seems to have broken linguistic as well as cultural boundaries' (p. 64).

The resemblance between the two could be due to both netspeak and graffiti being uncontrolled as opposed to other forms of communication that require editors, permission etc. Other parallels could include the anonymity available to writers of graffiti and writers on the internet, as well as the speed of the creation of these texts. Graffiti inscriptions and some tattoos somewhat resemble other signs and symbols used in our linguistic landscape: such as road signs and emoticons in netspeak. They are often simple drawings, accompanied by few words which require little time to be understood.

In their study of English graffiti in Mexico, Mora et al. (2016) find the phrase 'don't be racist' accompanied by a stencil drawing of a panda (p. 17); they believe that the phrase is linked to a quote frequently used on the internet: 'be like a panda: he's black,

he's white, he's Asian.' They conclude that the combination of the graffiti and the use of the internet could be providing a wider range of lexical options for graffiti writers who speak English as a second or third language and use it to increase the range of their messages. The occurrences in this study of common phrases and acronyms used online can be seen in Table 106.

Table 106 Acronyms and Abbreviations in Graffiti

No. of Occurrences	Acronym / Abbreviation
14	ACAB
8	BB
7	YOLO
4	LOL
3	WTF; 1312; www
2	Mr; NY/N.Y.C; N
2	Mr; BEAT-O-CULT
1	LE COVID 19; HK City; CJ For LiFE; 1312; BLM; MYTRIP.COM; .ORG; (FUCK SM though); SLSH; M. LAM J.TM WLH; Lobby LGBT+; No No + GT; DEVILS ULTRAS CVS; ECU STYLE; OCAML 4 THE WiN; O'brother; JR; The PFS; I was here 2005 G; RIP; SVTE; BD; C21; DJ Noise was here; EVIL NOT D [?]; CS Fuck; AC4DC
*BB in BB LOVE; BB KISS; ALWAYS BB; BB think; To block BB; Guess BB; BB Forever * N in N' in Guns n roses; Fake n fake taxi;	

Previous research suggests that features of written graffiti that are present in both pre-1960s and modern graffiti resemble netspeak: abbreviations, unconventional use of upper and lowercase (Menis, 2002). The first feature common to both graffiti inscriptions and netspeak to be analysed is the use of abbreviations and acronyms. There is a total of 76 graffiti inscriptions containing an acronym or abbreviation.

In both the graffiti inscription corpus and the script tattoo corpus, initials are used to abbreviate names. For example, D629 *I WAS HERE 2005 G* and tattoo bearer 61's tattoo *A single soul two bodies just us K and L for eternity*. The use of the abbreviation 'o' is present in both corpora. It appears in the inscription *BEAT-O-CULT* in graffiti D756 and D761 as well as in the script tattoo *O Captain ! My Captain !* (Tattoo bearer 41). The use of acronyms and abbreviations is significantly higher in combined graffiti corpora.

Menis (2002) suggests that the use of swear words, taboo subjects, sexual references and racial references are more frequent in graffiti 'which one would not normally write' or 'perhaps only express in the most intimate conversations with trusted partners' (p. 45). Similar to internet 'trolls', who often hide behind their computers when writing offensive comments (Asenas & Hubble, 2018), about controversial or taboo issues (Napieralski & Goniewicz, 2017), in graffiti writing the 'invisibility' of writers

'eases their authorship' (Islam 2011, p. 247), this could refer to the act of writing as well as the potentially taboo content. Taboo topics are subjective to each person's sensitivities, there is not a section dedicated to this theme as there are few examples. The data in this study supports Menis's (2002) theory about swear words and sexuality being common in both netspeak and graffiti writing, section 4.8.2: Negativity demonstrated the use of swear words and section 4.8.4 presented the sexual references.

Religion can be considered a taboo topic. There is one graffiti inscription that refers to the religious identity of the writer: *I'm Muslim don't panick*. Whereas in the tattoo corpus, there are 23 inscriptions that are categorised as being religious or spiritual. There is only one tattoo that refers to the religious identity of the bearer and in this case they are: *atheist* (TB184). Csesznek and Stemate (2019) write that while taboos can be a reason for some people to have a tattoo, it can also be a reason for people not to have a tattoo.

Skin colour is another subject that is taboo for some people. In the combined graffiti corpora, there were four inscriptions that referred to skin colour - and black people in particular, for example: C200 *BLM* which is an abbreviation for Black Lives Matter. There were two inscriptions condemning Nazism and racism in general (C210 *AILL AILL FUCK NAZIS* and C288 *PLAiDOiRiE CONTRE le RACiSME IT ALWAYS SEEMS iMPOSSiBLE UNTIL iT'S DONE*, as well as one inscription referring to white people. In the seven inscriptions in combined graffiti corpora, the only one that suggests the racial identity of the writer is: *Je sors avec un white... [I'm dating a white guy]*. This data does not follow Menis' results. This could be because this study is focused on English language graffiti and that the writers do not write in English about taboo subjects. In the script tattoo corpus, there are no tattoos that are overtly about skin colour or racism.

### **6.2.5 (Un)Intentional Errors**

(Un)intentional errors are a feature of the linguistic landscape (Demska 2019), which includes graffiti writing and script tattoos. A variety of language 'errors' can be seen in the corpora. The (un)intentional errors, or can be considered as modifications of the language through unconventional use of capitals, punctuation, and spelling, AbuJaber et al. (2012) describe erroneous spelling that is creative but different from popular usage by L1 speakers as 'playful spelling' (p. 60). In this study, I found occurrences of unconventional grammar, spelling punctuation, and word order.

As the two corpora were created differently, the origins of their potential errors differ. The combined graffiti corpora were created from photographs taken by or sent to the researcher and the texts and inscriptions resemble the legible words and letters in the photographs. The script tattoo corpus was taken from survey answers entered online by tattoo bearers. This meant that the texts being entered into the survey were subject to human typing errors and autocorrect. Some of the texts were verified through contact with the tattoo bearer or from the context of their other answers, the remaining tattoos, and the graffiti inscriptions, were taken as written and whether they are intentional or unintentional errors is assessed individually. As there was limited contact with the tattoo bearers and none with graffiti writers, the question of intentionality in the errors is up to interpretation. Mora et al. (2016) suggest that the random nature of graffiti impedes understanding and they posit that some errors are intentional whilst others are unintentional.

In this study I have found 38 inscriptions with errors in combined graffiti corpora (rf = 307) and there are 67 sentences with errors in the script tattoo corpus (rf = 812). The occurrences and the relative frequency are higher in the script tattoo corpus, this could be an indication of human error whilst answering the survey, or errors which written on people's skin.



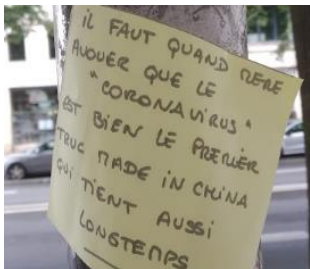

I suggest that intentional errors are when the writer understands the language being used and modifies it to change the meaning and/or effect the words have, these occurrences are identified, in this study, as either word play (English only) or hybridity (English and French, numbers, or symbols). For example, in graffiti, such as *fuck le sistème* (C83 and C146), the word *system* is spelt incorrectly to highlight one of the struggles of the LGBTQA+ groups, see section 4.7.2: Hybrid Words.

In the script tattoo corpus, the tattoo bearer 602 has the tattoo *dure à queer* which is an adaptation of the French phrase: *dur à cuire* which conjures an image of toughness. The word play represents the tattoo bearer's sexuality and the fact that she cannot come out in her current employment for fear of prejudice. The occurrences of word play and hybridity in this study, can be considered examples of 'the unbounded dynamic and fluid use of [a persons'] entire linguistic repertoire – a notion which goes beyond traditional understandings of language, literacy, and bilingualism' according to García and Kleifgen (2019, p. 2).

