

Swiss French Settlers of Shabo: Several Generations of Language Use**Elena Simonato**
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The present article considers the use of Heritage French of Swiss Shabo settlers across four generations, from the 1920s to the 2010s. The research is based on data collected by Soviet scholars in the 1920s, in the 1950s, and those collected in 2018–2019 from informants who are among the last descendants of Swiss Shabo settlers.

The present article has two goals. First, it addresses some phonological, morphological and syntactic properties of the Heritage French variety used by Swiss settlers and demonstrates the changes it underwent due to its contact with Russian. Second, it examines the role of the Shabo Heritage French affective dimension as the factor explaining its maintenance despite geographical distance and political rupture. Finally, the article attempts to show how the sociocultural dimension of a heritage language (He, 2010, p. 66) impacted its maintenance over four generations.

The results indicate that changes that this Heritage French underwent are, in phonology, vowel reduction and consonant assimilation, in morphology, morphological construction calques from Russian and, in syntax, a tendency to build sentences following the Russian rules of syntax. The results show that Shabo Swiss settlers' connections to their heritage language seem to have been strong, since they consider their heritage language as part of their cultural heritage.

Several additional perspectives are addressed that focus on the sociolinguistic situation as impacted by political circumstances. Implications for the discipline of heritage language scholarship are also discussed.

KEYWORDS: *French heritage speakers; heritage languages; language contact*

INTRODUCTION

For more than one hundred years, from 1822 to the 1960s, French was spoken in a Swiss colony called Shabo (sometimes spelled as Chabag, Schabo, Chabo, Chaba), situated on the Black Sea coast near Odessa, by the descendants of Swiss immigrants from the canton of Vaud. Nearly all French-speaking settlers left Shabo after 1940. In the 2010s, French was still spoken by several elderly people who left Shabo and re-emigrated to Switzerland, Germany and the United States. Other descendants of Shabo Swiss settlers have lost it, and its status should be defined as “dormant” and close to “extinct” (Lewis & Simons, 2010).

Shabo was a unique Swiss French-speaking colony of the former Russian Empire and one of the biggest Swiss colonies worldwide. One thousand people lived there before the Second World War. Several small French-speaking villages founded by French and Swiss people who had settled on the Volga river during the reign of Catherine the Great (1762–1796) did not last more than one or two generations. The Swiss settlers of Shabo, however, managed to maintain their village, develop a successful wine industry and preserve their Swiss culture and language for about 120 years, until World War II. In the history of Swiss emigration, the case of the Swiss winemakers from Vaud is one of the most prominent. Emigration from Switzerland to Russia during the first half of the 19th century has been the subject of a few scholarly studies,

mostly concerning Swiss-Germans. These studies have mainly been based on historical documents and family stories. Apart from these works, no academic investigation could be identified aiming to provide a systematic overview of the language practices of Swiss settlers. Study of these settlers include classic works by the team headed by C. Goehrke (Bühler et al., 1985) and a vast literature based on documents from family archives.

My article aims at analyzing the language use of four generations of Heritage French-speaking Swiss settlers of Shabo throughout the 20th century. The article is organized as follows. Section 1 introduces the topic of a French variety (French mixed with French dialect or “patois”) as a heritage language in Shabo and outlines the research questions. After providing historical facts on the Swiss French-speaking immigration to Russia in Section 2, I discuss some macrolinguistic aspects of the situation in Shabo. Section 3 presents a general overview of language practices of four generations of heritage French speakers in Shabo. This section offers some comments on the empirical data and focuses on the interconnections among various factors affecting language policy in Shabo and how subsequent processes of language loss and maintenance were influenced. The conclusion summarizes the results and highlights their significance in a more general perspective.

1. THE PRESENT STUDY

1.1 Aims and Research Questions

The aim of the article is to follow the use of the Heritage French by four generations of Swiss Shabo settlers during the 20th century. It constitutes a contribution to heritage language studies because it examines a heritage community that maintained their variety despite sociohistorical rupture.

Little attention has been given to the ways in which rupture affects language maintenance, even if some general conclusions on the links between identity, language ideological issues, and HL, as discussed by Jaffe (2015a) and Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992), focused on the nexus between language, gender and social practice.

This article seeks to develop this perspective through an attempt to follow the use of a heritage language variety within a community, based on linguistic, historical and sociolinguistic data from written and oral sources. Although practically all community documents were destroyed by fire during the Second World War, the study was possible thanks to private the archives of settlers and linguists.

