

Political Dimensions of Écriture Inclusive in Parisian Universities

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Abstract

Écriture inclusive (EI) (i.e. shortening expressions like *étudiants et étudiantes* to *étudiant·e·s*, *étudiant(e)s* etc.) has long been the topic of public debates in France. Despite this attention, there have been almost no studies documenting its use. To this end, we present a large quantitative corpus study of the (non)use of EI in Parisian undergraduate brochures. Our results suggest that Parisian university professors use EI not only to ensure gender neutral reference, but also as a tool to construct their political identities. We show that both the use of EI and its particular forms are conditioned by how brochure writers position themselves on non-gender related issues within the French university’s political landscape. Our paper thus provides new information to be taken into account in the formulation and promotion of non-sexist language policies, and sheds light on how feminist linguistic activism is deeply intertwined with other kinds of social activism in present-day France.

1 Introduction

This article presents a corpus study of *écriture inclusive* in Parisian universities. The expression *écriture inclusive* (EI), lit. ‘inclusive writing’, has been used to refer a wide variety of orthographic and discursive practices in France and across the Francophonie (see Vachon-L’Heureux, 1992; Vachon-L’Heureux et al., 2007; Abbou et al., 2018, for discussion). In this paper, we use it to refer to a set of spellings that indicate inclusive or gender neutral reference, particularly as a way of shortening expressions like *les étudiants et étudiantes* ‘the students_M and the students_F’. This set includes the *point médian* (*les étudiant·e·s*), the period (*étudiant.e.s*), the parenthesis (*étudiant(e)s*), the hyphen (*étudiant-e-s*), and the capital (*étudiantEs*), among others.

Francophones who use EI do so for a variety of different reasons. One of the reasons is to resolve a **communication problem**: although the French grammatical tradition has long maintained otherwise, a large and growing body of psycholinguistic research on French has shown that it is almost impossible to refer both men and women in an equal way by using a masculine marked expression (Chatard et al., 2005; Brauer, 2008; Gygax et al., 2008; Gabriel et al., 2008; Garnham et al., 2012; Gygax et al., 2019, among many

others): grammatically masculine noun phrases have a interpretative bias in favour of men that goes above and beyond the particular stereotypes associated with the noun. The communication problem arises because we very often wish to refer equally to men and women (in laws, policies, procedures, university brochures, class syllabi etc.), and EI aims to help us do this. Of course the communication problem posed by ‘gender neutral’ uses of French masculine marked noun phrases is not just any communication problem. Given that the use of masculine grammatical gender with human nouns creates a male-biased interpretation, there is reason to believe that, through this bias, such language plays a role in the under-representation of women in positions of power in society (see Sczesny et al., 2016, for a review of the literature on this question). Therefore, a second reason that French speakers use EI is to address this **political problem**: EI is thought to encourage (or force) equality in reference between men and women and, in this way, can help eliminate the contribution that language makes to the introduction and reproduction of gender inequality in francophone societies.

As with most language policies aimed at addressing gender inequality, EI is and has been very controversial. This linguistic practice has given rise to debates between and within groups of feminists and anti-feminists concerning whether EI should be used and, if so, which form should be preferred. Many of these debates came to a head in France in 2017, when, in March of that year, the scholastic publisher *Hatier* published an elementary school social science textbook (CE2: 8-9 years old) which had many occurrences of EI using the period. For example, the textbook had chapter names such as *Les agriculteur.rice.s au fil du temps*, *Les savant.e.s au fil du temps*, and *Les puissant.e.s au fil du temps* ‘The farmers/intellectuals/powerful ones throughout the ages’. This textbook was discovered by the right wing press in the fall through a short article in *Le Figaro* by Marie Estelle Puech¹, published on September 22nd, 2017. Thoroughly scandalized, Puech criticized the use of EI with the period and announced that the publisher was further considering publishing a guide to EI favouring the *point médian*. Puech’s article sparked a period of intense public discussion surrounding gender inclusive language: the Académie Française called EI a *péril mortel* ‘mortal peril’ for the French language², and the education minister stated that EI wasn’t necessary, because “la France a comme emblème une femme : Marianne ; l’un de ses plus beaux mots est féminin : la République”³. There were also rejoinders from the pro-EI side, such as the tribune in *Slate* on November 7th, signed by 300 elementary, high school and university teachers⁴. Note that while *Hatier*’s manual uses EI with the period, and Puech’s article accurately describes them as doing so, the form of EI that was most frequently at issue in articles and speeches at this time was, in fact, the *point médian*. The debate focused so much on the *point médian* that journalists were often

¹<https://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2017/09/22/01016-20170922ARTFIG00300-un-manuel-scolaire.php>

²<http://www.academie-francaise.fr/actualites/declaration-de-lacademie-francaise-sur-lecriture-dit>

³*France has a woman as a symbol: Marianne; one of its most beautiful words is feminine: ‘Republic’*<https://www.marianne.net/politique/pas-besoin-ecriture-inclusive-embleme-de-la-france-est-une-femme-balaie-ministre-education>

⁴<https://www.slate.fr/story/153492/manifeste-professeurs-professeures-enseignerons-plus-masculin>

unaware (or forgot) that the original scandal was about EI using the period. For example, a pro-EI article appearing in the left wing newspaper *Libération*⁵ reports Hatier as using the forms *agriculteur.rice.s* and *artisan.e.s*, rather than *agriculteur.rice.s* and *artisan.e.s* which appear in the text.

Finally, to clarify the government’s position on this matter, the Prime Minister, Edouard Philippe, issued an official statement (*circulaire*) on November 22nd, stating that gender inclusive/neutral reference should be accomplished using the repetition forms (*le ou la candidate*) in official texts, outlawing any orthographic versions of EI. The circulaire orders “à ne pas faire usage de l’écriture dite inclusive, qui désigne les pratiques rédactionnelles et typographiques visant à substituer à l’emploi du masculin, lorsqu’il est utilisé dans un sens générique, une graphie faisant ressortir l’existence d’une forme féminine”⁶.

These recent debates exemplify what an important current social and linguistic question gender inclusive/neutral language is in France; however, despite their intensity, we actually have very little corpus or experimental data on how speakers and writers of French use *écriture inclusive*. This paper therefore contributes to filling this empirical gap by presenting a large quantitative corpus study of the (non)use of EI in Parisian universities in 2019/2020. The results of our study suggest that people who work in the Parisian universities do use EI as a way to overcome the communication and gender-equality problems discussed above. However, we also argue that the quantitative patterns we find suggest that (non)use of EI has another important motivation: the construction of a political identity. In particular, we find that both the use of EI and the particular forms employed are conditioned by factors related to the writers’ orientations within the French university’s political landscape on issues that do not, at least ostensibly, have to do with gender. We therefore argue that these other political dimensions of EI play an important role in determining whether EI is used and whether or not it will become more widespread in the future. We believe that our paper provides valuable information for individuals who wish to formulate and apply language policies promoting gender equality, and sheds a light on how feminist linguistic activism is deeply intertwined with other kinds of social activism in present-day France.

The paper is organized as follows: in section 2, we review the previous corpus work on *écriture inclusive*. As far as we can see, the only research on EI from this perspective is Abbou (2011, 2017)’s study of EI in anarchist brochures. We describe Abbou’s results and discuss what (if any) predictions can be made for EI in a university context. Then, in section 3, we present the methodology our study of EI in the *brochures de licence* ‘undergraduate brochures’ of 12 Parisian universities. We describe the constitution of our corpus, and the extraction and coding of the data. In section 4, we present our results and their statistical

⁵https://www.liberation.fr/france/2017/09/27/pretes-a-utiliser-l-ecriture-inclusive_1598867

⁶*To not make use of so called inclusive writing, which refers to editorial and typographic practices aiming to substitute for the masculine, when it is used in a generic sense, a spelling bringing out the existence of a feminine form.* https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jo_pdf.do?id=JORFTEXT000036068906

analysis. We show that there exist significant differences in both the use (vs non-use) of EI across both universities and academic disciplines, and that the choice of whether to use EI is conditioned by gender balance of the discipline/university, but also ideological properties like university/discipline prestige and political activism. Likewise, we show that, within the academic departments that use EI, prestige and activism also play a role conditioning which particular form is used. Finally, in section 5, we discuss the implications of our results for language policy, namely that recommendations for non-sexist writing in French should take into account the political dimensions of EI.

2 Previous corpus work on EI

To our knowledge, the only previous work on variation in *écriture inclusive* is by Julie Abbou (2011a, 2011b, 2017), who studied the “perturbations de genre” in anarchist pamphlets (<https://infokiosques.net/>) from 1990 to 2008. Abbou examined 280 pamphlets and found that over a third (105) had some form of feminisation or *écriture inclusive*. She observes, however, that feminisation/EI is not equally frequent: in the 1990s, less than a third of the texts in her corpus contain some feminisation or EI; however, starting in the year 2000, the rate rises greatly and even attains almost 80% or 90% in some of the later years.

To get a more detailed look at EI in an anarchist context, Abbou did a qualitative analysis of 6 brochures which, together, contain 15 texts. Her first main result concerns the wide range of variation in the forms of EI found in this corpus. She says, “Le premier constat qui émerge de l’observation détaillée des termes marqués du corpus est la diversité des procédés typographiquement employés⁷” (Abbou, 2017, 56). She finds all the forms shown in Table 1 in her corpus; however, the most frequent variants are the hyphen and the capital. Most of the forms (slash, hyphen, point médian, capital etc.) involve using some punctuation to make a composite representation of the both masculine and feminine forms, resulting in a form that has no obvious pronunciation.

In order to develop an understanding of the choices that underlay the patterns of variation that she found, Abbou conducted interviews with four writers from the corpus, asking why they use the forms that they do. As is common in verbal hygiene discourses (see Cameron, 2012), the writers’ reasons for preferring one variant of EI over another included a mixture of practical and aesthetic considerations. One of the most important aspects that determine the use of different forms of EI, according to Abbou’s participants, is what she calls the “sémiotique politique de la typographie”, or what, in this paper, we will call its *social meaning*. For the anarchists interviewed by Abbou, some variants of EI signal something about the political views of their users, in addition to their views about gender. The two variants that the anarchists comment on in the interviews are the parenthesis and the capital. As Abbou says (p.65),

⁷ *The first observation that emerges from the detailed study of marked terms in the corpus is the diversity of typographical practices employed.*

FORM	EXAMPLE
Hyphen	étudiant-e-s
Period	étudiant.e.s
<i>Point médian</i>	étudiant·e·s
Capital	étudiantEs
Underlining	étudiant <u>es</u>
Long forms	locuteurices
Repetition	étudiantes et étudiants, locuteurs, locutrices
Slash	étudiants/étudiantes, locuteurs/ices

Table 1 – Variants of *écriture inclusive* in Abbou (2011, 2017)

La parenthèse (qui n’apparaît pas dans le corpus de textes) est rejetée en bloc dans tous les entretiens, comme un procédé qui n’est pas acceptable politiquement. La majuscule est dans l’ensemble refusée (contrairement à ce qu’on trouve dans les textes) car elle est perçue comme valorisant la femme, et non comme questionnant le genre en tant que rapport de pouvoir. Ce sont les seuls procédés qui seront évalués politiquement, et dont le sens typographique fait consensus. Les autres procédés ne sont pas perçus comme véhiculant de sens particulier

The parenthesis (which does not appear in the corpus of texts) is entirely rejected in all the interviews, as a method that is not politically acceptable. The capital is generally refused (contrary to what we find in the texts) because it is perceived as emphasizing women, and not as questioning gender as a power relationship. These are the only techniques that are politically evaluated, and which the typographic meaning forms a consensus. The other techniques are not perceived as carrying any particular meaning.