These occurrences of intentional modifications in both graffiti writing and script tattoos could be considered examples of translanguaging, whereby the multilingual

writer(s) do not follow the structures present in language use (García and Kleifgen 2019). Otheguy et al. (2015) define translanguaging as ‘the deployment of a speaker’s full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages’ (p. 283). It could be argued that graffiti writing in particular resembles translanguaging in that it is the deployment of a writer’s linguistic repertoire without regard for adherence to the politically and socially defined boundaries and rules of a space. The act of tattooing a word on the body could also be perceived as the use of a person’s linguistic repertoire to defy the social and political customs specific to cultures and communities where tattooing is discouraged.

In contrast to the intentional errors, the errors identified as unintentional do not add anything to the phrase or are inconsistent with the translation provided by the tattoo bearer. This could be one error such as the missing question mark in *Who are you* (TB1), or multiple: *If we admit that human **live** can be ruled by reason then all possibility **if** life is **destroy** [si l'on admet que la **vie** humaine peut être régie par la raison alors toute possibilité **de** vie est **détruite**]* (TB116). In the second script tattoo, the verb *live* is used instead of the noun *life*, the conjunction *if* is used instead of the preposition *of*, and the verb *destroy* is in the base form instead of being conjugated in the past simple *destroyed*. The language changes are not present in the French translation and were therefore probably not intentional by the tattoo bearer. As I was unable to contact the tattoo bearer it is unknown whether these are typing errors or whether they were inked into his skin.

Examples of Non-Standard Grammar in Graffiti	
Image 323 Graffiti C270; Graffiti C271	
	
Image 324 Graffiti C43	Image 325 Graffiti C50
	

Menis (2002) gives the example of non-standard grammar, spelling, and use of upper and lowercase. For example, C270 reads *CORONA THE RYTHM OF THE NiGHT*. The word 'RYTHM' should read 'rhythm'. In the script tattoo corpus, tattoo bearer 145 writes that they chose to have the tattoo *Just breath* instead of *just breathe* to represent her father in hospital, she does not explain why she preferred the phrase *just breath to just breathe*.

Non-standard use of upper and lowercase could be considered the use of lowercase letters when uppercase letters are expected and vice versa. AbuJaber et al. (2012) suggest that graffiti writers use uppercase and lowercase to attract the attention of potential readers. Graffiti C43 is an example of the use of upper and lowercase in block letters. The use of upper and lowercase varies from writer to writer. Some writers choose to write in block letters but do not use the same size or placement for all of the letters. The use of a lowercase letter rather than an uppercase letter can be seen in script tattoos for example: *Dad, i love you; Mum, i love you [CHK]* (tattoo bearer 163). The tattoo bearer did not give a reason for the use of the lowercase I, therefore it is assumed it is a stylistic choice.

### **6.2.6 Words as Identity Markers**

This study considers graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos as linguistic acts and therefore markers of a person's identity, and that the choice of a language and a person's identity are very closely linked (Mora et al., 2016). In his book, *Seducing the French*, Kuisel (1993) asks whether the influence of North American culture in France would impact the nationality identity of the French:

*'...how could the French accept American economic aid and guidance; borrow American technology and economic practice; buy American products imitate American social policy; even dress, speak, and (perhaps worst of all) eat like Americans and yet not lose their Frenchness?' (p. 3)*

I believe this study explores the question above, exploring the relationship between the French tattoo bearers and the words and phrases they have chosen to wear on their skin and the choices graffiti writers make when practicing in the streets. On the one hand, it could be argued that using English in graffiti, and particularly in script tattoos, oversteps French culture as it displays a preference for another language and another culture. The tattoo artist Jean would support this view:

*'Personnellement, je suis pro français. Si quelqu'un me le demande je le fais en anglais mais si je veux euh, je préfère donner du français. Si par exemple, je dois faire un tatouage sur moi, ce sera en français.'*



*[Personally, I'm pro-French. If someone asks me, I'll do it in English, but if I want, erm, I prefer to do it French. If for example, I have to tattoo myself, it will be in French.]*

This could suggest that some people subscribe to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, believing that if they use English rather than their first language, they would see the world and themselves differently (Mowbray 2012), and therefore lose something that makes them who they are, on a personal and/or national level. Moreover, Yakushkina and Olson (2017) describe language as a means to transmit culture, and therefore if the French language declines, the means to transmit and therefore the culture will also decline. This supports Gade's (2003) findings that language is an important, if not the most important, factor when defining a cultural or national group. The presence and use of English in France could therefore be seen as threatening the French language and therefore the French identity. If we consider language and identity to be entwined and interdependent (Denissova et al., 2019), loss of one would lead to loss of the other.

Just as popular culture references can be considered inextricably linked to their original language, so can a person's identity and personal culture also be intertwined with the language that they speak. This rational would support Jean and the argument that embracing foreign sources impacts 'Frenchness'. Kuisel (1993) suggests that:

*'Frenchness is complex, changing, subtle, contested, and arbitrary rather than simple, fixed, distinct, consensual, and given. It is not a matter of geographical space, history, language, the state, or even culture, though all of these contribute. None of these criteria provide precise, impermeable, or permanent boundaries for the French nation because much of what defines its identity is imagined. France is an invention, a conceptualization. Like other nations, it is to a large extent a collective subjective perception.'* (pp. 4-6)

I agree with Kuisel that Frenchness is complex, identity, a person's 'ness', like Frenchness, is not limited to a person's nationality. I would argue that the above description can in part be applied to personal identity which is also complex and changing. Personal identity is also affected by a person's geography, their history, their culture, and as this study suggests, language use also contributes to identity.

On the other hand, it could be seen as an evolution and extension of a person's linguistic identity, the addition of words and phrases to a person's lexical diversity rather than the replacement of words in an L1. As seen in the interviews and survey responses, the tattoo bearers often see the English words and phrases as an extension of their own vocabulary, or 'unique meaning-making repertoire' (García & Kleifgen 2019, 2). AbuJaber et al. (2012) find that in their study, the LX writers of English 'have developed a sense of ownership of the language, so much so that they are turning

creative in it and have become comfortable enough with it that they play with its spelling as native speakers have done so for hundreds of years' (p. 62). This is in keeping with Sara's interview where she expressed the feeling that everyone 'sees themselves in English' [*tout le monde se reconnaît dedans*]. AbuJaber et al. (2012) find that the graffiti writers in Jordan 'were willing to compromise cultural identity by borrowing a foreign convention to emphasize their unique individual signatures. The question of individual identity seems to come before cultural identity' (p. 62). It could be therefore argued that the French graffiti writers and tattoo bearers in this study are also adapting elements of English convention as a means to express themselves and their individuality and this leads them away from their cultural, and national identity.

The data in this study supports Coupland's (2012) theory of exoticism and ceremonialism. The foreignness of the English words makes them more appealing to some of the tattoo bearers, and is an extension of the linguistic identity of others. It could be argued that some of the occurrences of English in these script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions are more likely examples of 'exoticising' rather than 'ceremonialising' (p. 21).