As will be shown, French-speaking settlers of the Swiss colony of Shabo demonstrate significant variation in their French proficiency. The term “Heritage French” or *heritage variety* may be used to denote that speakers have some proficiency due to, exposure to French during childhood both in the family and at school. Beginning from the second generation of Shabo settlers born in Shabo in the 1820s–1830s, every generation’s French variety can qualify as HL following Montrul’s (2015) definition: “Heritage speakers are child or adult members of a linguistic minority who grow up exposed to their home language—the HL—and the majority official language spoken and used in the broader speech community” (p. 2). By the third and the fourth generations examined here, most of the Shabo community fits into the “broad” rather than the “narrow” definition of HL speakers (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007), because they commonly used Russian in their everyday communication and their Shabo Heritage French use was limited to interactions with family members. These people could be defined as a “metalinguistic community” following the model of Avineri (2012): a diverse group of

participants who experience a strong connection to a language and its speakers but may lack familiarity with them due to historical, personal and/or communal circumstances.

The study addresses the following research questions:

- 1) How widespread was the use of Heritage French in the colony of Shabo, especially by generations 1, 2, 3, 4, and in which contexts did they use it?
- 2) How do the linguistic properties of Heritage French differ from the linguistic properties of modern standard French, due to the community members' contact with Russian?
- 3) The current work focuses on the factors that affected Shabo residents' and descendants' HF (Heritage French), which include language contact, but also to investigate aspects of HF language use with particular emphasis on attitudes towards this language and Swiss identity.

The current status of HF of Swiss Shabo settlers, dormant and nearly extinct, is due to a series of events that occurred in the 20th century. These events include World War II, during which Shabo Swiss settlers were sent to Hitler's camps, their return to Switzerland but without the possibility of staying together, their emigration to Germany and the U.S., and assimilation. The number of HF speakers has greatly diminished since 1940. Its last speakers are between 80 and 100 years old and do not use HF as their language of communication. Only one older member was sufficiently conversant in the language to produce whole sentences, while the others only used HF loanwords learned from their parents and grandparents.

To understand heritage language situations, linguists need to understand their the entire ecology, as seen from both social and diachronic perspectives (Brown & Bousquette, 2018, p. 202). This requirement particularly applies to the Shabo Swiss settlers. The community's political landscape affected its destiny and also explains difficulties the researcher faces while researching this topic, including the small quantity of data available today.

The study employs a mixed methodology, including written sources from various time periods, analyses of survey materials collected by linguists in the 1920s and 1950s, and observations. The difficulties gaining access and collecting data shaped the methods that could be employed. Studies have found that the combination of different methods might be fruitful and complementary since they shed light on different aspects of the same phenomenon (Mullany, 2008; Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007).

Quantitative analysis was adopted to analyze the linguistic characteristics of the Shabo Swiss settlers up to the 1920s–1930s (the first generation). Written documents produced within the community, including diaries and private letters in their heritage French, as well as data from indirect sources such as accounts by journalists visiting Shabo, contributed to an understanding of the ways French was used and transmitted in Shabo. Historical archival sources and community materials were used document the community's language use until the rupture in transmission occurred.

A mixed method consisting of a combination of analysis of a previous field study conducted in the 1920s and one in 1930s as well as my own analysis of written sources, was employed for the data pertaining to the first generation of HF speakers. The total number of informants was several dozen, and written data on both fieldwork research projects are available, including transcripts of their utterances, as well as one short recorded interview and two long diaries. Secondary sources, such as quotations and examples of the Shabo French by non-linguists visiting Shabo are also available. A similar combination of methods was used for an analysis

of 2nd generation speakers' language use. Materials from a linguistic survey conducted in the 1950s consisting in face-to-face interviews and participant observations were used, as were secondary sources. Transcripts of several interviews with all members of one family of Swiss settlers living in Shabo were also used. A mixed method combining direct and indirect data-gathering methods (Angouri, 2018, p. 36) was used to characterize HF use among the fourth generation of HF speakers. Recordings were made of one long interview in 2014 in the U.S., three short interviews in Lausanne in 1992, in 2018 and in 2019, and a series of interviews among the descendants of Swiss Shabo settlers in Germany in 2018.