The anarchists find the parenthesis unacceptable because it signals a pro-government, pro-institutional stance. For example, speaker E says that “la parenthèse pour moi c’est un peu associé aux formulaires euh style France Télécom ou l’État français qui t’envoie un truc et qui dit cher client cher clientE et maintenant au lieu [...] il mettent cher client[(e)]⁸” (E65). This quotation also shows that repetition shares this social meaning. According to E, the parenthesis is used by non-activists, saying that it’s “ou la forme officielle OU la forme des gens qui ont pas réfléchi à la question et qui veulent juste être sympa avec les meufs quoi⁹” (E67), and it can even go as far as signaling that the writer is right wing, saying

⁸The parenthesis for me it’s a bit associated with forms euh like France Télécom of the French state who sends you something and who says dear client_M, dear client_F and now instead [...] they put dear client(e).

⁹the official form OR the form of people who haven’t thought about the issue and who just want to be nice with chicks.

“quelqu’un de droite il va pas féminiser ou avec la parenthèse quoi¹⁰” (E75). Undoubtedly both repetition and the parenthesis have acquired these social meanings because they have traditionally been the means through which the French state and its dependents have been gender inclusive. One of the most famous early examples of inclusive writing (or in this case, inclusive speech) is the General de Gaulle’s use of repetition in his first speech upon his return to politics in 1958: “Françaises, français, aidez-moi!¹¹”. Although more recent than repetition, the parenthesis is also featured in reformist feminist texts supported by the government, such as the 1998 official guidelines for feminization: *Femme, j’écris ton nom* (Becquer et al., 1999). Thus, given their social meaning associated with older, governmental institutions, it is understandable that anarchists would avoid these variants.

The capital variant has no particular association with the French state, but it is disfavoured by the anarchists interviewed by Abbou for different reasons. As Abbou mentions in the citation above, her interviewees dislike the capital because they perceive it as having a social meaning that goes counter the radical political project of gender deconstruction in which they are engaged. As Abbou says (p.65),

En effet, la majuscule est perçue comme essentialisant les femmes, à travers une mise en valeur du féminin. Cette valorisation a pu être développée notamment par le féminisme différentialiste, et – conséquemment – ce procédé s’est diffusé dans les cercles les moins radicaux se préoccupant de la question des femmes. Aujourd’hui, alors que la question du genre tend à remplacer la question des femmes, les espaces féministes réaffirment la nécessité d’une lecture anti-essentialiste, faisant de la majuscule le marqueur d’un féminisme de la différence, souvent perçu comme dépassé, ou tout au moins, à dépasser.

In fact, the capital is perceived as essentializing women, through an emphasis of the feminine. This emphasis was developed by differentialist feminism, and - consequently - this technique spread in least radical circles focused on the woman question. Today, while the gender question tends to replace the woman question, feminist spaces reaffirm the necessity of an anti-essentialist reading, making the capital the sign of a difference-based feminism, often perceived as outdated or, at least, to move away from.

This view is exemplified by participant C who says, “majuscule ça commence à me gonfler quand même + ça me fait trop penser à euh c’est beau d’être une femme alors que c’est nul d’être une femme¹²” (C352).

¹⁰A right wing person will not feminize or [they will] with the parenthesis

¹¹Frenchwomen, frenchmen, help me!

¹²capital starts to annoy me + it makes me think too much euh it’s great to be a woman when it sucks being a woman

2.1 From anarchists to university professors...

Abbou shows that for anarchists in the 2000s, not all variants of EI are equal: the people she interviewed preferred the hyphen and the period for readability reasons and also because these variants were not associated with any social meanings that the feminist anarchists found objectional, such as having a pro-institutional or pro-gender binary/hierarchy stance. The study that we will present in the next section asks the same questions as Abbou, but in a very different temporal and social context. Therefore, we may wonder to what extent the patterns Abbou found might carry over to university brochures in 2019.

On the one hand, we expect there will be very many differences: our study looks at texts produced over a decade later, which were written after EI with the *point médian* suddenly became very salient in the French media in 2017. Our study is also drastically different from Abbou's since we are studying university undergraduate program brochures, not anarchist ones. Obviously, we should expect university professors to have less of an anti-institutional stance, since universities are integral parts of the state's educational institution, and those who work there are participating in this institution. On the other hand, French universities are also sites of political and social conflict, and university faculty often participate in these conflicts. There is a long history of left wing activism in Parisian universities, the most famous example being the student riots in May 1968. There is also a long history of right wing activism in Parisian universities, with the activities of the *Groupe union défense* (GUD), an extreme right wing student organization, active predominantly at Université Paris 2-Assas and Université Paris 10-Nanterre in the 1970s-1990s. Recent years have seen both kinds of activism continue: for example, the 2018 left wing student protests against the university selection process (*Parcoursup*), and student and faculty protests against proposed pension and research reforms (*loi LPPR*) in 2019-2020, and the re-consolidation of extreme right wing student groups at Paris 2-Assas in 2011 (GUD) and 2017 (*Bastion Social*). Abbou shows that the anarchists' use of écriture inclusive played a role in constructing a right wing vs left wing identity, so EI in Parisian universities may likewise be sensitive to this salient political distinction.

Another difference between the anarchist context and the university context is that language in official university publication is much more regulated. This being said, when it comes to gender inclusive language, the official regulations are not uniform across the Parisian universities. Champeil-Desplats (2019) reviews the state of EI in legal and administrative contexts. She writes,

Quant aux universités, les pratiques sont clivées. Certaines ont jugé utile de rappeler à leurs personnels administratifs “que l'utilisation de l'écriture inclusive n'est pas conforme à la règle orthographique [...]”. D'autres, au contraire, se sont familiarisées avec l'usage des tirets et du point-milieu, notamment au contact des multiples tracts et panneaux de mobilisation étudiants contre Parcoursup au printemps 2018. [...] Une chargée de mission égalité femmes-hommes et non-discrimination à été nommée en janvier 2019 [à

Paris 10-Nanterre]. Son premier communiqué de presse indique l'élaboration d' "un plan de formation comprenant notamment des conférences sur le sexisme ordinaire, l'écriture inclusive"

As for the universities, the practices are divided. Some have judged it useful to remind their administrators "that the use of inclusive writing does not conform to orthographic rules [...]". Others, on the contrary, had familiarized themselves with the use of hyphens and the interpunct, particularly through contact with the numerous pamphlets and signs of the mobilization of students against Parcoursup in Spring 2018. [...] A head of a division devoted to gender equality and non-discrimination was nominated in January 2019 [at Paris 10-Nanterre]. Their first press release signaled the development of "a training plan involving notably conferences on everyday sexism, inclusive writing"

Champeil-Desplats thus makes a distinction between universities, like Paris 10-Nanterre, who have taken significant administrative action to promote EI (such as having a service devoted to gender equality whose official position is pro-EI), and other universities who take the directly opposite position and forbid it. The clearest case of such a university is Université Paris 2-Assas, whose president sent the following email (cited in the Champeil-Desplats quotation above) to all administrative staff on December 17th, 2018:

- (1) A la demande de M. le Président, je me permets de vous rappeler que l'utilisation de l'écriture inclusive n'est pas conforme à la règle orthographique, qu'elle est proscrite par la charte orthotypographique de l'université et qu'elle ne doit pas être utilisée. [...] Je vous remercie de rester vigilants sur ce point : en tant que personnels administratifs, vous êtes les ambassadeurs de l'image de l'institution en interne comme en externe.

At the order of the President, allow me to remind you that the use of inclusive writing does not obey orthographic rules, that it is proscribed by the orthotypographic charter of the university and that it should not be used. [...] I thank you to be vigilant about this: as administrators, you are the ambassadors of the image of the institution internally as well as externally.

The two quotations above already hint that EI may be sensitive to similar dimensions in the current university context as in Abbou's anarchist context over 10 years ago. In (1), the president's office of Université Paris 2 makes a clear link between the (non)use of EI and the university's image, suggesting that EI also has an identity constructing function in the university context. Likewise, Champeil-Desplats attributes the recent rise in EI in the French university to another recent political conflict: the left wing movement against *Parcoursup* in 2018. Very broadly speaking, *Parcoursup* is an initiative by the Macron government to institute a particular selection process in French universities. This initiative was highly controversial and was met with anger, blockades and strikes from

left wing student and faculty activists, who hold the view that universities should be open to all students with high school diplomas. The conflicts surrounding Parcoursup are about education and economic policy, not gender; therefore, the existence of a link between protests about *Parcoursup* and EI suggests that, as with anarchists, the social meaning(s) of EI in the university could be related to left vs right, pro- vs anti-government stances.

To further explore these questions, we turn to our study of *écriture inclusive* in Parisian university brochures.

3 EI in undergraduate brochures: Methodology

3.1 Corpus constitution and criteria

We constituted a corpus by collecting all undergraduate (*licence*) brochures available online in the 12 main Parisian universities (resulting from the 1970 scission of the *Université de Paris*) between August 2019 and February 2020. The list of the universities whose undergraduate brochures make up our corpus is shown in (2).

- (2)
- Université Panthéon-Sorbonne (Paris 1)
 - Université Panthéon-Assas (Paris 2)
 - Université Sorbonne-Nouvelle (Paris 3)
 - Sorbonne Université, product of the merger of Paris-Sorbonne (Paris 4) and Pierre-et-Marie-Curie (Paris 6)
 - Université Paris-Descartes (Paris 5)
 - Université Paris-Diderot (Paris 7)
 - Université Vincennes Saint-Denis (Paris 8)
 - Université Paris-Dauphine (Paris 9)
 - Université Paris-Nanterre (Paris 10)
 - Université Paris-Sud (Paris 11)
 - Université Paris-Est Créteil (Paris 12)
 - Université Sorbonne Paris-Nord (Paris 13)

We included the brochures (html, txt, pdf files) on department websites that were intended for undergraduate students and that described the undergraduate degree (*licence*) in general. Unless this was the only option, we did not include files that redirect on the University general website or somewhere else, distance learning files (*enseignement à distance*), professional degree files (*licences professionnelles et/ou d'apprentissage*), files outlining double degree programs (for example, physics/chemistry degree, Italian/minor history degree), and files only about schedule, planning, internship, minor, etc). This led us to 871 brochures to analyze.

3.2 Data extraction

Although in the future it would be desirable to do a study of *écriture inclusive* with all nouns in the corpus, in this paper we present the results of variation in EI with the most frequent relevant noun: *étudiant* ‘student’. We used the Antconc software (Anthony, 2004) to extract all occurrences of the word *étudiant* from the 871 brochures. We searched for *étudiant** and *Éeacute;tudiant** (html symbol). We found in total 21077 occurrences. As shown in Table 2, some occurrences were adjectives (*vie étudiante*, *public étudiant*), or present participles (*étudiant le rôle de la philosophie...*). We only kept the nouns (i.e. words with gender neutral reference) for the analysis, which left us with 19610 occurrences and 811 brochures.

FUNCTIONS	OCCURRENCES
Adjective (non gender neutral reference)	1413 (6.70%)
Noun (gender neutral reference)	19610 (93.04%)
Verb	54 (0.26%)

Table 2 – Functions of *étudiant*

Table 3 shows the number of files kept for the analyses depending on the Parisian universities.

UNIVERSITY	NUMBER
Paris 1	68
Paris 2	7
Paris 3	35
Paris 4 & 6	245
Paris 5	48
Paris 7	71
Paris 8	73
Paris 9	4
Paris 10	133
Paris 11	30
Paris 12	66
Paris 13	31

Table 3 – Number of files by university

4 EI in undergraduate brochures: Results

We separate our results into two categories: 1) factors conditioning the use or avoidance of any form of *écriture inclusive*, and 2) factors conditioning which form of EI is used.