This conclusion is drawn due to the presence of mistakes in the inscriptions, the explanations of the tattoo bearers who chose English because they did not want French, and the tattoo bearers who chose English despite not speaking the language. For language use to be ceremonial there must be recognition of the meaning and power of the words. It can be argued that for some tattoo bearers the use of English was ceremonial as they identify as bilingual, (n = 12) or their script tattoo demonstrated a keen understanding of the English language: for example, tattoo bearer 183 who has the tattoo *BeYoutiful*. As the graffiti inscriptions are anonymous it is harder to know whether the use is exotic or ceremonial, phrases such as *fuck le 17* would suggest it is exotic, whilst phrases such as *make art not war do the wrong thing* are potentially evidence of ceremonialism. If we consider exoticism a fad, a reduction in the use of the English in graffiti inscriptions in the future would support its classification as exoticism in general. This would suggest that English can be considered a 'consumable cultural curiosity' (Coupland, 2012, p. 15).

The use of English by French tattoo bearers can be considered similar to previous tattoo trends. Tattoos that were inspired by Japanese styles were called 'ethnic' tattoos and were worn by the wealthy in the late 1880s as a message of worldliness, suggesting (sometimes falsely) that the bearer had travelled and seen other cultures (Fisher, 2002, p. 94). The appeal of the foreign tattoo is still present and is visible

outside of France and this study. Mora et al. (2016) interview a tattoo artist who thinks that:

*'it's the same aesthetics that it sounds pretty because for them what's different will obviously be pretty, strange, or appealing, and perhaps the [sic] want to tattoo it in that style... because they say it's in English, it sounds pretty, the words are cool, and different from what they are living, which is Spanish.'* (p. 14)

This reasoning is reflected in this study through the answers in the survey and in the very fact that both the tattoo bearer and graffiti writers in this study all chose English, either by preference or default, nonetheless a choice was made. Forty-five of the tattoo bearers chose their script tattoo as it 'sounded better' in English confirming the quote above from a tattoo artist. A further two tattoo bearers said that they liked the script tattoo in English, supporting the tattoo artist's description of people finding the words 'cool'. Barni and Bagna (2010) conclude their study suggesting that 'languages that are more visible have a greater potential for vitality' (p. 15), if their conclusion is correct, based on the presence of English in graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos, the visibility of English would suggest that it is going to be a permanent feature of the French linguistic landscape for the time being.



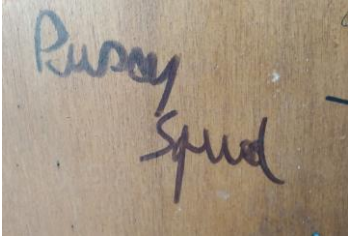


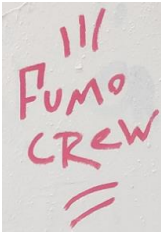
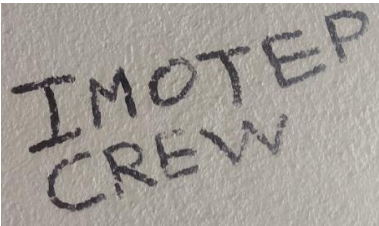

### **6.2.7 Communities**

A sense of community exists in both the graffiti and tattoo world. Fisher (2002) writes that tattooing is 'a peer activity' (p. 100), and that 64% of people get a tattoo with a friend or family member present. Some people have a tattoo that they share with a partner, friend, or group of friends. This is commonly referred to as a 'bro tat'. In the graffiti community, crews are formed informally by groups of writers as a support network, for companionship, as well as collaborative works (Avramidis and Drakopoulou, 2012; Hedegaard, 2014). Macdonald (2001) writes that a crew is:

*'a group of likeminded writers who band together under a single name to form a union. Crews can be small or large, illegal or legal, local or even international. But they all share a common purpose - support'* (p. 112)

The structure and formation of the two groups differs. Bro tats are normally the result of a pre-existing relationship between two or more people that is immortalised in tattoo form on each of the bearers. Pritchard (2000) writes that tattooing can be a means to align oneself or distance oneself with a particular culture, whereas a graffiti crew is formed before the artwork is created and the bonds are formed through making art together. According to Ferrell (1993), 'the crews to which writers belong not only tag and piece together, but form deep social bonds as their members share time and

resources, construct collective artistic orientations, and defend one another from enemies real and imagined' (p. 38).

<i>Occurrences of Crew Inscriptions</i>		
<i>Image 326 Graffiti C362 and C363</i>		
		
<i>Image 327 Graffiti D196</i>	<i>Image 328 Graffiti D103</i>	
		
<i>Image 329 Graffiti C304</i>	<i>Image 330 Graffiti C292</i>	<i>Image 331 Graffiti C209</i>
		
<i>Image 332 Graffiti D101</i>	<i>Image 333 Graffiti C387</i>	
		

Graffiti crews can use the words: crew, team, platoon, squad, and gang (Macdonald, 2001). In my corpus I have not found the above crew names repeated more than once.

There are two examples of a joint tattoo whereby the participants do not have the same phrase tattooed. There is an example of two friends that share half of a tattoo each. Tattoo bearer 307 has the first half of a tattoo: *You see all my light* and her best friend has the second half. The tattoo bearer did not write the second half of the tattoo

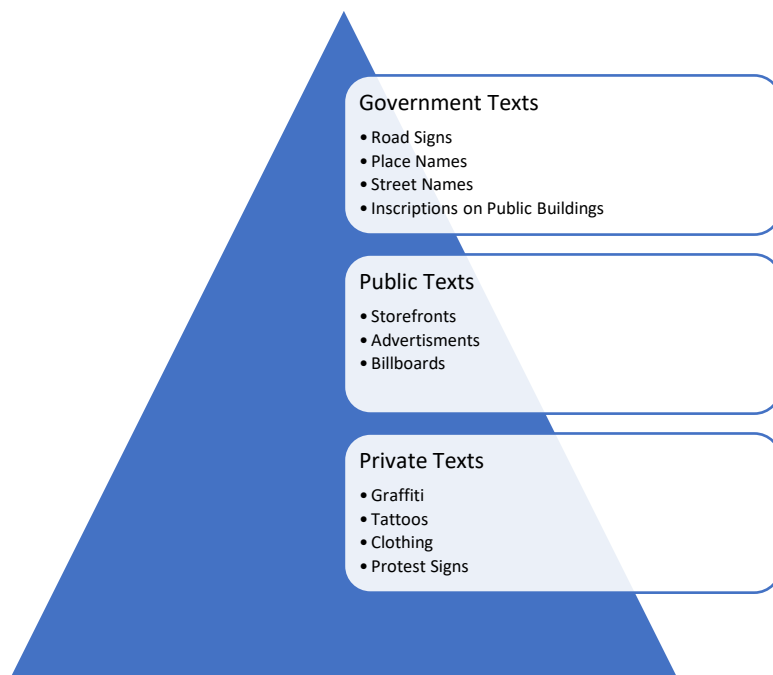
or leave any contact details. Tattoo bearer 466 belongs to a mother and daughter pairing; they each have *Once upon a time* as a tattoo, the mother in French and the daughter in English. They wanted the tattoos to be linked but slightly different, the daughter explains that she has the English version as she speaks English and her mother does not. According to Kirkland (2009), tattoos are a means to blur the lines between the bearer and the people or community that they are connecting to, whilst helping the tattoo bearer to reach within themselves.

### **6.2.8 Public Spaces and Private Places**

In this study, public spaces include the streets, the universities (which are publicly owned), and the areas in the local businesses which are open to the public (the customers). These three areas are represented by the three corpora: city, desktop, and toilets. There is a level of overlap present in the corpora. An inscription in a classroom is identified as 'desktop' be it on a chair, desktop, or classroom wall. An inscription found outside of the classroom, or on the ground of the university is categorised as being in the city as the access is no longer restricted to students only. The inscriptions in the third corpus, come from both public house toilets and university toilets. This grouping was made due to the specific function of the room, which is the same in a university and a public house. In this study, I consider the body to be a private space for displaying private texts (e.g., clothing or tattoos). The body is private because the individual has agency over who interacts with their body and how their body is presented. When a tattoo is visible, it can be considered a private text in a public space, in the same way as wearing clothing with religious connotations, political or sporting affiliations. As these elements of the body are visible in the public space they can be 'read' and interpreted by passers-by, in the same way that other texts can be seen and read.