2. THE FRENCH OF THE SWISS SETTLERS OF SHABO

2.1. Sociopolitical Situation in Shabo

As mentioned earlier, during the years of Catherine the Great, several expatriate communities from France and Germany were formed by refugees, most prominently in the Volga region, where local authorities encouraged their immigration. They also invited Swiss engineers and mathematicians, tradesmen and teachers, missionaries and officers, and cheese- and watchmakers to settle in Russia. The agrarian emigration, mainly to Crimea, began after the Russo-Turkish wars (1787-1792). The first Swiss agrarian colony, called Zürichtal, was founded by settlers from the canton of Zurich in 1805 near Sevastopol (see Appendix). It existed until 1937, when the German population was forced to move to Siberia and Kazakhstan.

The colony of Shabo owed its existence to unusual historical circumstances. Tsar Alexander I, influenced by his tutor Frederic César De La Harpe (1754–1838), who was from the canton of Vaud, signed a decree allowing Swiss winemakers to settle in Shabo, in order to develop wine production in the area, prompting Swiss French-speaking settlers from the canton of Vaud to move to the Odessa region. They were predominantly from an area called Lavaux, at the time a rather poor region of Switzerland. In 1820, Louis-Vincent Tardent (1878–1836) from the Swiss city of Vevey, obtained permission to found a Swiss colony which will be called Shabo. In 1822, 15 families of Vaud winegrowers with their numerous children answered Tardent's call and started their way across Switzerland, Bavaria, Austria and Poland (Grivat, 1993; Shishmarev, 1975). They named the colony Chabag, since the existing village was called "Asha-Abag" (meaning "Lower gardens" in Turkish). The name was soon written and pronounced Shabo (also spelled as Chabo, Chaba, or Schabo). An imperial *ukaz* [decree] granted them 16,200 hectares of land, including 170 vineyards, abandoned by the Turks after the Russians had conquered the region. However, encouraging Swiss to settle in a distant and unknown country like Russia required special incentives. For this reason, the decree granted them freedom of faith, trade and exemption from military service. Historical documents show that the Swiss had a good reputation in Russia as hard and honest workers, who would bring knowledge and wine growing skills to the area.

2.2. Dynamics of Language Use between 1822 and 1918

The overall period of French use in Shabo falls into at least three stages: before 1918, from 1918 to the 1960s, and after the 1960s. One historian called Shabo "miniature Switzerland," because of its ethnic structure. Two communities coexisted in the colony. In 1840, despite protests of the Swiss French settlers ("Romands"), the Russian government allowed the settlement of forty German and Swiss-German families. These two communities never lived together, only "side by side." German-speaking settlers had more contact with neighboring German villages, where there was a primary school and a high school. French-speaking colonists dominated numerically. They spoke only French within the colony, and Shabo was mentioned in all statistical documents as a "French colony."

My first research question was: How widespread was the use of Heritage French in the colony of Shabo? It seems particularly true in the case of Shabo that the social context of heritage languages as minority languages is necessary for an understanding of the limited social domains where heritage languages may be acquired, used, and maintained (Rothman, 2009, p. 165). Three relevant social spaces that contributed to the linguistic experience of Swiss French-speaking settlers in Shabo, based on historical sources, can be identified: 1) everyday social interactions in the community; 2) schooling and church activities, and 3) cultural associations. Each social space played a key role in the way people interacted and identified with each other.

Swiss-French settlers had initially settled down with their families with the intention of establishing a Swiss community (Deloës, 1846, p. 21). Single people were not allowed to settle in the colony; they were required to marry a Swiss person living there or a person from a neighboring German colony. All Swiss people lived together in the same neighborhood and were able to marry within their ethnic group. As will be shown, French was better maintained in families of Swiss settlers than it was in mixed families. Moreover, similar to some other communities (Gal, 1978), women would transmit French more easily than men.

The second relevant fact to point out is that the Swiss lived separately from the local Russian–Ukrainian population. Russian and Ukrainian workers and peasants, who had left their lands to Swiss settlers and moved away, lived outside the colony in the nearest village called Posad. Swiss and Russian (the term used by Shabo settlers for all habitants of the Russian empire speaking Russian) communities never lived in the same village due to their differing ways of life, habits, cuisine and routine. That is why these communities did not communicate outside work. Until 1860, serfdom existed in Russia but Swiss settlers, who were not used to slavery, preferred to use servant labor. Thus, they employed Russians and other local people, such as Moldavians, in their vineyards or plantations. Intercommunity marriages were nonexistent. The Swiss even spoke French and their local dialect (“patois”; see below) to their Russian workers.