4.1 (Non) Use of écriture inclusive

4.1.1 Descriptive results

Out of 19610 occurrences, 3188 (16.48%) were inclusive forms. Figure 1 presents the distribution of EI among the 12 Parisian universities and highlights the variation between them. It shows that some universities do not have inclusive forms at all like Paris 2, Paris 9 and Paris 11. Also, we can see that EI is not predominant in any university and its rate always remains less than 50%. The universities with the highest rates of EI are Paris 3, Paris 4&6, Paris 13 and Paris 8.

Figure 1 – Écriture inclusive by university

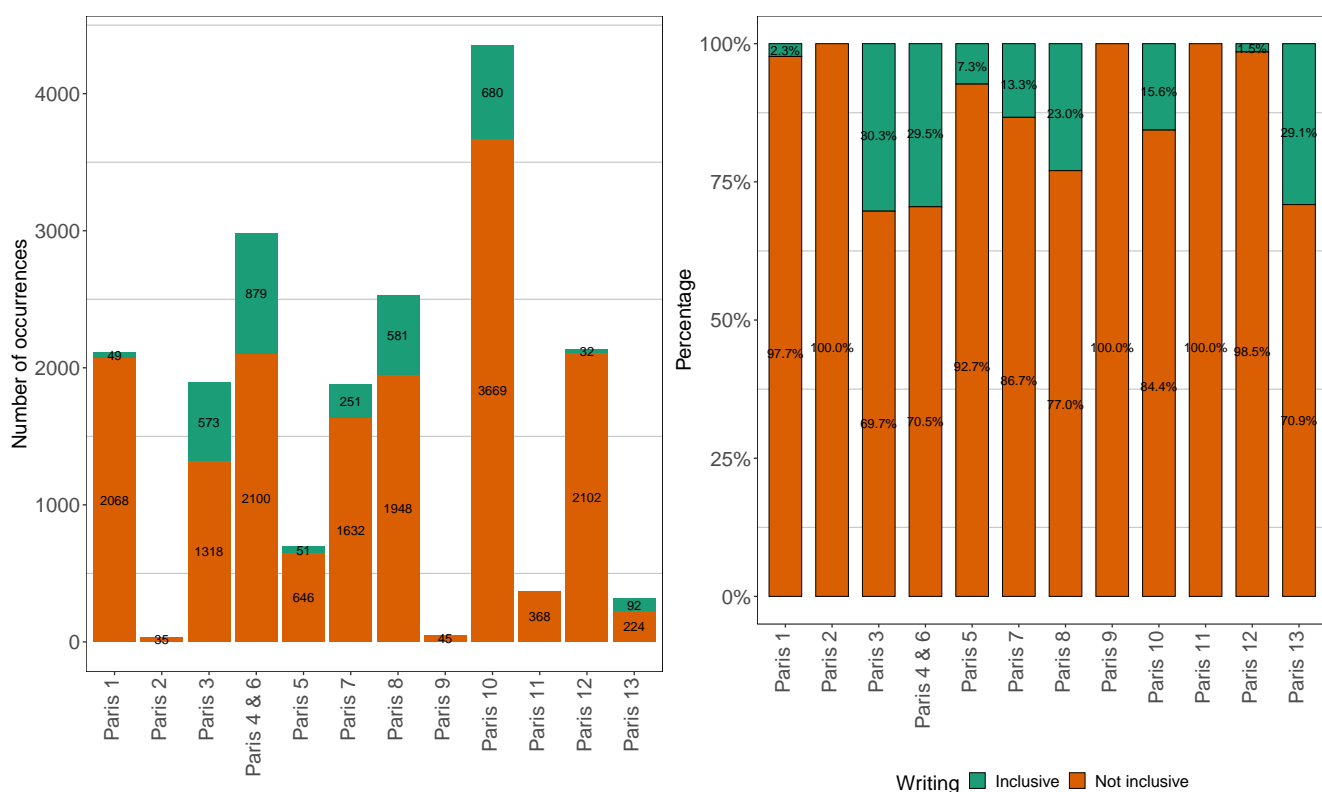


Figure 2 shows the distribution of EI among the different academic domains according to the ONISEP website¹³. Looking at the results, we can see that there is also variation between the different domains, with barely any EI in medicine (*Études Médicales*) and economics/management (*Économie et Gestion*) compared to literature and languages (*Lettres et Langues*) and humanities and social sciences (*Sciences Humaines et Sociales*).

¹³<http://www.onisep.fr/Choisir-mes-etudes/Apres-le-bac/Principaux-domaines-d-etudes>

Figure 2 – Écriture inclusive by academic domain

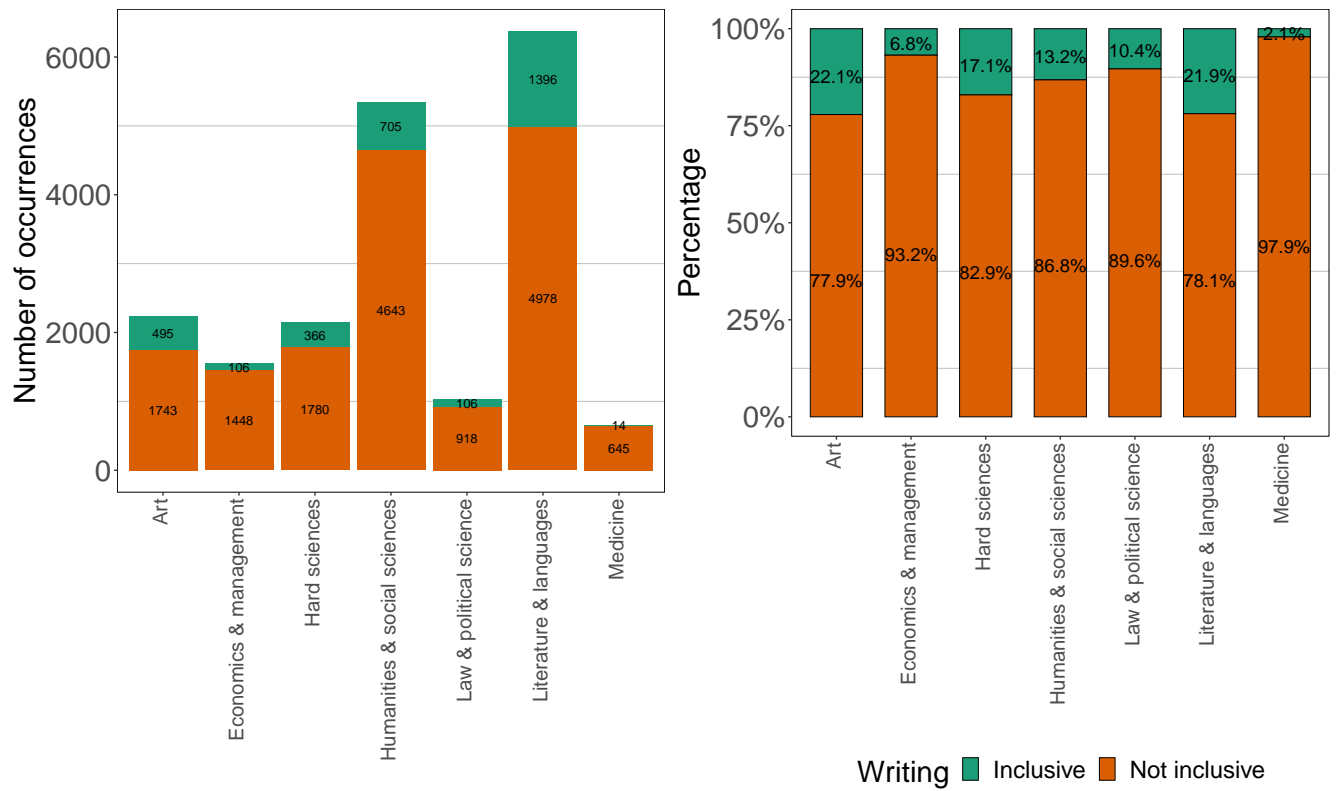
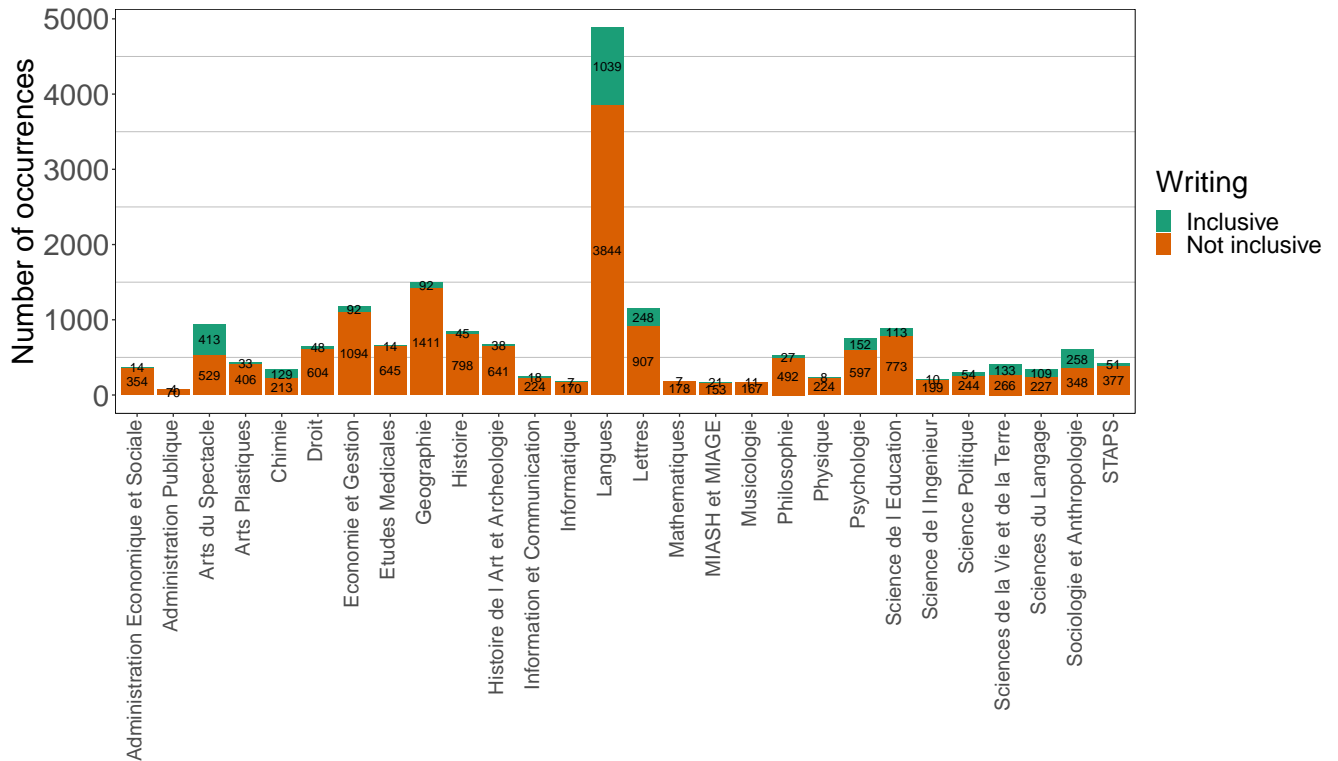


Figure 3 shows the distribution of EI depending on the different academic disciplines and further specifies the variation already observed in Figure 2 across academic domains.

Figure 3 – Écriture inclusive by discipline



4.1.2 Factors and hypotheses

The figures presented above show that there exists an enormous amount of variation in our corpus, and that this variation can be observed both by looking across university and across academic discipline. What drives this variation?