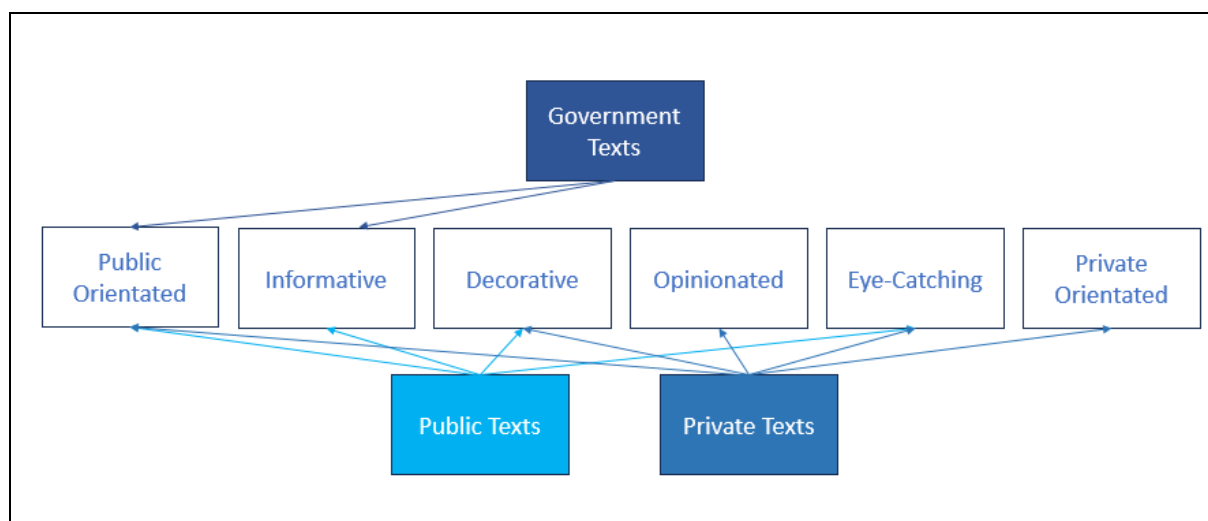
According to Landry and Bourhis (1997), writing in public spaces can be divided into two categories: public and private. I argue that texts can be divided into three categories: government written texts, public texts belonging to privately owned businesses, and private texts that are worn on the body or created through graffiti. See Figure 41.

Figure 41 Government, Public, and Private Texts



The triangle shape does not represent the quantity of occurrences, rather it reflects that official language is top-down (from authorities), and that private language is bottom-up (from citizens) (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006; Kallen 2010). I would argue that public texts in commercial businesses occupy the middle-ground between government and private texts, as demonstrated in the triangle. The functions of the three categories overlap, as can be seen in Figure 42.

Figure 42 Functions of Government, Public, and Private Texts



It can be argued that some government texts are also decorative, e.g. hospital or university names. It could also be added that during protests, some signs and banners are informative and explain the reasons behind the movements, even graffiti and tattoos as seen in this study can be considered informative about language use and

about the people writing them, but these are secondary to the main aims of the texts. Whatever the function, texts in public spaces are all generally short and aim to convey their 'message', be it directions or a slogan on a t-shirt.

There is an oxymoronic quality to both tattoos and graffiti. Both graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos can be both public and also private. Fisher (2002) writes that there is 'an element of desire to reveal tattoos, there is often an equally profound desire to conceal tattoos' (p. 101). Graffiti writers also desire to see their pseudonym everywhere: the bigger, the more frequent, the more public the better. This desire can be seen in the location of some graffiti inscriptions, the writers choose inaccessible high points in the city, leaving their mark in places that people can see but do not normally walk on (Beyaert-Geslin, 2019). Tattoos are a personal body modification and yet they are often seen by others, particularly those that are not covered by clothes or that are on body parts that the bearer cannot easily see such as a person's back. For some tattoo bearers, the point of being tattooed is to show others who they are (Kirkland 2009).

As explained earlier, Beyaert-Geslin (2019) describes graffiti writing as a means for graffiti writers to inscribe and leave a part of their body and identity in the linguistic landscape around them. In this study, the graffiti slogans represent the internal thoughts of the writers and the tags represent their private identities. The inscriptions can therefore be perceived as an internal thoughts and identity being externalised into graffiti writing. The occurrences of script tattooing, however, suggest that the inscriptions are often inspired by external sources, popular culture, messages from family and friends, life events, and these are then 'internalised' into the skin of the tattoo bearers.

As seen in the literature review, the motivations for being tattooed can also be divided into two opposing categories: external, as cited above, and internal factors (L. F. Dickson et al., 2015; McCarty, 2019). Fisher (2002) and Swami and Harris (2012) note that in the past tattoos were used by the wealthy to impress others whilst at the same time the poorer lower classes used tattoos as a means of self-expression. Likewise, graffiti is, often, an anonymous form of art which is in the public space. Everyone can see it, but no one knows who did it. Beyaert-Geslin (2019) summarises the paradoxes: the tag identifies a writer and yet conceals their identity, the writer hides behind a tag and yet writes it in the public space, she argues that these paradoxes would feature in the 'l'énonciation piétonnière' described by De Certeau (1990, p. 148).

This paradoxical nature has also been observed in the data and the study has revealed that the tattoo bearers are aware of this paradox in their tattoos. Even though tattoos are primarily for the tattoo bearer, the position on the body sometimes means they are often more visible to others, and English can be a way for the tattoo bearer to regain some privacy. For example, tattoo bearer 337 chose English: *'pour que ça reste un peu plus personnel même si les gens le voit' [so it was more personal even if other people see it]*. Tattoo bearers use English to share their inscription linguistically with some groups and set boundaries with other readers. Tattoo bearer 176 wrote that: *'En anglais, ça me semblait mieux et moins compréhensible qu'en français.'* [In English, it seemed better to me and less easy to understand than in French] whereas tattoo bearer 198 chose English because *'tout le monde lis cette langue' [everyone reads this language]*.

The same can be said of graffiti. If a graffiti writer decides to write in a local dialect they are excluding visitors and people who do not speak the dialect from understanding the message, or, they choose English in order to target a specific group. (Kosut, 2006; Yakushkina & Olson, 2017).

Image 334 Graffiti M1



For example, the graffiti inscription: *FUCK TOURISTS !* seen in Marseille, France, has a clear audience in mind and uses English as a means to express those feelings. Another element that graffiti writers and tattoo bearers share is controlling who sees and/or recognises their inscription or tattoo. A tattoo bearer can control who sees their tattoo through its placement on the body (Mun et al., 2012), and a graffiti writer can choose who is aware of their artwork and their real identity. Banksy is one of the most famous examples of a street artist whose identity remains a mystery; due to the illegal nature of graffiti, even the most famous artists remain anonymous unless they are caught in the act.

Moreover, both graffiti and tattoos can be seen as 'outward manifestations of personality' (Alonso, 1998, p. 8). The word 'outward' is representative of the public



element of both graffiti and tattoos: graffiti is mainly found in public places for others to read, and tattoos are on the body for others to see, this outward nature of tattooing was corroborated by Pierre in his interview in section 5.9.7: Pierre – Tattoo Artist. Yet the word ‘personality’ refers to the private and individual nature of the tattoo or graffiti whereby the artists (and bearer) express themselves through ink or paint.