The Swiss colonists impacted the lives of the local people and developed a friendly relationship with German colonists who had already settled in the region. Dulamangiu (1939) indicated that before the 1930s, Shabo settlers had little contact with other communities.

In the 1830s, Shabo colonists built a school. First, they enrolled a colony member to teach their children to read and write French. However, the colonists sent many requests to their villages in Switzerland for a proper tutor, resulting in the arrival of the priest Bugnion. He organized both church and school activities. According to Bugnion, in the 1840s, out of fifty families, only five asked for German classes for their children (See Deloës, 1845, p. 89), and the rest spoke French

In the letters that Bugnion wrote to Deloës, a fellow priest (1846), based in Chexbres, Switzerland, he describes the second generation of Shabo settlers, born in Shabo during the 1820s and 1830s, for whom school and church activities kept them close to their Swiss origins. As in other Swiss colonies, such as Zurichthal, priests, who usually came directly from Switzerland, were the only immediate contact with any Swiss cultural heritage, both in terms of their mother tongue and folklore, history and cultural references. Settlers’ private documents including letters diaries, and registered interviews reveal that the Swiss built their houses in the

same style as in Switzerland, visited their relatives in Switzerland, and maintained correspondence with them.

Shabo settlers used French to communicate with Russian authorities. “Nous ne soussignons que ce qui est écrit en français” [We will only sign that which is written in French¹], the settlers declared in one letter (Anselme, 1925, p. 62). Only after 1870, when Shabo was subordinated to the central authorities and correspondence was carried out in Russian, were the Swiss required to communicate in Russian and accept Russian classes at school.

Finally, by the beginning of the 20th century, the German-speaking population in the Odessa (Ukraine) region began to diminish following the expropriation laws of 1914. Many German-speaking settlers left Russia while others acquired Romanian citizenship to keep their land. Because it is difficult to acquire statistical information on the nationality of the Shabo settlers, my analysis will strictly follow the issue of mother tongue (French or German) as a marker of ethnic identity.

3. THE USE OF HERITAGE FRENCH IN SHABO DURING THE FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

The reason for starting with this generation for a more complex analysis is twofold. First, the earliest linguistic survey carried out in Shabo was in the late 1920s. Second, ethnologists, historians and linguists who visited Shabo before 1918, agreed in that the most prosperous period of the colony’s existence had ended by the 1920s. Indeed, for various historical periods of the 20th century including the First and Second World War, national boundaries were redrawn such that Shabo belonged to several states. It belonged to the Russian Empire until 1918, to the Romanian Kingdom from 1918 to 1940, to the Soviet Union from October 1940 to April 1941, to the Third Reich from April 1941 to June 1944, and then again to the Soviet Union. Each of these periods results in political, economic, and social changes in the colony’s life. These sociopolitical upheavals allow us to see how members of a heritage language community maintain their language even when schooling was conducted in Russian or when Shabo Swiss were in the Hitler’s “*Volksdeutsche*” camps.

3.1 Heritage French of the Swiss Settlers: Generation 1, 1920s-1930s

The first linguistic survey of Shabo was carried out in 1927–1929 by the Soviet linguist Vladimir Shishmarev (1874–1957) as a part of research on Romance-speaking communities of the Southern Soviet Union. Shishmarev’s research is based on the colony documents that were destroyed by fire during the war, as well as his own data, which include oral and written interviews with people of Swiss descent. He discussed the historical background of the language contact situation, the demographics, and the economic and language policy events that impacted life in Shabo. Shishmarev also described the domains of French language use in communities, characterizing them from the perspective of language maintenance versus language shift. His second contribution is a set of transcripts of utterances produced by Swiss settlers in their Heritage French variety, which are of high importance for the present study. As Polinsky and Scontras (2019, p. 5) remind us “The input language is likely to deviate, so changes present in the HL might already have been presented in the input from which the HL was learned by our 1st generation HF speakers.” Shishmarev’s transcripts help us to understand some features of the French spoken in Shabo to which the next generations’ use will be compared.