EI to solve the communication problem. A first idea would be that writers of the university brochures are using EI to solve the communication problem described in the introduction: since masculine marked noun phrases have a male bias in their interpretation, their use in disciplines where there is gender parity (or a female majority) would be particularly at odds with scholastic guidelines written in the masculine¹⁴. We therefore predict that disciplines and programs with more than 50% women should use more EI, to counter the biased interpretation of the masculine. Since we are studying the word *étudiant**, it makes sense to think that the more female students a discipline has, the more the professors writing the brochures will use EI. Sadly, the precise number of male and female students in each discipline at each university is not publicly available. What is available

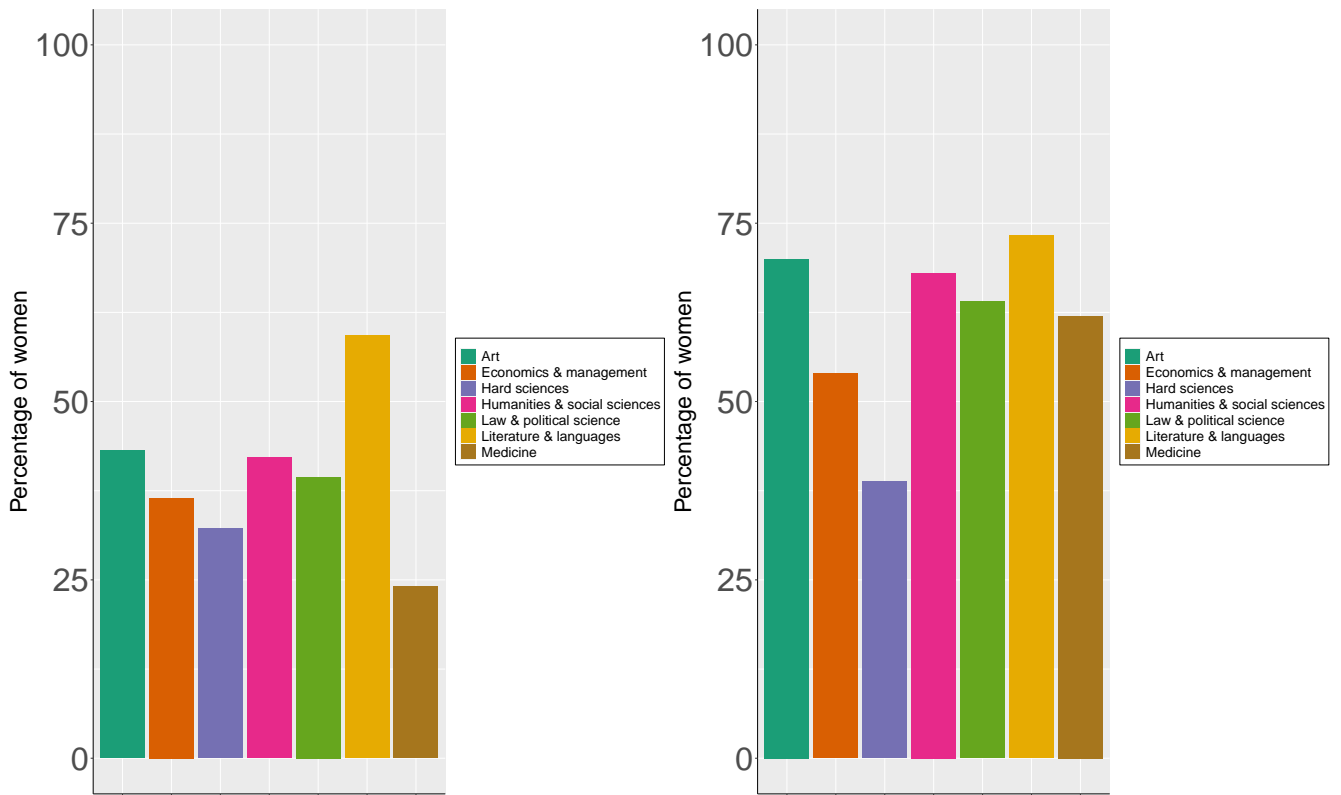
¹⁴Note that use of the masculine continues to aggravate the political problem of lack of gender parity in male dominated disciplines, but, from the point of view of faithfully representing the world through language, use of the masculine is semantically accurate.

are statistics concerning student gender parity across disciplines published by the Ministère de l'enseignement et de la recherche in 2011¹⁵. These numbers should give us a general idea of the gender balance between male and female students within the programs described in our corpus; however, this measure is far from ideal since the numbers are based on all French universities, not just the 12 Parisian ones that we study, and the way the Ministry cuts up disciplines is quite rough. Another idea is that, since the writers of the brochures are faculty members, their views of their disciplines will be influenced by their colleagues, possibly even more than their students. To investigate faculty gender parity, we took the proportions of men/women from the CNU section from 2012/2013 (DGRH A1-1, Gesup 2013). The CNU is a national organization that administrates academic disciplines (qualifications, promotions etc.), so the numbers used in this measure likewise take into account the whole country, not just the universities in our corpus. However, the CNU sections are associated with individual academic disciplines, so our faculty parity measure is much more fine-grained than our student parity measure.

Although it is of interest to know whether student or faculty gender balance is important, it turns out that distinguishing between the two options is difficult since the two are highly correlated. In fact, we find a positive correlation between faculty and student gender parity ($t = 129.25$, $p < .001$, $cor = .68$): the higher the proportion of female students in a discipline, the higher the proportion of female faculty members in this discipline. The gender balances of students and faculty by academic domain are shown in Figure 4.

¹⁵https://cache.media.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/file/Charte_egalite_femmes_hommes/90/6/Chiffres_parite_couv_vdef_239906.pdf

Figure 4 – Percentage of women for faculty (left panel) and students (right panel)



This correlation is not surprising since results of a recent study of gender in French academia show that, in most cases, the student gender distribution in a discipline is similar to the faculty distribution, except that, in the faculty, there are more men the higher one goes up the hierarchy¹⁶. Since the sections of the CNU are much more fine-grained than the categories for which we have information about student gender parity, we will take faculty parity to represent gender parity in the statistical analysis.

EI as identity construction. The reference that the president’s office of Paris 2 makes to the “image” of the university being damaged by the use of EI strongly suggests that inclusive writing has social meaning for French academics. If EI was a neutral way to achieve gender neutral reference, how could this affect a university’s image?

One obvious way that that EI could be related to the image of the universities that employ it comes from the relationship between the use of “generic” masculines and professional **prestige**. Although the debates surrounding EI are more recent, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, there were equally large public debates concerning the use of feminine marking on professional noun phrases referring to women (eg. *la ministre*, *la professeure*, *la*

¹⁶https://cache.media.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/file/Charte_egalite_femmes_hommes/90/6/Chiffres_parity_couv_vdef_239906.pdf

médecin) (see Houdebine, 1987, 1998; Burr, 2003; Viennot, 2014; Burnett and Bonami, 2019; Cerquiglini, 2018, among others). For some women, one of the main reasons they prefer to be referred to in the masculine (eg. *le ministre*, *le professeur*, *le médecin*) is that they have the impression that the masculine forms have a more prestigious connotation than the feminine ones (Dawes, 2003). Given that the idea that masculine marking applied women confers more prestige onto them was a major discourse in the debates surrounding *la féminisation des noms de métiers et de fonction* (Houdebine, 1998; Cerquiglini, 2018), it would not be surprising if French speakers continue to associated “generic” masculines with higher prestige 20 years later. We might therefore hypothesize that universities (and perhaps departments) that wish to present a more prestigious image should use less EI.

Prestige is a complex notion and it is not immediately obvious how to operationalize it in a corpus study such as ours. A full discussion of the different measures of university prestige that we explored is given in the appendix. The factor encoding *prestige* that we use in our statistical analysis comes from a measure that aims to tap into French speakers’ commonsense notion of prestige: the kind that was at issue in the debates on *féminisation*. We set up a survey on the Ibex platform (Drummond, 2017) to ask the opinion of French speakers about the Parisian universities. We asked 79 participants whether they knew the university logo¹⁷ (see Figure 5). They then had to rate on a 11-point level slider whether they thought the university was prestigious and activist (more on this below).

¹⁷Logos were taken from each university’s Wikipedia website.

Figure 5 – Illustration of the survey run on Ibex for commonsense notion (prestige and activism)



Connaissez-vous cette université ?

a. non oui

A votre avis, cette université est plutôt :

b. pas prestigieuse  très prestigieuse

c. pas militante  très militante

[– Cliquez ici pour continuer](#)

The results of this survey are depicted in Figure 6: the universities with the highest prestige rating are Paris 4&6, Paris 1 and Paris 2, and the lowest ratings are Paris 8, Paris 10 and Paris 12.

Our second set of identity construction related hypotheses concern the construction of left/right wing, anti/pro-government stances. Recall that Abbou’s anarchists saw use of EI as being part of their activism; therefore, if EI is playing a similar role in Parisian universities, we predict that professors in more left wing activist universities should use more EI. The link that Champeil-Desplats draws between the rise of EI and protests against university selection (*Parcousup*) in 2018 further strengthens the hypothesis that university faculty will use EI to signal an anti-Macron government stance.

Again, it is not obvious how to operationalize notions like *anti-government stance* and *left wing activism* in a corpus study such as ours. In the appendix, we detail the three different measures that we investigated. Our survey set up on Ibex (see Figure 5) allowed us to

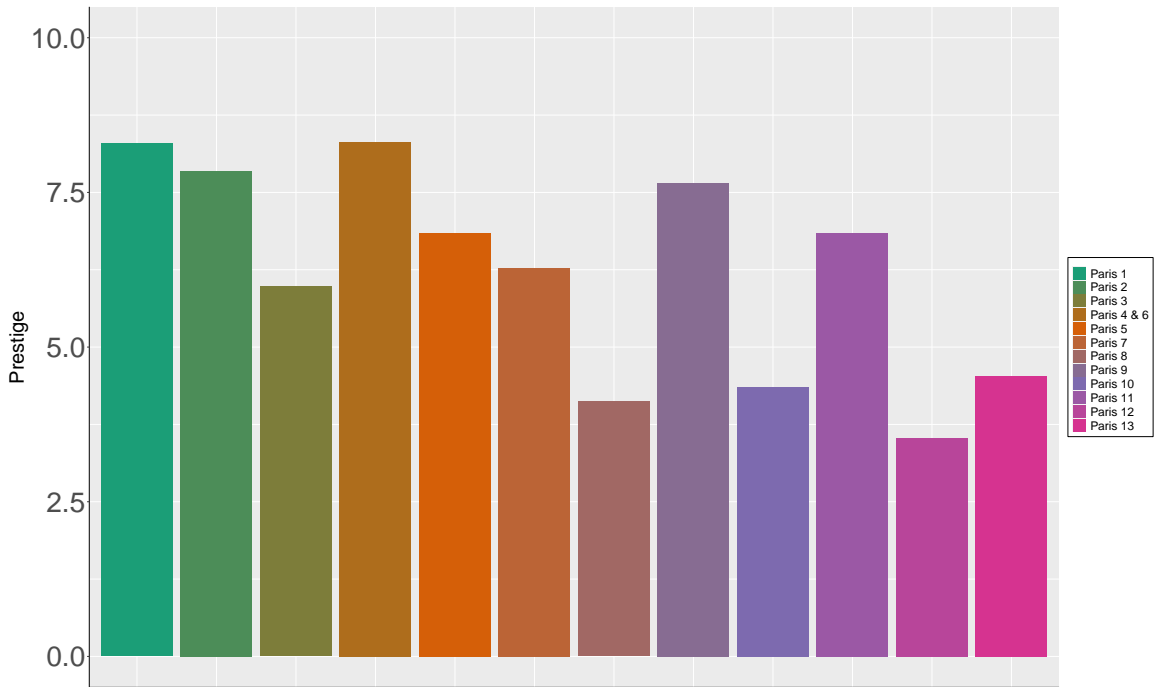


Figure 6 – Ratings for prestige depending on university

construct a measure of French speakers’ commonsense notion of activism (*militante*), and the results of the survey are shown in Figure 7.