**6.2.8.1 ‘Private’ Graffiti and Private Tattoos**

In this study, I have found that toilet graffiti is a particularly good example of the oxymoronic nature of graffiti, the toilet cubicle is one of the most private places in a public context (Green, 2003). It is open to all, but once the door is closed it becomes a private space. Abel and Buckley (1997) write that ‘the narrow stall provides a world of secrecy’ (p. 10). Islam (2011) argues that ‘anonymous, backstage spaces, while private, can produce public dialogue’ (p. 247). Graffiti is considered a private text, and therefore ‘latrinalia’ can be understood as ‘private’ graffiti (Halsey and Young 2002; Lynn and Lea, 2005). Toilet graffiti is described as being more unique than other graffiti as it can demonstrate differences between the genders, language use, and social contexts (Green, 2003).

The toilet graffiti in this study revealed that the use of ‘I’ was more prevalent in the toilets than in the other areas analysed; this is an example of private introspection in a public place. If we compare private graffitiing and (private) tattooing, there are themes and words that appear in both corpora, as well as themes and words that are specific to each corpus.

*Table 107 Features and Themes Present in Toilet Graffiti and Script Tattoos*

	<i>Toilet Graffiti Only</i>	<i>Both</i>		<i>Script Tattoos Only</i>
<i>Themes and Features</i>	<i>Community Internet culture Order / Advice Police Politics Skin colour Toilet Humour University 'x' was here</i>	<i>Apology Books Education Feminism Foreign Language Love Music Names Negativity Opinions/Feelings</i>	<i>Positivity Quotes Rebellion<sup>96</sup> Relationships Religion Sexuality Sexual Nature Song Lyrics Sport Word Play</i>	<i>COVID Date / year Family Film Food Friendship Mantra / Motto Television Travel</i>

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<sup>96</sup> There were no phrases that referred to rebellion, however, the act of writing graffiti is considered rebellious.

A comparison of the toilet graffiti and script tattoos corpora shows that there are 22 features (such as the use of names) or themes (such as sport) that are present in both corpora, and nine features/themes that are used in only the toilet graffiti, and nine only in the script tattoos. The potentially taboo topics only written in the toilets, and not in the other graffiti corpora, were toilet humour. The two phrases were: *Je sors avec un white c'est sympa...* (T33) and *I shitted here* (T23) and *WHAT WOULD MACGYVER DO?* (T44).

Table 108 Words Present in Toilet Graffiti and Script Tattoos

	Toilet Graffiti	Script Tattoos
Salient Words and Phrases  (Relative Frequency over 10,000)	ACAB (n = 101)	-
	-	Always (n = 82)
	Beautiful (n = 101)	Beautiful (n = 14)
	-	Dream(s) (n = 143)
	-	Family (n = 49)
	Fuck/s/ing (n = 101)	Fuck/s/ing (n = 26)
	Heaven (n = 67)	Heaven (n = 5)
	Good (n = 67)	Good (n = 23)
	-	Life (n = 164)
	Love (n = 33)	Love (n = 211)
	Never (n = 67)	Never (n = 190)
-	One (n = 88)	
Stan (n = 169)	-	
Total Inscriptions	48	825
Type-Token Ratio	0.78	0.34

Table 108 presents some of the linguistic differences between the corpora. Functional words have been omitted from the table and the focus is only on the words that appear in both corpora or have a significant presence in one corpus and not the other. Due to the disparity in corpus size, they are compared using their relative frequency rather than number of occurrences.

The five words that were used more than once in both corpora were *fuck/s/ing*, *heaven*, *good*, *love*, and *never*. The words *fuck*, and its lemmas, *heaven* and *good* have a higher relative frequency in the toilet graffiti than in the script tattoo corpus. The words *love* and *never* have a significantly higher relative frequency in the script tattoo corpus. This is due to the script tattoo corpus having more repeated phrases. As seen in both the corpus and the interviews, repetition, or near repetition with slight variants, is a key feature of the script tattoo corpus. In the toilet corpus, not one phrase appears twice verbatim. The structure *I need* appears three times: twice in one phrase and once in a separate phrase. The five structures *I don't know*, *to heaven*, *is real*, and *I'm gonna* all appear twice but the entire phrases are not identical. For example, in graffiti T5 “*! don't know why I'm here I don't know what I feel but I know what I need And I'm ready*

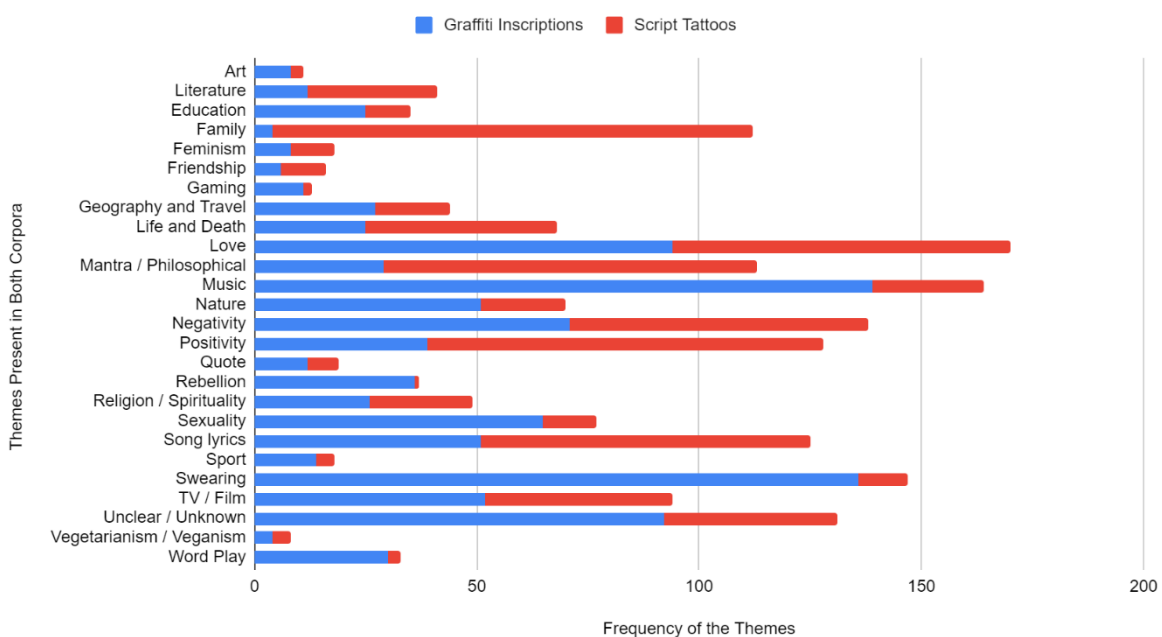
to love things that I need" the structure *I don't* is followed first the by the conjunction *why* and then *what*. The phrase *to heaven* appeared in the Shakespeare quote: "*My words fly up My thoughts remain below Words without thoughts never to heaven go*" Shakespeare (T6), and in a second inscription discussing university and through songs from popular culture: *Highway to Hell = University or Stairway to Heaven?* (T18).

### 6.3 Themes Common to both Datasets

In this subsection, the main themes and content of the two corpora will be analysed. I will explore the themes they have in common as well as any significant differences. I originally identified 35 themes in the script tattoo corpus and 67 content categories in the combined graffiti corpora. Despite being only 20% smaller, the script tattoo corpus has just over half the number of content categories / themes present in the combined graffiti corpora. This supports Pierre's comments about tattoo designs being repetitive and being inspired by the same sources.