The issue of dialect variation is also worth a note here since it will help establish the baseline of the 1st generation settlers-HF speakers. The corpus study of written sources conducted within the project allows us to affirm that in Shabo, the baseline language of the 1st generation settlers-HF speakers was a diasporic variety, similar to the French spoken in the rural areas of the canton of Vaud (French mixed with patois, varieties of Franco-Provençal, of the canton of Vaud, namely the region comprising of the villages Rivaz, Ormonts, and Vevey (Bichurina 2019, 2020)). Standard French has dialect variation, most generally along the natural boundary of the Alps, but distinct dialects are also recognized on a smaller regional scale. While Germans and Swiss-Germans who settled in Shabo were from various regions and brought dialectal variations, all the Swiss French settlers came from the same region. Therefore, to establish their baseline language, we should make our comparisons with the French spoken in Switzerland. Bugnion, who spoke both French and patois, but was not a philologist, was able to distinguish between the two languages. He attested: “Swiss-French speak ‘patois romand’ within the colony and outside, in society when they need to say something they do not want to be understood by others.” In current terminology, we can qualify the situation as “diglossia” (Ferguson, 1959). Since there was no school in the colony during the its initial years of existence, the children born in Shabo, or who arrived very young, were never exposed to standard French. After a school was established, they were taught only standard French and spoke HF at home.

According to Shishmarev (1975), the linguistic competence of Swiss settlers HF speakers can be represented as a continuum, with varied proficiencies and a range of cultural ties to the language. His informants include people born in the 1900s, who never learned French at school, and the generation that attended school in French in the 1920s-1930s who had at least four years schooling in French. Shishmarev confirms the role of schooling in French and cultural associations such as Alliance Française for the maintenance of French by the younger generation. The generation of the 1920s experienced what Shishmarev called “linguistic reaction”, when after decades of Russification, the use of French was encouraged at school and through cultural associations. In the same vein, the research by Romanian linguist V. Dulamangiu, published in 1939, addresses the use of French in Shabo and adds some comparisons with standard French.

Examples from Shishmarev and Dulamangiu allow us to see that the linguistic properties of the HF spoken by this first generation differ from those of standard French, and to discuss whether transfer from Russian provides a plausible explanation. Their examples are based upon both the oral and written performance of the HF speakers. Written data come from letters of a Swiss Shabo settler from the same period, and their conclusions result from their analyses of both kinds of data.

a) Phonemic Issues

1) French orthography uses the acute accent ‘é’ to denote the closed vowel [e], while the combination ‘ett’ for open [ɛ]. The phonemic opposition /e/ vs. /ɛ/ is disappearing from HF, becoming reduced to the single phoneme /ɛ/. For instance, settlers used to write as they heard, for example:

- (1) *réssemble* (pronounced [e]) – instead of “ressemble” (“to look like”)
- (2) *en s’informant si nous n’étions pas de parents* (sounds as [ɛ]) – instead of “des parents” (“inquiring if we were relatives”)
- (3) *J’ai des vieux papiers* (pronounced [e]) – instead of “de vieux papiers” (“I have old documents”)

(4) *completter* (pronounced [ɛ]) – instead of “compléter” (‘to complete’)

This phenomenon does not result from Russian’s influence on Heritage French. Most probably, it is due to the simplification of the Standard French or the Franco-Provençal phonemic systems, both of which have two phonemes.

Other features resulted from the influence of Russian:

2) the opposition between /r/ and /R/ is lost, leading to the systematic replacement of the French sound /R/ (pronounced in the throat) by the Russian /r/ (rolled with the tip of the tongue).

This phenomenon constitutes one of the most striking phonetic features of Shabo Heritage French and is still perceived as a mark of this Heritage French pronunciation.

3) Loanwords taken into HF follow the phonemic patterns already determined by native words. For example, the borrowed Russian word “vedro” (‘bucket’), in which, in Standard Russian pronunciation, the first vowel is pronounced as [ĭ] (short i), is also pronounced as [i] in HF.

b) Syntax

Shishmarev and Dulamangiu also comment on HF’s morphosyntactic properties. Word order in the examples they provide follows the patterns of the Russian language; namely, the HF word order is more flexible:

(5) *Sur l’origine des parents de papa je ne puis pas vous dire grand-chose.* word order: On the origin of my father’s parents I can’t say much, patterning Russian word order (Russian *O proisxoždenii roditelej papy ja vam ne mogu mnogo skazat’*, [on the origin of my father’s parents I can’t tell you much.])

(Standard French: “*Je ne puis pas vous dire grand-chose sur l’origine des parents de papa*” (I can’t say much on the origin of my father).)

Word order in French and Franco-Provençal differs from Russian: In declarative clauses French has the order SPO, whereas in Russian the ordering of constituents is dependent almost exclusively on requirements of information structure. This leads to a greater variation regarding word placement in Russian: the phrase-initial “sur...” is one of the possible options, whereas in French it is ungrammatical. Thus, transfer from Russian here results in a less fixed position in HF, pragmatically marked.