Universities that had the lowest values for prestige in Figure 6 now have among the highest values for activism in Figure 7. In fact, the two measures are strongly correlated ($t=79.255$, $p<.001$, $cor=-0.5$): the more prestigious a university was judged, the less participants judged it to be militant. This shows that, when it comes to Parisian universities, prestige and activism are not independent; rather, they are flip sides of an ideological coin. Because of this correlation, we will only include the *prestige* measure in the statistical analysis. However, one should keep in mind that positive results for prestige are negative results for activism, and vice versa.

4.1.3 Analysis

Method of analysis We did a Bayesian binomial regression model using the brms package (Carpenter et al., 2017; Bürkner, 2017; Bürkner and Charpentier, 2018). The dependent variable was the use of EI coded as 1 for inclusive and 0 for not inclusive (bernoulli family). We applied mean centered coding for all the independent variables. The model was run with 4 chains with 6000 iterations by chain. We used weakly informative priors (normal(0,10)). Random variables were brochures¹⁸. For clarity purpose, we report in the paper effects

¹⁸It should be pointed out that taking brochures as random variables is more conservative and may hide some differences for the EI frequency between universities because of the unequal number of brochures per

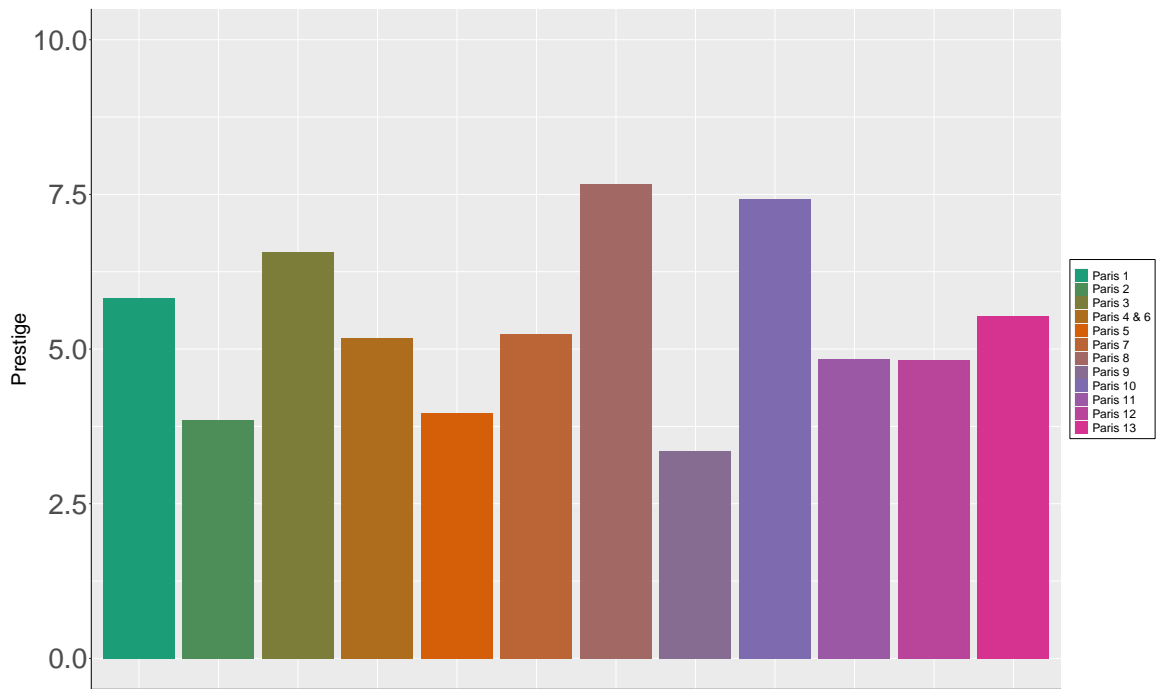


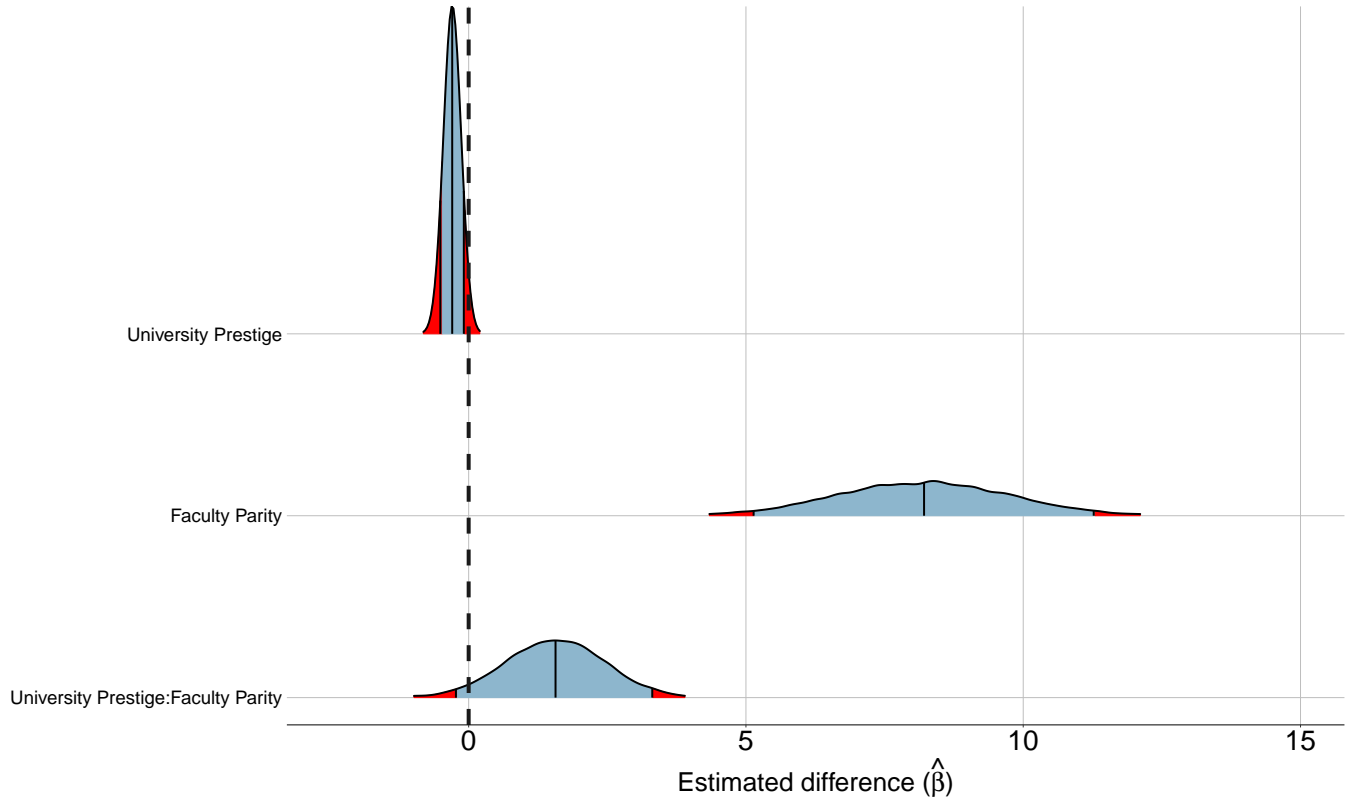
Figure 7 – Ratings for activism depending on university

whose $P(\hat{\beta}) > 0$ or $< 0 > 0.80$. The other effects remain available on the OSF repository.

Results Figure 8 shows the posterior distributions for EI use depending on two variables: university prestige (from the survey) and gender parity (faculty). The blue color represents the 95% central part and the red one the tails.

university and the unequal distribution of the “étudiant” word among the brochures.

Figure 8 – Posterior distributions for EI use depending on university prestige and faculty parity



Using Binomial regression models, we found a strong effect of prestige ($\hat{\beta} = -0.30$, 95% CrI=[-0.51,-.09], $P(\hat{\beta}) > 0 = 1$): The higher the university prestige, the more inclusive writing was used. An effect of parity was found ($\hat{\beta} = 8.20$, 95% CrI=[5.14,11.27], $P(\hat{\beta}) > 0 = 1$) with the proportion of EI increasing when parity increases. We found an interaction between university prestige and faculty parity ($\hat{\beta} = 1.56$, 95% CrI=[-0.23,3.31], $P(\hat{\beta}) > 0 = .96$): The higher the prestige and the parity, the more EI is used.

4.1.4 Discussion

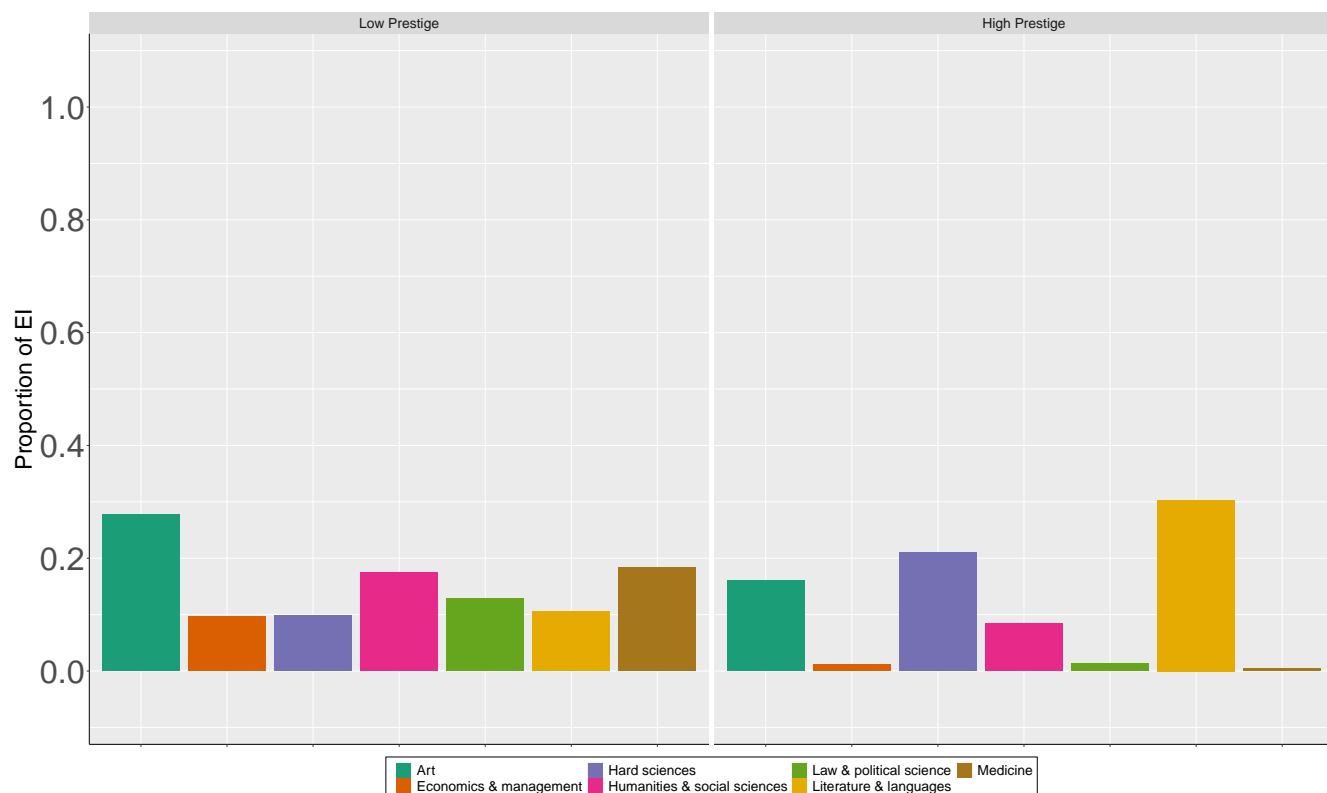
Our statistical analysis has shown that the main factors that we identified: gender parity and prestige/activism condition the use of EI. The main effect of gender parity supports the idea that brochure writers are using EI as a way to compensate for the male bias in masculine marked expressions: the more female faculty members a department has, the more likely they will be to use an inclusive form in their brochure. Since faculty gender balance and student gender balance are correlated, use of an inclusive form of *étudiant* also increases as the proportion of female students increases.