Graph 13 Themes Present in both Corpora

Graffiti Inscriptions and Script Tattoos



There were 25 themes present in both the combined graffiti corpora and the script tattoo corpus, as well as a category of inscriptions which had an unknown theme or unclear content. The most common themes present in both corpora are *love* and *popular culture*. I will also be exploring themes that differ in the way that they are formed in the corpora, *sex and sexuality*, *grief and homage*, and *art within art*.

### 6.3.1 References to Popular Culture

Despite initial reservations towards American culture the French began to embrace the country and its culture from the 1980s, as demonstrated in the literature review (Kuisel, 2013; McKay, 2008). This cultural colonisation has made its way into the music, restaurants, films, the French language, and as this study argues: in graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos. The use of the inscriptions, particularly in script tattoos, is further evidence of the presence and acceptance of North American culture in France. The majority of popular culture references in this corpus come from North American songs, films, and television series ( $n = 46, 42, \text{ and } 44$ ). This is particularly interesting as Kuisel (2013) had noted that initially there was more resistance towards television programmes and music, than films and other areas of North American culture. However, this reticence fades as 'the dialectic of forming identity by negating Americans no longer articulated French uniqueness', this could explain some of the increase in English use (Kuisel, 1993, p. 6).

The presence of popular culture references in English was significant in both corpora. There were 171 inscriptions referring to popular culture in the script tattoo corpus and 282 inscriptions in the combined graffiti corpora. The most referenced area of popular culture in both corpora was music ( $n = 190$  and  $rf = 1,535$  for graffiti inscriptions and  $n = 99$  and  $rf = 1,198$  for script tattoos). The references to television and films were slightly higher in the combined graffiti inscription corpora, but the relative frequency was higher for the script tattoo corpus ( $n = 52$  versus 38 and  $rf = 420$  and 460). However, due to the slight difference in corpus size they both represent 4% of their respective inscriptions. There were more references to literature in the script tattoo corpus: 28 versus 12 in the combined graffiti corpora ( $rf = 338$  versus 97).

The music cited in the two corpora had some overlap: the band Metallica was cited in four script tattoos and found once in the graffiti corpora. The Beatles were mentioned in three graffiti inscriptions and also in three tattoos. The band Guns 'n' Roses was also cited in both corpora, once in the script tattoos and twice in the graffiti inscriptions. The band AC/DC also appeared three times in the combined graffiti corpora and once in the script tattoo corpus.

In the theme of literature, both *Shakespeare* and *Harry Potter* are mentioned in both corpora, however the inscriptions themselves are different. In the combined graffiti corpora, there are two *Harry-Potter* themed inscriptions: *Avada Kedvra* and *Slytherin(e) as fuck*.



In the tattoo corpus, there were nine inscriptions that were related to the *Harry Potter* books or films. None of them contained the words *Avada Kedavra*. Four of them were inspired by the quote: *After all this time? Always*; there was also one tattoo that read *Slytherin* (TB180).

The *Shakespeare* quotes in the script tattoo are: *all the world's a stage, there are thousands of thoughts in a man whom he doesn't know until he takes a feather to write, and the memory is the sentinel of the spirit*. The *Shakespeare* quote in the graffiti corpora reads: *"My words fly up My thoughts remain below Words without thoughts never to heaven go"* *Shakespeare*. *Shakespeare* is the only identified author in both corpora, either in the script tattoo survey answers or as part of the graffiti inscription.

The references to music differ between the two corpora. In the script tattoo corpus, there are more inscriptions from song lyrics whereas there are more band names written in the combined graffiti corpora.

### 6.3.2 Love

There were 94 graffiti inscriptions and 76 script tattoos that were categorised as an expression of love. The graffiti inscriptions are limited to the phrases that contain words that express love, for example, love is expressed through the word *stan* which is used as a verb: *Stan Red Velvet = I love Red Velvet*. There are 12 hearts in combined graffiti corpora that are either used to decorate and emphasise the expression of love or to replace the word *love*.

In the script tattoo corpus, the words in the tattoo are not necessarily linked to the concept of love. For example, in the script tattoo *Victory*, it is the meaning behind the tattoo that is linked to love, in this case *Victory* is the name of the bearer's pet animal

that they loved and had tattooed when the animal died. Therefore, there is more linguistic variety in the combined graffiti corpora around the word love, but a greater variety of means to express that love in the script tattoo corpora.

The object of the love also differs in the two corpora. In the script tattoos the tattoos are often linked to a person, either family members or romantic partners. Whereas in the graffiti inscriptions there were inscriptions that expressed love for fictional characters, geographical locations, bands etc. (n = 22). There were 12 inscriptions in combined graffiti corpora that contain a person's name or initials such as *R + N forever* *Jtm* and *Robin ♥ me*. However, 10 of the graffiti inscriptions in the category of love were abstract, for example: *love is the answer ♥* and *peace and love*.

### 6.3.3 Sex and Sexuality

The themes of sex and sexuality are present in both the combined graffiti inscription corpora and the script tattoo corpus. Although sex and sexuality are not the most frequently seen themes in the two corpora (n =12 in the tattoo corpus and n = 65 in the graffiti corpora), the principal use of the themes differs between the two corpora.

There are 12 script tattoos that have a sexual nature or are linked to the bearers' sexuality. The three tattoos linked to the bearer's sexual identity are: *girls gang*, *wake up*, and *dure à queer*. Six tattoos are sexual and allude to sex acts in their wording or placement on the body including *take me* and *fuck me*.

One tattoo refers to male sex organs: *my nuts*. There were also two tattoos that referred to when the bearer was raped: *my body my rules* and *my body my property*, see section 5.6.2: Life Story and Self-Representation.

Image 336 Tattoo Bearer 518



Tattoo bearer 518 has two tattoos in English: *Believe in hope, live your dreams* and *Bad seed*. On its own *Bad seed* can be associated with negativity, nature, or films. The placement of the tattoo and the use of ellipsis, however, could suggest that there is a sexual element to the tattoo. Peck and Stroud (2015) find that the body is fragmented, they explain that 'different parts of the body come with different geosemiotics' (p. 7), which in turn would give a different reading of the tattoo, as in the example of tattoo bearer 518.

In the combined graffiti corpora, a total of 65 graffiti inscriptions were categorised as being of a sexual nature. There were 48 inscriptions that were sexual and/or alluded to sex acts such as: *sex and love tit! And I love pute*. There were 15 inscriptions that referred to sex organs, for example: *pussy* and *anus*. There was one inscription that mentioned homosexuality: *06 98 46 54 08 I send gay only nudes*. Finally, there were two inscriptions that referred to feminism, *all clitoris are beautiful*, see section 4.8.3.1: ACAB.

This disparity between the two corpora shows the different ways in which graffiti writers and tattoo bearers express their sexuality as well as the different sexual topics they were willing to write on public surfaces as opposed to on their bodies. The tattoo bearers either had a tattoo that was linked to their sexual identity be it as a rape survivor, a lesbian, or a sexually suggestive tattoo. Whereas the graffiti writers were much more forthcoming in their liberal use of sexual language and imagery, in particular the frequent use of the word *fuck* as a sexual term (n = 1 in the tattoo corpus<sup>97</sup> and n = 14 in the combined graffiti corpora). This is further supported by the difference in quantity, there were six times as many mentions of sex in the combined graffiti corpora. This could be due to the anonymity present in graffiti that allows the writers to be more expressive without fear of judgement.