The use of the conjunctions attested in the following examples is typical for Russian:

(6) ...il est perdu de rhumatismes sa pauvre femme aussi n’a pas de santé. (instead of “non plus”), (Russian *U nego revmatizm i ego bednjažka žena tože nezdorova*, ‘He suffers from rheumatism, and his poor wife is also unwell’)

(7) HF speakers replicate patterns of adjective–noun order from their dominant language, Russian. Although most adjectives follow the noun in French, these HF speakers placed their adjectives in front of the noun:

(8) *Poste ça au grenier à une propre place.* (instead of *Poste ça au grenier à une place propre*). (in Russian, *Otnesi na čerdak na čistoe mesto*, ‘Put it the cellar at a clean place’)

(9) *Donnez-moi le noir habit* (instead of *Donnez-moi l'habit noir*).
(in Russian, *Daj mne čěrnjy kostjum*, 'Give me the black suit')

c) Lexicon

Lexical deviations from baseline French can be found at a single- and multi-word level, which could be divided further into transfer-based structures and novel creations, showing that the latter are used by heritage speakers.

1) Transfer-based structures from Russian

(10) *le cousin résssemble beaucoup à un mien cousin, enfant du frère mineur à papa*. (The cousin is similar very much to a cousin on mine, the child of the brother younger my fathers')
(Standard French: *Le cousin ressemble beaucoup à un cousin à moi, enfant du frère cadet à papa*.)

In Russian, one would write "*Kuzen poxož na odnogo moego kuzena, mladšego brata moego papy*", 'The cousin is very similar to a cousin of mine, the younger brother of my father'.

2) Transfer-based words from "patois," which Dulamangiu refers as archaic and dialect forms. Dulamangiu's approach is that of a dialectologist: detecting expressions he refers as "old expressions of the canton of Vaud" and assessing whether they are still in use in the homeland during that period by finding them in the *Glossaire des patois de la Suisse Romande* (Vocabulary of varieties spoken in the French-speaking Switzerland) (Gauchat, Jeanjaquet, Tappolet, & Muret, 1924–1933) and in Jules Gilliéron's *Linguistic Atlas of France* (1902–1910).

To recapitulate, we can see that Dulamangiu discerns patois in the Shabos' language that are mostly used in a family setting and are related to peasant life. Examples are listed here with a standard French synonym.

- (11) [*guverne*] = *soigner le bétail* ('to take care of livestock')
- (12) [*kote*] (*la porte*) = *fermer la porte* ('to close the door')
- (13) [*depatanal'e*] = *mal vêtu (vêtu négligemment)* ('poorly dressed')
- (14) [*emode*] = *commencer* ('to begin')
- (15) [*gãdëz*] = *choses peu vraisemblables* ('amazing things')
- (16) [*lefe*] = *nourriture pour le bétail* ('feed for livestock')

Nearly all of lexemes that Dulamangiu lists are home words.

Heritage language scholars have discussed the role of both quality and quantity of the input from which HL was acquired. It should be stressed that the quality of input, understood as "the richness of the language the child is exposed [to] in terms of diversity and complexity of structures and vocabulary" (Montrul, 2015, p. 118), was highest in this first generation compared to the following three generations. The quantity of the input, the percentage of time the HL was used in leisure activities, but afterwards just within the families was very high as well. This generation of HF speakers was the last one to use French in different spheres of life: in both the immediate family and the school context.

On the basis of our classification of HF examples, the following can be stated:

– For many aspects, the HF of the Shabo settlers fits the case analyzed by other scholars of HL. According to Montrul (2015, p. 118), when input is not optimal in quantity, many heritage speakers exhibit acquisition without mastery of several aspects of their heritage grammars.

- It can be argued that the HF of this generation followed a pathway representing an example of “incomplete acquisition.”
- At least two factors can be identified that affect the language development of heritage speakers in Shabo: changes in the input and political circumstances.

Indirect sources confirm that political circumstances and the language policy of the Romanian Kingdom helped foster HF maintenance in Shabo between 1918 and 1940. Annexation of Bessarabia, region where Shabo was situated, was followed by a period of what Shishmarev called “linguistic reaction.” Due to the favorable attitude of Romanian authorities towards Swiss settlers, a cultural association was created in Shabo, and some years later, the Alliance Française (French Alliance for the Promotion of French Abroad) opened a branch. The Swiss Consulate located in Galati started distributing Swiss newspapers, and settlers started editing an almanac. Two apparently opposing processes were occurring. On the one hand, the amount of input from the heritage community was dwindling, since many HF speakers were becoming bilingual even in Romanian. On the other hand, the quality of input was increasing: it came both from family/community (HF) and from school, where children were taught standard French.