However, addressing the communication problem is clearly not the only motivation for using or avoiding *écriture inclusive*. As shown in Figure 8, university prestige and activism also

has an effect: more prestigious universities, which are less activist, use more masculine forms than less prestigious universities, who are more likely to have a culture of left wing and anti-Macron government activism. We know from the debates on *la féminisation des noms de métiers et de fonctions* in the late 20th century that (extreme use of) “generic” masculines are ideologically associated with prestige and a previous era when the university was more male dominated than it is now. We therefore propose that it is this conservative, pro-institution social meaning that makes professors in more prestigious universities strongly favour “generic” masculines.

Another piece of data that supports this analysis is the interaction between gender parity and university prestige shown in Figure 8. The interaction signifies that gender parity plays a different role with respect to écriture inclusive in more prestigious versus less prestigious universities. More specifically, gender parity has a stronger effect on EI in prestigious universities. This effect can be seen in Figure 9: while rates of EI are relatively similar across academic domains in less prestigious universities, male-dominated domains in prestigious universities use less EI compared to domains with better gender balance.

Figure 9 – EI by academic domain in more/less prestigious universities (median split)



If “generic” masculines have social meaning related to prestige and male-domination, it makes sense that professors in male-dominated disciplines, which are often themselves the

most prestigious (see Leslie et al., 2015, among others), in prestigious universities would find masculines particularly useful for reproducing these aspects of their academic culture.

4.2 Use of the different forms of EI

4.2.1 Descriptive results

Like Abbou's, our study reveals a large plurality of forms of EI: the point médian, the period, the parenthesis, the hyphen, the slash, the capital and repetition. The most used form in our corpus is the point médian (N = 1296) and the least used form is the capital (N=2). Recall that the capital was one of the most used and most discursively salient forms in Abbou's study. Its almost complete absence in our study suggests that, if it was ever used in an official university context, it has since disappeared, along with differentialist feminism to which it was ideologically related.

As with EI *tout court*, we find large amounts of variation across university and academic discipline. The distribution of different forms of EI across university, academic domain and academic discipline are shown in Figures 10-12.

Figure 10 – Occurrences of écriture inclusive by university according to the EI form

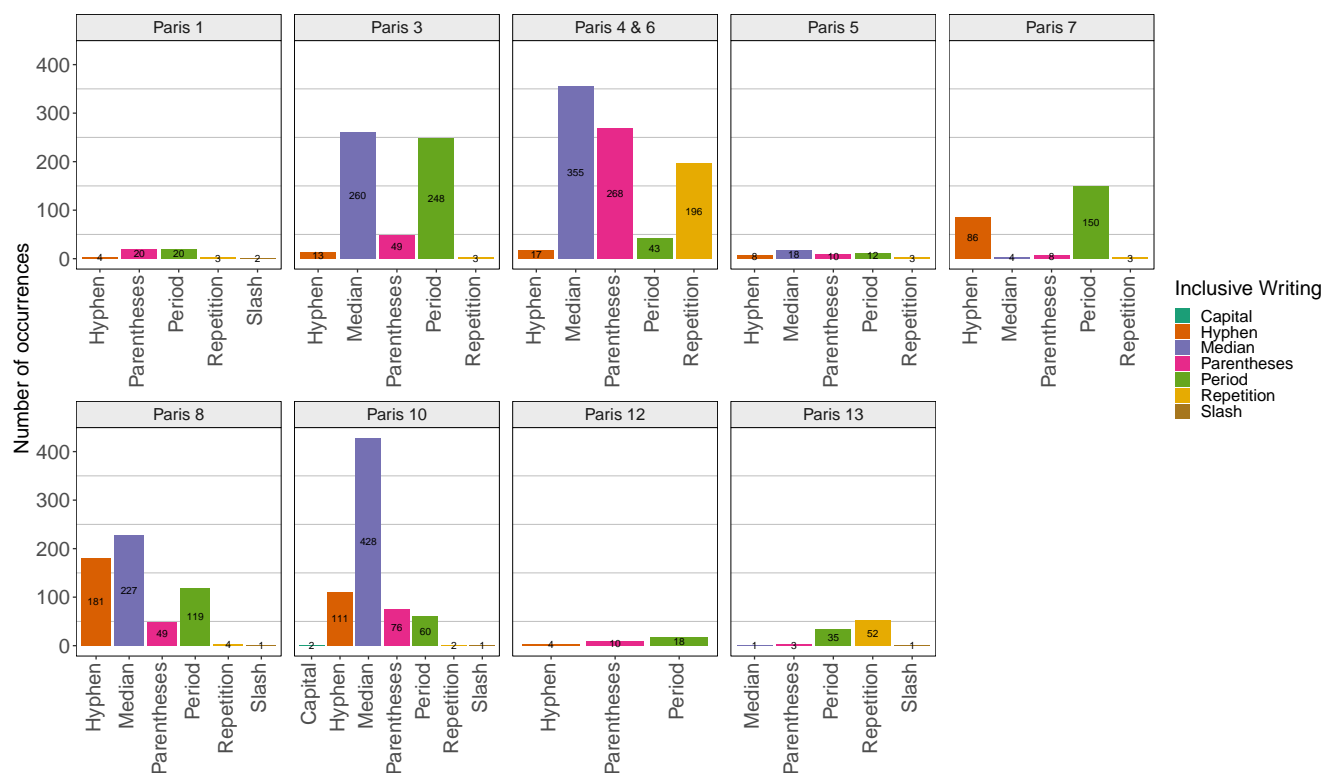


Figure 11 – Occurrences of écriture inclusive by domain according to the EI form

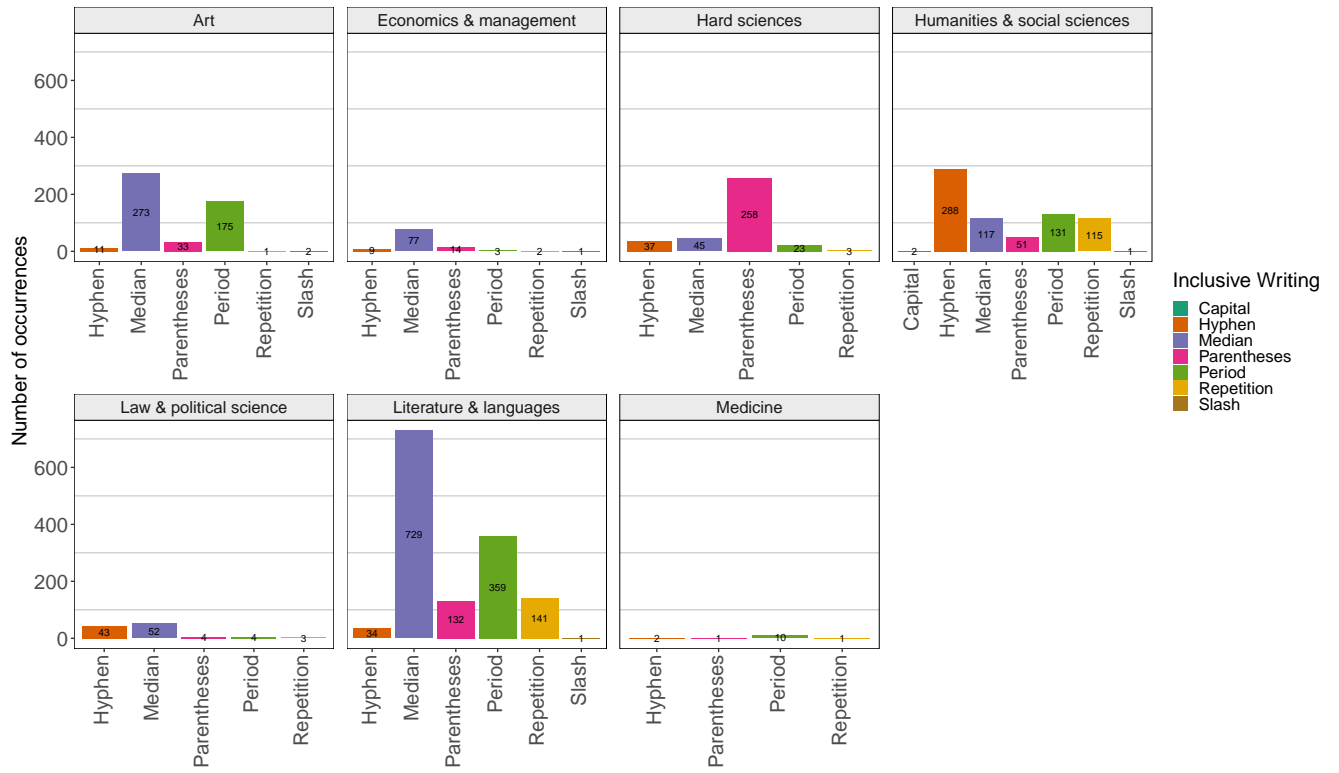
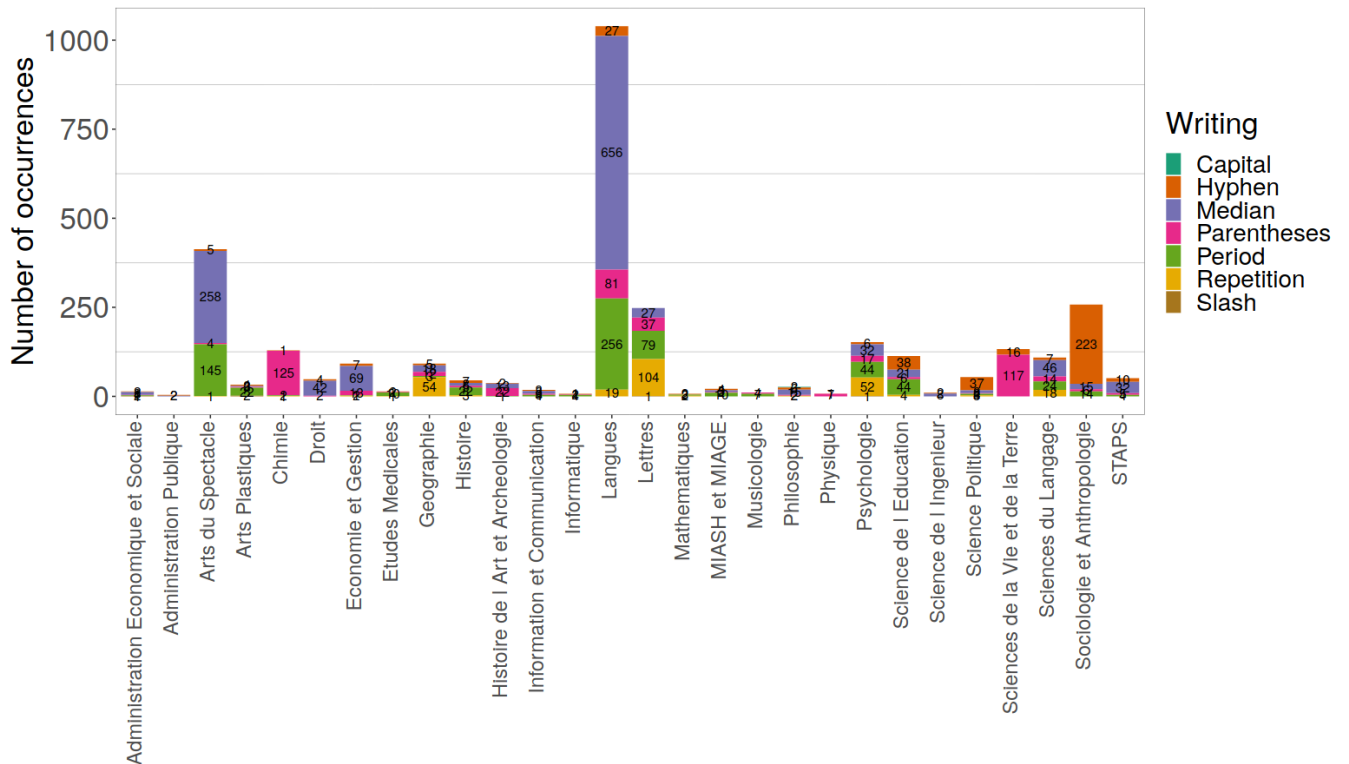