#### 6.3.4 Grief and Homage

Grief and homage are present in both tattoos and graffiti. Graffiti writers sometimes dedicate their artwork to other writers and crews in order to show respect (Macdonald, 2001). Similarly, graffiti writers and street artists can create murals in dedication to people who have died (Ferrell, 1993), MacGillivray and Curwen (2007) explain that

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<sup>97</sup> This was confirmed by the tattoo bearer's translation and placement: '*sur la fesse, un dessin qui contient "fuck me" (baise moi)*' [on my buttocks, a drawing that has the words "fuck me" (fuck me)].]

sometimes tagging can be 'occasionally a lengthy tribute' (p. 358). Khatib (2013) writes that some of the street art seen in the Arab Spring were homages to the victims of the rallies and protests. Tattoo bearers also choose to honour people in their tattoos (Csesznek & Stemate, 2019). Woodstock (2014) describes tattoos as 'intimate tales about overcoming illness, recognizing loss, and celebrating life' (p. 783).

As stated in the literature review, medieval graffiti writers believed that by writing their name in a place of worship their presence would be extended (Żurawski, 2019). This echoes the sentiment seen in many script (and non-script) tattoos. By tattooing a word, phrase, or drawing associated with a lost loved one, the bearer can take comfort in the idea that they are keeping that person close to them in spite of their parting. M. Atkinson (2003) describes that tattoos can be used as a means of affect management when someone dies. The act of being tattooed can allow some people to respond to emotions with an active, normative, measured response (M. Atkinson, 2003; L. F. Dickson et al., 2015).

In this study, 41 of the 825 tattoos were in honour of a person, people, or animals who had died. Due to the anonymous nature of combined graffiti corpora, and my lack of contact with artists in Bordeaux, I cannot say if any of the graffiti inscriptions were dedications. The script tattoos that were in honour of a lost loved one were individual to each tattoo bearer. This is in keeping with the understanding that grief is a personal and individual emotion that is different for everyone. Kirkland (2009) describes this as 'dedicating' a tattoo to a person.

Twenty-two tattoo bearers have a phrase that describes their loss in general for one or more people, for example, tattoo bearer 55 has *never forget the past* for her grandfather who survived different concentration camps during the war. Ten tattoo bearers choose a phrase that is directed at the lost loved one. Tattoo bearer 270 has the phrase *'you're no longer where you were, but you're wherever I am'* in honour of her late grandfather.

Whilst others focus on the negative feelings and concentrate them into the tattoo: tattoo bearer 115 has the word *alone* on his face after the loss of a partner. He explains that he was inspired by his favourite rapper, XXXTENTACION, who also had the word *Alone* tattooed on his face. This tattoo can be considered a very public demonstration of his grief. Tattoo bearer 196 has a quote by Oscar Wilde which she feels summarises her mother's fight against depression before she died: *'we are each our own demon and create our own hell.'* Finally, three tattoo bearers chose to have a tattoo that was



connected to their lost loved one's favourite book or song. Tattoo bearer 184 has lyrics from the song *Where is my mind* by the Pixies in honour of her father. When studying the Santhal community, Ghosh (2020) writes that in the Santhal community, the 'ritual of tattooing comes from the belief that nothing could be taken from the material world once death happens, hence tattoos are the only things which could help survive in afterlife' (p. 299).

**6.3.5 Art within Art**

In this subsection, I will present the script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions that refer to either graffiti or tattoos. The previous chapters focused on the main themes that occurred the most frequently in both corpora. This section is in keeping with the aim of this chapter and wishes to highlight the inscriptions that are about the two art forms.

<i>Graffiti about Graffiti</i>	
<i>Image 337 Graffiti C35</i>	<i>Image 338 Graffiti C17</i>
	
<i>Image 339 Graffiti C253</i>	<i>Image 340 Graffiti C389</i>
	
<i>Image 341 Graffiti C263</i>	
	

There were 13 graffiti inscriptions that referred to graffiti and/or street art. Amongst the graffiti inscriptions, there were both positive and negative takes on street art. There is a certain irony in writers insulting other writers through the same medium, this can be seen in the two inscriptions *I shit on your street art* and *nik le street art [fuck street art]*. David Selor's piece *this is not art* could be seen as the artist engaging with local discussion as to whether street art should be recognised as art or not. Islam (2011) identifies three inscriptions in his study of toilet graffiti which he calls: 'graffiti about graffiti' (p. 252). Similar to the inscriptions found in my own study, all three of Islam's inscriptions are also negative about graffiti writing: *graffiti for the needy*, *WARNING: Writing clever political blurbs on bathroom walls is not only as ineffective as voting, but also renders you an irreversible d\*\*\*\*\*!*, and *Why does everyone who writes on the wall have so such political concern, who gives a s\*\*\*? Sooner or later we're all gonna be dead* (Islam 2011, p. 252).<sup>98</sup> The five inscriptions share a 'meta' theme of graffiti itself, criticising, commenting on, or questioning the act of writing graffiti through graffiti.

Some writers appear to identify issues that they face: *street art no street no art* could be the artist referring to the restrictions and the lack of spaces for legal graffiti. This is echoed by the artist Mas: *Too many painters not enough walls*. Other writers incite passers-by to become street writers: *make art not war* and *sex is cool but have u ever try vandalism?* The inscription *street art is your love* is also a message of positivity concerning the art form. The inscription *make art not war* is also an example of constitutive intertextuality as it is a reformulation of the phrase: *make love not war*.

In graffiti C263, *graffiti stories*, the wall is covered in purple tags and the last inscription *graffiti stories* appears to bring all the tags together. This could be the work of several artists and the name of the collaboration could be *graffiti stories*.

Image 342 Graffiti C34



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<sup>98</sup> Islam (2011) chose to use asterisks to represent the vulgar words used in the graffiti, I have kept the asterisks rather than wrongly assume the content of the words.

There was one graffiti inscription that referred to tattooing. There is a tattoo parlour in Bordeaux that is registered under the name *Tattoo Spirit*. The inscription could be one of the tattoo artists, a fan of the shop, or a coincidence.

In the tattoo corpus, there were two tattoos that were linked to tattooing and body modification. The first was *skin is a playground* which is on the skin of a body piercer, the tattoo represents her work and her opinion of the human body as a place of fun (TB451). The second tattoo reads *sorry mom* and is an apology to the bearer's mother who does not approve of tattoos (TB523). There was one tattoo, *Stupid Lifestyle*, that referred to graffitiing on trains which tattoo bearer 30 describes as their passion.

This concludes the analysis of the script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions that refer to tattooing and graffitiing. The next section explores the presence and importance of communities in script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions and the examples found in the two corpora.

#### **6.4 Concluding Remarks**

This section has compared the two mediums of graffitiing and tattooing in general, based on both the literature review and the overall findings of the study. The two datasets have been presented in comparison with one another, including their similarities and disparities. Tattoos and graffiti, despite the similarities I have found during this study, are rarely associated in academic literature. However, on a structural level there are many similarities: both script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions are often one to four words in length. There is also a tendency for the phrases to be written in the present simple or imperative.

Although some of the same phrases can be found in both corpora: *only God can judge me* and *never give up*, a quantitative analysis of the data shows that the most popular phrases in one corpus are not necessarily as popular in the other corpus. The use of the word *fuck* is prolific in the combined graffiti corpora and appears only five times in the script tattoos. The differing use of English shows that the bearers and writers have preferences concerning the topics they write about as well as the words they choose to write.

The next chapter, conclusions, aims to present the final results of this study. There will also be a presentation of the limitations of this research, recommendations for language teaching and future research in this area, and finally future projects that I would like to pursue after completing this thesis.



*Image 343 Tattoo Bearer 607*



## **7 Conclusion**

This thesis is an investigation of English script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions as language markers of flux and hybridity in France. The social nature of graffiti inscriptions and script tattoos are testimony to their nature as an alternative form of street communication. The study of skinscapes offers the possibility to research into how the body can be used as a sign as well as the signs and script tattoos on the body.