We must question whether Dulamangiu (1939, p. 222) was right when he stated that “French has replaced the original dialect spoken in Vaud, only some expressions of that dialect are being used today.” Indeed, Dulamangiu defends a normative point of view of the languages by presuming that Swiss settlers spoke patois in their home country and that they lost it afterwards. Following his thesis we would not have been able to identify the evolution of the Swiss settler’s language properly. We can state that to the contrary, Shabo settlers have always spoken French mixed with patois. In his research, Dulamangiu did not cite entire sentences in this mixed variety; he only lists patois words or expressions employed within a HF sentence. Here are some of them, in HF, the corresponding word in French and in English:

- (17) *guverne* = *soigner le bétail* ‘take care of livestock’
- (18) *kote (la porte)* = *fermer la porte* ‘to close the door’
- (19) *dir de gãdz* = *dire des choses peu vraisemblables* ‘to say amazing things’
- (20) *le portze* = *petit cochon* ‘a piglet’

The examples that Dulamangiu quoted are those of code-switching, which was probably practiced for a long time in Shabo. Even the first settlers, in the 1820s, would speak patois when they did not want to be understood, as attested in Bugnion’s book (1846):

Le patois romand ; il est employé à Chabag par les Suisses français; ils se servent de ce dialecte national dans la colonie, et au dehors, en société, s’ils veulent dire quelque chose qui ne doit être compris que par eux.
[The patois is used in Shabo by Swiss French people; they use their national dialect within the colony and outside it when they do not want to be understood by other people.]

The HF of Shabo settlers of this 1st generation can be considered a mixed variety, as it was influenced both by Franco-Provençal and Russian. The case of spoken =French-Russian hybrids has never studied before, although several relevant studies were dedicated to Corsican (Jaffe 2015b, who described Corsican speakers who both claim and produce mixed codes as participants in a Corsican-speaking world).

Related to hybridity is the question of incomplete transmission scenarios. “The pathways to heritage speakerhood vary quite widely. Similarly diverse is the range of abilities that result” (Scontras, Fuchs, Polinsky, 2015, p. 3). While both Shishmarev and Dulamangiu address incomplete acquisition, they focus less on the acquisition scenarios. The following common features of all speakers’ pathways can be listed:

- 1) acquisition of HF from family: diasporic variety
- 2) acquisition of French at school: standard French
- 3) the main impact on HF came from Russian

Loanwords from Russian belong to everyday vocabulary. Borrowings are typical of the language of the first-generation immigrants who need to adjust to the references in their new environment. Some of them are Russian words such as

(21) *djadja* (meaning ‘Mr.’ and ‘uncle’) and *tjotja* (‘aunt’ and ‘Lady’).

(22) *uxa* (‘fish soup’).

Some others result from a morphological confusion:

(23) *se ramasser* with the meaning of “*se réunir*” (‘to meet’).

Russian has two verbs, *sobrat* (‘to collect’), in French, “ramasser” (‘to gather up’) and *sobrat’sja* = in French “se réunir.”

The differences on the lexical, morphological and syntactic levels could seem insignificant when enumerated in a list as they were in Dulamangiu and Shishmarev. Nevertheless, the result is that when the children who grew up in Shabo returned to the canton of Vaud, they did not understand the French spoken there. Vaudois people did not understand them completely either, as noticed by the teacher Annen (Borodina, 1963).

With regard to social life in Shabo and the ways of transmitting Heritage French, two conclusions can be drawn from Dulamangiu and Shishmarev’s research. First, the schooling in French introduced in Shabo after 1918 affected French maintenance positively. It changed language use within the families where both languages were in use, as quoted in Dulamangiu, before 1918, “Les écoliers rentrant chez eux, lisent probablement des livres russes à leurs parents et les leur traduisent en français” (‘When schoolchildren come home, they probably read Russian books to their parents and translate them into French.’) Second, for Shabo settlers the use of (Heritage) French in correspondence with relatives in Switzerland constitutes a symbolic link with their home country, and, as noted in other studies (Benor 2019), their use of HF enabled them to connect with their relatives and their community.