Figure 12 – Occurrences of écriture inclusive by discipline according to the EI form

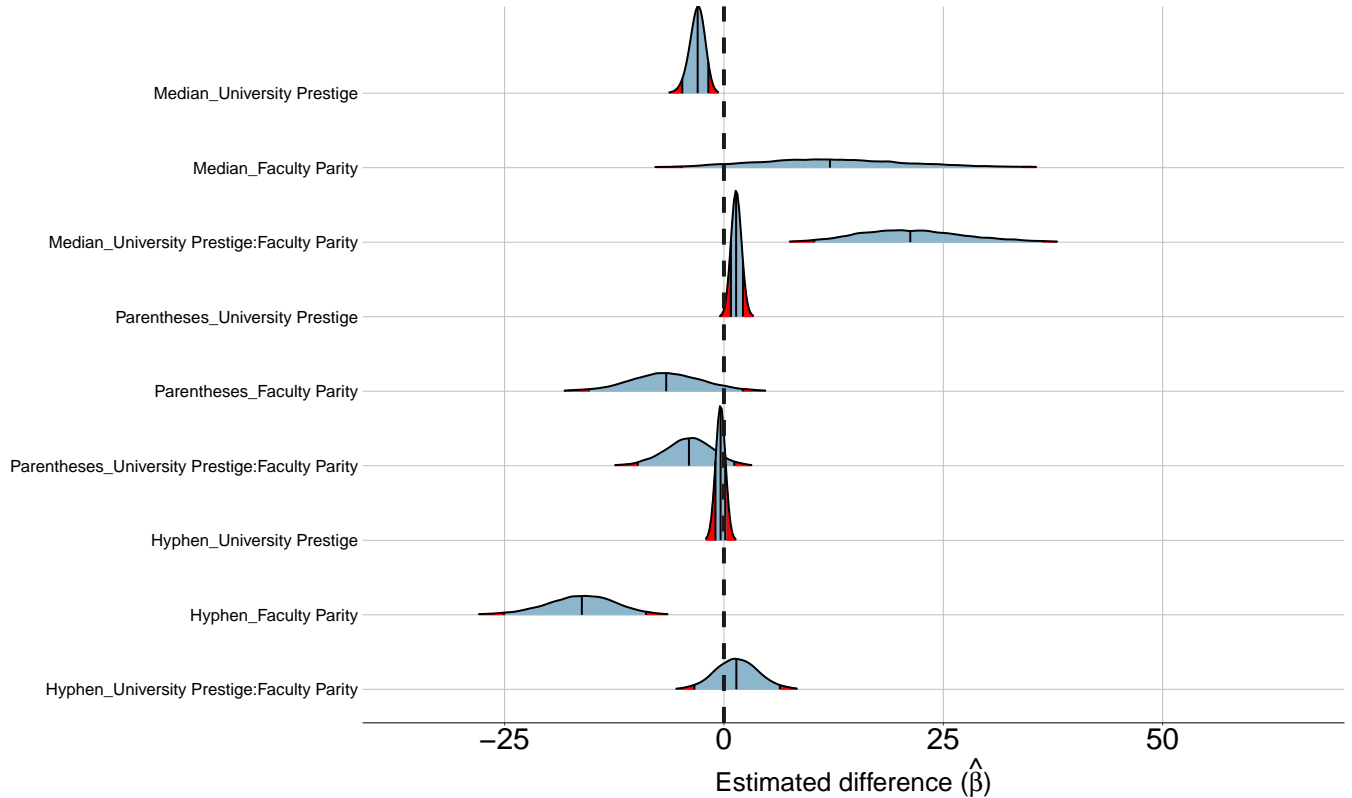


4.2.2 Analyses

Method of analysis We did a Bayesian multinomial regression model with the brms package (Carpenter et al., 2017; Bürkner, 2017; Bürkner and Charpentier, 2018). The dependent variable was the different forms of EI as categorical variables (categorical family). Since the number of occurrences of slash ($N=5$), capital ($N=2$) and repetition ($N=266$) forms are quite low compared to the hyphen ($N=424$), parenthesis ($N=493$), period ($N=705$) and median ($N=1296$) forms, we decided to exclude them from the analysis, leading to a four level dependent variable. We applied mean centered coding for the independent variables (petition, university prestige, faculty parity). The model was run with 4 chains with 6000 iterations by chain. We used the default priors from the brms package. Random variables were brochures¹⁹. Again, for clarity purpose, we report in the paper effects whose $P(\hat{\beta}) > 0$ or $< 0 > 0.80$. The posterior distributions for the EI forms are shown in Figure 13. The intercept is the **period** form.

¹⁹Again, it should be pointed out that taking brochures as random variables is more conservative and may hide some differences for the EI frequency between universities because of the unequal number of brochures per university and the unequal distribution of the “étudiant” word among the brochures.

Figure 13 – Posterior distributions for EI forms depending on university prestige and faculty parity (intercept: period)



When comparing point médian and period, we found an effect of prestige ($\hat{\beta} = -3.07$, 95% CrI=[-4.75,-1.79], $P(\hat{\beta}) < 0 = 1$) and an effect of faculty parity ($\hat{\beta} = 12.72$, 95% CrI=[-4.83,34.04], $P(\hat{\beta}) > 0 = .91$): the higher the prestige, the less the point médian is used compared to period, and and the higher the parity, the more it is used compared to period. There was also an interaction between parity and prestige ($\hat{\beta} = 21.75$, 95% CrI=[10.29,36.27], $P(\hat{\beta}) > 0 = 1$): the higher the prestige and the parity, the more the point médian is used compared to period.

As for parentheses relative to period, effects of prestige and of parity were found ($\hat{\beta} = 1.41$, 95% CrI=[0.79,2.17], $P(\hat{\beta}) > 0 = 1$ for prestige, $\hat{\beta} = -6.55$, 95% CrI=[-15.39,2.13], $P(\hat{\beta}) < 0 = .93$ for parity): the higher the prestige, the more the parentheses is used, and and the higher the parity, the less the parentheses is also used. An interaction between prestige and parity was found ($\hat{\beta} = -4.96$, 95% CrI=[-9.82,1.78], $P(\hat{\beta}) < 0 = .94$): the higher the prestige and the parity, the less parentheses is used compared to period.

When looking at hyphen, there was an effect of prestige ($\hat{\beta} = -0.39$, 95% CrI=[-0.97,0.15], $P(\hat{\beta}) < 0 = .93$) and an effect of parity ($\hat{\beta} = -16.40$, 95% CrI=[-25.05,-8.89], $P(\hat{\beta}) < 0 = 1$): the higher the prestige, the less hyphen is used compared to period, and the higher the parity, the less hyphen is used compared to period.

4.2.3 Discussion

The first main result of our study of the different forms of EI is the dominance of the point médian. Although we do find a wealth of forms, the interpunct is by far the most frequent variant used, being used almost twice as much as the next most frequent variant: the period. It is not the most widespread, however, since it is not found in Medicine. The period, on the other hand, is found across all academic domains. Given this, we consider the period to be to have the least marked, most neutral social meaning, which is why we chose it as the intercept in the statistical analysis.

Compared to the period, the point médian, the parenthesis and the hyphen all show social conditioning. As shown in Figure 13, the less prestigious and more activist a university is, the more they use the point médian compared to the period (and other forms). At the beginning of the paper, we argued that the public debates about the point médian in 2017 established this variant as the one that is the most detested by the government and the right wing media. It is possible that these conflicts imbued the point médian with a social meaning related to left wing, anti-government activism, and that this social meaning appeals to professors in more activist universities. Anti-government activism most likely does not appeal to professors working in male-dominated areas of prestigious universities. Figure 13 shows that, as with use of EI itself, male-dominated academic disciplines in prestigious universities avoid the point médian, compared to the period, and this effect is not as strong in less prestigious universities.

The form that is comparatively favoured by this group is the parenthesis, which is conditioned by prestige/activism and gender parity: the more prestigious and less activist a university is, the more faculty in it will use the parenthesis, compared to the period when they use EI. Likewise, the more male-dominated a discipline is, the more they will use the parenthesis. Abbou's study showed that anarchists associate the parenthesis with the French state and right wing politics, and the results of our study suggest that this variant has maintained this social meaning.

Finally, the hyphen is conditioned only by gender parity: the more female faculty members a department has, the less they will use the hyphen compared to the period. As first this seems strange, since the hyphen does not have any particular masculine associations, either in Abbou's study or in other discourses on *la féminisation* and *écriture inclusive*. However, it is important to keep in mind that the gender parity effect appears when we look within the occurrences of *écriture inclusive*. In other words, the hyphen is favoured, compared to the period, by male-dominated disciplines who actually use *écriture inclusive*. Of the academic disciplines who are regular users of EI in our corpus, some of the most male-dominated ones are sociology, anthropology and political science. As shown in Figure 12, these are the disciplines that favour the hyphen. Our corpus data alone cannot tell us why professors in these disciplines favour the hyphen; however, one possibility has to do with the history of the study of gender in these fields. In fact, much of the research on gender in the French university has been done by sociologists and political scientists, since French

academia has been very resistant to the formation of gender studies departments and programs (Fassin, 2008; Parini, 2010). Gender has been a major focus of work in French sociology since the 1970s, and this has not been the case in other areas. For example, the study of language and gender is a much more recent development in language and linguistics departments in France (Greco, 2014). Recall that the hyphen was the favoured forms of Abbou’s anarchists at the turn of the century, and its use in an activist university context does, indeed, appear to be much earlier than activist use of the point médian. For example, the hyphen is also the favoured form of early guidelines (1991-1992) for inclusive writing produced by the feminist division of the faculty union at the Université du Québec à Montréal (*Syndicat des professeurs et professeures de l’Université du Québec à Montréal*²⁰). In other words, we hypothesize that the hyphen is an older form, but, rather than being the older, conservative form like the parenthesis, the hyphen is the older activist form. If sociologists, anthropologists and political scientists had already been widely using écriture inclusive before the recent rise of the point médian, they would have less incentive to switch after 2017, since the radical social meaning of the hyphen persists. So again, we suggest that the patterns of use of EI are best understood as arising from the political dimensions of the academic culture in which the writers in our corpus work.