The concept of linguistic landscape is used as the main tool for the research. The two datasets were obtained and analysed using a variety of methods inspired by ethnography, some methods were common to both datasets and others were only pertinent to one set. The 1,237 graffiti inscriptions were collected from three location types in the city of Bordeaux: the streets, university classrooms, and toilets. The 825 script tattoos were obtained via an online survey through social media. This corpus study has been based on a classification of lexical and grammatical meanings of the inscriptions. This is not an exhaustive list of language use by L2 French speakers, rather a glimpse of the language used in the graffiti and tattoo context.

The salient results are that the short phrases indicate limited lexical diversity in both corpora. The graffiti inscriptions rely on set phrases and hybrid messages containing both French and English to convey the messages of discontent, whilst the script tattoos contain evidence of clichés and examples manifest intertextuality by both speakers and non-speakers of English. The presence of English words and phrases in both the script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions are evidence of language flux, the occurrences of hybrid words and phrases are evidence of 'the effects of globalisation and language contact on the languages themselves' (Huebner 2006, p. 32). The occurrences of hybrid language and English by L1 French speakers can be examples of both translanguaging and code-switching depending on the writer/ tattoo bearer and their understanding of language. Some writers and tattoo bearers choose English for a specific reason: to reach an international community, to represent an element of popular culture, or because they liked the word/phrase (code-switching), whilst other writers and tattoo bearers choose words and phrases from their lexical repertoire irrespective of the named language it is normally attributed to (translanguaging).

The shortness of the content of the phrases is not surprising: the word *fuck* is used significantly in the graffiti inscriptions and the most tattooed word is *love*. What this study reveals is how the two mediums use language to communicate the thoughts and feelings of the writers and bearers and that the two mediums merit comparison. The graffiti inscriptions use the imperative to criticise *fuck society* whilst the script tattoos use the imperative to guide the tattoo bearers and those that read the tattoos: *Never Give Up*.

Furthermore, the two mediums have been overlooked in the past by researchers. Both tattoos and graffiti were associated with deviance and a lack of education, or studied for their artistic merits. This study explores the linguistic nature of tattoos and graffiti, showing that some writers and bearers are proficient language users putting thought into their messages: *fuck le système* and *dure à queer*. The survey of the tattoo bearers demonstrated that despite tattoos being purely visual, the sonority of the words was often an important factor for the bearers: '*l'anglais est la langue musicale par excellence*' (TB592).

The words and phrases found in the inscriptions represent the L2 language use of the graffiti writers and tattoo bearers. The phrases vary from carefully thought-out wordplay *BeYoutiful* to the use of the word *fuck* as if it were already a part of the French language: *fuck le 17*. The use of English in the hybrid phrases demonstrates that the direction of language flux at this time is from English to French. There is evidence of L1 French speakers choosing English words because of their sound, length, visual aesthetics, choosing English as a default choice after French, and not choosing 'English' but rather choosing a context and a phrase that happens to be in English, this language usage resembles code-switching as the writers and tattoo bearers perceive clear lines between languages. Some tattoo bearers explain that as the inspiration for the tattoo was in English, the tattoo would automatically be in English, this is evidence of language and culture being inextricably linked. In some instances, the choice between words in French and English is closer to a choice between two synonyms, as is explained by translanguaging, in that multilinguals have 'a unitary semiotic repertoire' (García & Kleifgen, 2019, p. 2). The use of certain English words, for example: *fuck* and *love* according to this study, appears to transcend English-speaking countries and are truly international and are used as such. Duranti (2004) describes this 'natural' or organic choice of English as 'unconscious but nevertheless careful choice of words' (p. 466).

There is a particular ambivalence demonstrated by the tattoo bearers as a group. There are the tattoo bearers who choose a script tattoo in English, an undisputed international language, in order to hide its meaning, create a sense of intimacy, and a potentially esoteric experience. Whilst others choose English in order for the text to be understood by others, connecting the tattoo bearer to English-speaking culture. There is also the contradiction in those that choose English despite not speaking the language, often through manifest intertextuality. Regardless of the perceived universality of English, it is viewed by some tattoo bearers as exotic and using English allows the speaker to be connected to a different language and culture to their own.

There is also an ambivalence surrounding the link between graffitiing and tattooing. The tattoo artist Pierre was reluctant to link the two artforms explaining that they are opposites in many regards: tattooing implies two people, graffitiing is often a solitary activity, graffitiing uses the whole body whereas tattooing is restricted to the hands, graffitiing is usually done outside, whilst tattooing takes place in a studio. Pierre was alone in this opinion, in four interviews the interviewee agreed that there were links between the two artforms. Pascal and Jean explain that many graffiti writers turn to tattooing as a means to make a living, and that in some cases it is preferable to becoming an official artist. Steve compared the two artforms technically explaining that the styles and use of colour were unique to tattooing and graffitiing. The presence of English in the French linguistic landscape suggests that the language has been accepted to some degree by some of the social actors and the 'sociolinguistic reality' of the graffiti writers specific to Bordeaux and French script tattoo bearers. These social actors write and or wear English on their skin, increasing the language's potential for vitality in France. Both the writers and the bearers explained that the presence of English in script tattoos and graffiti inscriptions reflects the linguistic landscape, or rather sound landscape, around them: they hear English language music, they watch television and films in English, they are 'swimming' in English.<sup>99</sup>

As seen in the survey answers, the interviews, and the repetition in the corpora, English is a communicative tool or vehicle that the writers and bearers believe conveys their message effectively and, in some cases, more effectively than in French or another language. In the case of Louisa and Henri, the French alternative did not fully

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<sup>99</sup> Jean the tattoo artist said that he was 'swimming in English' [*baigné dans l'anglais*].



represent their feelings. This suggests that despite equivalent or approximative translations being available in French, or other languages, the associations and connotations were restricted to the language and therefore the message conveyed changes with the language being used to convey it.

### **Limitations and Future Directions of Study**

This study has been primarily focused on the English inscriptions found in graffiti and script tattoos and has not exhausted the possibility of further analysis of either data type. For example, this thesis is limited by a lack of gender equality between the participants in the survey and all the people interviewed were of Caucasian European origin. In future studies, I would like to have a more representative group of participants and genders and ethnic backgrounds. One area that I intend to dedicate more time to is that of the differences between male and female toilet graffiti. This was not possible in this thesis due to the majority being unisex toilets, but I believe that this area could be interesting for further study of the differences in language use in male, female, and unisex toilets.

When collecting the data for this thesis, I focused mainly on inscriptions in English. I saw various inscriptions in other languages and took photographs of some of those inscriptions for future study. I believe it could be worthwhile collecting the data from the desktops again and analysing the different languages used on the desktops as well as analysing the French inscriptions.

From a language teacher perspective, I intend to further my understanding of the language identity of my students, namely how they relate to English language, outside of a tattoo and graffiti context.<sup>100</sup> One area that was mentioned several times by my students and participants during this study was the world of Manga. The participants explained that they improved English so they could read Manga books as soon as they were released in English and therefore not wait for the French translation, even though this wait could be as little as a day or even an hour. I believe that this passion could be harnessed and used in our classrooms to help improve the way we engage students in a formal English language classroom. I have already explored the world of online

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<sup>100</sup> See appendices for my proposals on how to use graffiti and tattoos in the formal English language classroom.

gaming and its influence on L2 English language users (Peake & Reynolds, 2020), the study of Manga and language learning would be a logical next step for me.

Another project that interests me for future work is that of the ACAB acronym. Its history and use in France in the 2020s have been touched upon by this study. However, there is little research into the variants of the phrase in the academic world, the variants are examples of linguistic appropriation and are only limited by language and creativity.

*Image 344 Graffiti C284*



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