5 Conclusion

This paper presented a quantitative corpus study of écriture inclusive with the word *étudiant* ‘student’ in undergraduate brochures in 12 Parisian universities. We showed that, in 2019, there exists an enormous amount of variation both the presence/absence of EI and the forms that are employed. We argued, however, that this variation is not random: we showed that it is conditioned by gender parity in academic disciplines and by ideological concepts such as prestige and left wing activism. We suggested that the patterns that we found arise from a combination of the social meanings associated with “generic” masculines and the different forms of écriture inclusive and the specific academic cultures in which the writers of the brochures are working and socializing. Our quantitative results suggest that the aspects of academic culture that are relevant for EI involve the university one is in (more vs less prestigious) and the discipline one practices (more vs less male-dominated; sociology/anthropology/political science vs others). We hypothesize that different academic cultures have different histories and different values, and this affects how they use EI construct their institutional identity.

If our hypotheses are correct, then our paper has a number of implications for language policy and practices addressing gender inequality. At the time of writing, we are in the middle of an explosion of verbal hygiene related to écriture inclusive: the internet and bookstores abound with instructions about how and why to properly use EI²¹, courses to

²⁰https://spuq.uqam.ca/documents/x_documents/463_spuq-info_307.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1xtenYidVIIfItZj2lHZK9DQcHKc2zHRMG8jL3R30geeiVSsRLUlxu4cE

²¹See, for example, <https://www.egalite-femmes-hommes.gouv.fr/initiative/>

take to improve one's EI²², and even guides for how to get one's computer to produce the point médian²³. We believe our study shows that “mastery” of écriture inclusive goes beyond knowing how to properly form an expression combining words like *locuteur* and *locutrice* with the interpunct, but also involves grasping the social meanings associated with the different forms and understanding how they will contribute to the construction of one's own identity and the “image” of one's institution.

The results of our quantitative corpus study also open the door to a number of new studies of EI, using different methodologies. Large quantitative corpus studies such as ours are extremely useful for identifying subtle but reliable socially driven patterns of language use. However, a corpus study alone does not provide the kind of data that can verify or falsify our proposals about the social meanings of EI and the aspects of academic culture that they interact with. We therefore believe that our corpus study provides the groundwork for follow up research in two domains: qualitative interviews which would try to get a deeper understanding of academic culture and EI's place in it, and social perception experiments studying the linguistic conditions under which readers' inferences about the political orientations of users of EI. The social perception experiments will be particularly useful for the study of the “generic” masculines, since these masculines actually constitute the vast majority of noun phrases with intended gender neutral reference in our corpus. Recall that the highest rate of EI that we found in a university was only around 30%. We therefore consider our study to be the first step in a broader investigation of the linguistic and political dimensions of écriture inclusive, and the place of this linguistic practice in francophone activism and social life.

Appendix

Measuring prestige

In studies of the relationship between university prestige and other outcomes or behavior (see for example Cyrenne and Grant, 2009, among others), prestige is often measured through university rankings, such as the Shanghai rankings, the Times Higher Education rankings, or Macleans' magazine rankings (for Canada). However, because of how the French university system is organized, the criteria through which such rankings are constructed often yields counter intuitive results when applied to France (see also De Mesnard, 2012). For example, only 5 of our 12 Parisian universities even feature on the Shanghai

manuel-decriture-inclusive/, <https://lessalopettes.wordpress.com/2017/09/27/petit-guide-pratique-de-lecriture-inclusive/>, among many many others.

²²See <https://www.cfpj.com/formation/utiliser-l-écriture-inclusive>, <https://www.apcltech.com/formation-decouvrez-lecriture-inclusive/>, among many others.

²³<https://rebellyon.info/Comment-taper-facilement-le-point-median-16767>, <https://les-raccourcis-clavier.fr/point-median-milieu-écriture-inclusive/>, among many others

rankings²⁴. So these cannot be what we use to measure prestige in our corpus study.

We therefore adopt three different measures of university prestige to test the hypothesis that this property conditions use of EI. Our first measure, which taps into material conditions, is **budget**: based on the universities' respective Wikipedia sites, we recorded the budget (in euros) allocated per student by university (making no distinction by field). Our second measure, which taps into intellectual prestige, is the **IUF**: we recorded how many faculty members belonging to the prestigious *Institut Universitaire de France*²⁵ worked at each university in our study. Our third measure comes from the Ibex survey described in the paper.

Measuring left wing activism

In order to measure left wing activist and anti-governmental stances, we took into account three measures. The first one builds on the hypothesis that the Parcoursup protests are important for EI: for each university, we recorded the number of days that it was blockaded during the strikes in 2018²⁶. Although this measure allows us to assess the relationship between Parcoursup and EI, it is not ideal: it only makes distinctions between universities, not departments. Furthermore, it doesn't distinguish between universities that were never blockaded, which is almost half our sample. We therefore decided to include another measure of anti-Macron government activism: data from a publicly circulated petition expressing opposition to the 2020 *la Loi de Programmation Pluriannuelle de la Recherche* (LPPR). The LPPR is a law (not yet passed at the time of writing) which promises to greatly restructure the French research system by, among other things, increasing competition among researchers and universities for funding²⁷. In January 2020, a petition circulated widely in French academia whose signatories, who indicated both their university and their discipline, state that they plan to resign from their administrative duties, should the LPPR be adopted. The petition expresses as much of an anti-institutional and anti-government stance as it is possible in the university: those who sign it are proposing to remove themselves from the aspects of their jobs that make the institution run. Because both university and department information are available, it allows us to observe how anti-institutional stances vary both across institutions and academic disciplines; therefore, the LPPR measure is more complete than the Parcoursup one.

This being said, the LPPR petition deals with a very specific issue which means that it does not represent a general culture of activism in the university, which, as discussed above, may actually be what is conditioning EI. We therefore constructed another measure based on French speakers' commonsense notion of activism 'militant' through the experiment set up on Ibex, discussed in the paper.

²⁴<http://www.shanghairanking.com/ARWU2019.html>

²⁵<http://www.iufrance.fr/>

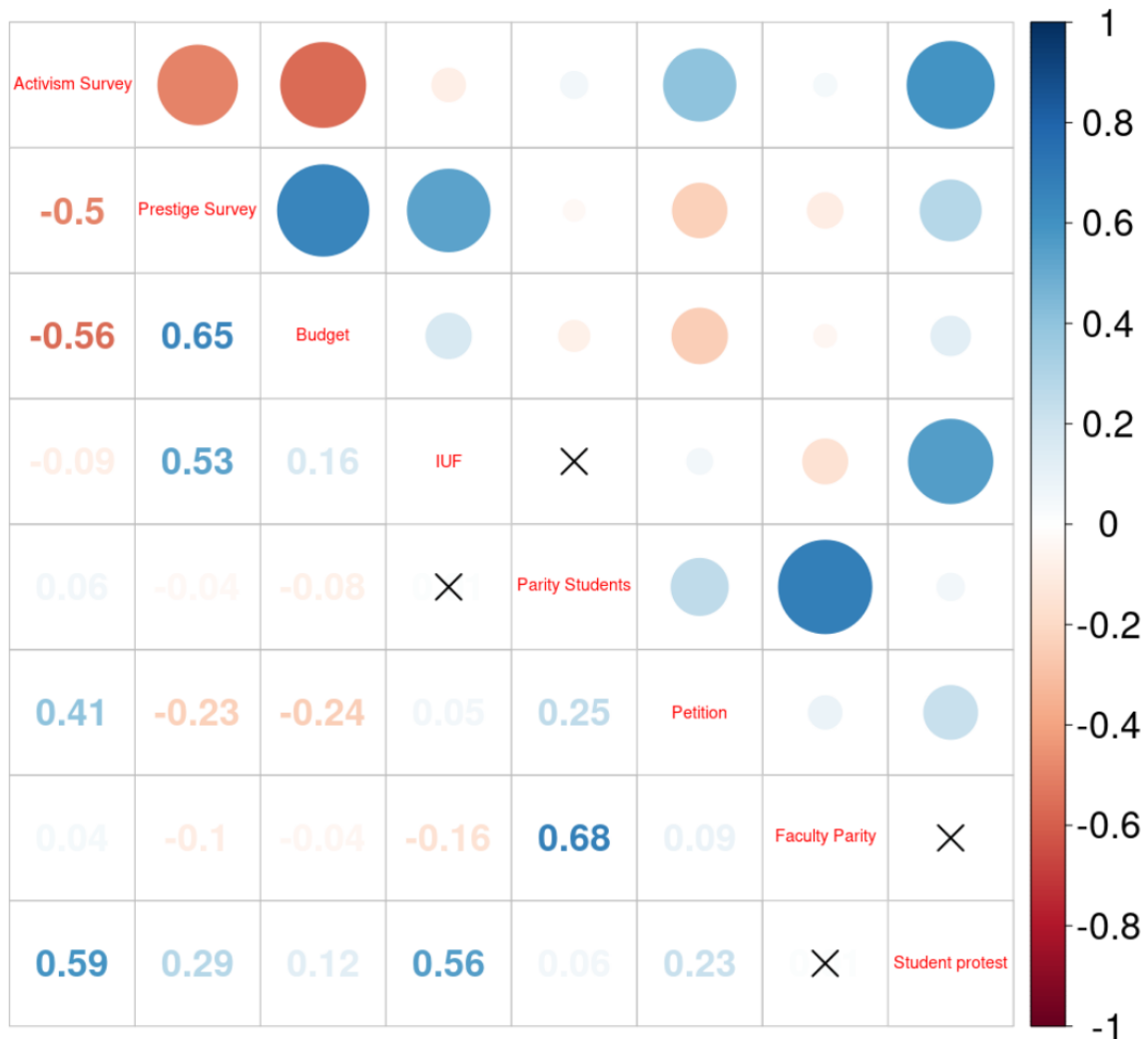
²⁶According to <https://www.liberation.fr/apps/2018/03/universite-facs-mobilisees/>

²⁷https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2019/12/18/antoine-petit-nous-avons-un-imperieux-besoin-d-u-6023322_3232.html

Correlations of all independent variables

In our corpus study, we want to test a number of different measures aiming to test hypothesis related to three dimensions: gender parity, prestige and (anti-government) activism. However, in the statistical analysis, we cannot include variables that are highly correlated. We therefore tested for correlations between all the available variables using the Hmisc and corrplot packages (Harrell Jr et al., 2020; Wei and Simko, 2017). Figure 14 shows these correlations.

Figure 14 – Correlations between all variables measuring parity, prestige and activism



A secondary (non-linguistic) result of our paper is that a large number of our variables are correlated. As discussed in the body of the paper, student and faculty gender parity are positively correlated.

Our three measures of prestige are also correlated. As shown in Figure 14, there are positive

correlations between commonsense *prestige* and both university budget (0.65) and number of IUF faculty (0.53): the higher university budget/more IUF professors they have, the more prestigious our participants think the universities are. Since our commonsense measure captures both material and ideological aspects of university prestige, and it covers all our universities, we used this measure in the statistical analysis.

Figure 14 likewise shows that our three measures of activism are positively correlated: commonsense activism is positively correlated with number of days of blockade during the *Parcoursup* protests (0.59), as well as signatories of the anti-LPPR petition (0.41). However, more interestingly, the correlation tests show that our measures of prestige and those of activism are also strongly negatively correlated: the more participants considered a university to be militant, the less they considered it prestigious (-0.5), the smaller its budget (-0.56) and the more its professors have an anti-government stance (-0.23). Thus, the dimensions of prestige and activism that we thought were separate when we formulated our hypotheses turn out to be intimately linked such that they are almost mirror images of each other. We will therefore take commonsense prestige to represent both university prestige and university activism in the statistical analysis.

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