2nd-Generation settlers’ Heritage French

Data on language use by the 2nd generation come from transcripts made by Melitina Borodina in 1957 and 1959. French was spoken in the household by few Shabo families. In mixed families, parents spoke both HF and Russian. For instance, a number of informants were related to each other, because they were members of the same family. In some of Borodina’s samples, she outlines the case of three generations of one French-speaking family in Shabo that perfectly fits the characterization of HL speakers established by Scontras, Fuchs, and Polinsky (2019): “Heritage speakers receive input from a smaller group of speakers, in the extreme case, just their family members or caretakers, and the community they are exposed to is more in flux and less homogeneous than in the homeland” (p. 4)

As for the contexts in which French was acquired, Borodina describes a Swiss family as an example. Borodina (1963) concludes that in this family, women continued their use of French

better than men. In the same family, both mother and father were Swiss French, and they spoke HF with each other, as well as with their parents and their 2-year-old child. They sometimes spoke to the child in Russian mixed with French words. As a result, the girl answered mixing the two languages: “net pain.” [No bread].

Borodina’s focus was on the features of the Shabo settlers’ HF, compared to the French spoken in Switzerland. She was interested in studying “insular dialects.” (term used by Soviet scholars for varieties of small communities living in the middle of a region when another language is spoken and with no communication with other communities of the same varieties) However, this term - suggests that Borodina believed that Shabo settlers lived in isolation (1963, p. 470). To the contrary, Shabo settlers have never been totally isolated from their home country. Another weakness of Borodina’s approach is that she compares Shabo settlers’ HF to standard French (1963, p. 26) although the baseline was French mixed with patois. To be precise, she qualifies patois words as “archaisms.” Indeed, if ‘the settlers’ exposure to French frequently occurred in informal settings, formally acquired and normatively prescribed varieties usually do not provide a good yardstick. Nevertheless, Borodina’s survey presents an additional point of interest. First, she made handwritten notes checking whether settlers still understood lexemes cited in Dulamangiu’s list of “patois words”, that is, words which had been used in Shabo by the previous generation. Second, Borodina’s challenge was to distinguish relevant variation from random variation. She demonstrated the systematic character of the differences in HF compared to standard French, which allows us to qualify HF as a system.

a) *Phonemic Issues:*

Borodina showed that the phonemic inventory available in the baseline was different in the HF of second-generation speakers, which had the following features:

1) [e] closed, similar to a diphthong. This sound appears namely on the following positions:

e < latin ‘a’ in an open syllable and in the middle of a word:

(23) *père* (‘father’)

(24) *mère* (‘mother’), *frère* (‘brother’)

(25) At the end of a word – *diner* (‘to have lunch’), *manger* (‘to eat’), [e] is so closed that it sounds much like an *i*: [dini], [mãʒi].

The following example is particularly interesting since it shows that speakers did not distinguish the sounds [ɛ] and [e]; for example:

(26) Vous avez une grande fête [fɛt] demain? Ils ne comprenaient pas. Alors j’ai dit: ‘Vous avez une grande feite demain?’ – Ah, oui, une feite [feit] était la réponse.

‘Are you having a big party [fɛt] tomorrow? They did not understand me. So I asked: “Are you having a big party tomorrow?” – Oh, yes, a party [feite], was the answer.’

2) Palatalised [lʲ] absent from standard French, which uses [j] in these positions. This [lʲ] appears in the following words:

(27) *l’oreille* (‘ear’), *l’œil* (‘eye’), *il a sommeil* (‘he is sleepy’), *une bouteille* (‘bottle’)

3) The nasal [õ] is pronounced as [ã] in words such as (28) *maison* (‘house’), *chapon* (‘capon’), *bouton* (‘button’), *ils vont* (‘they go’)

4) Word-final consonant devoicing, which Borodina explains as transfer, since it is a typical phonetic feature of standard Russian.

(29) *mange* would be pronounced as [mãʃ]

b) *Morpho-syntactic issues* that Shishmarev did not - include:

(30) In the sentence *tout de suite je lui ferais le kaš* ('I will make you the *kaš* ('porridge') right now'), the Russian word *kaša*, feminine, appears with an article and is treated as masculine.

(31) The sentence *Na tebe ursika* ('Take the teddy bear') contains a morphological construction calque from Russian. The French word *ours* ('bear/teddy bear') is used with a diminutive suffix *-ik*, and the *a* ending is from the Russian masculine animate accusative.

(32) The word *fisja*, meaning 'son', comes from the French noun *fil*s ('son') with a diminutive suffix *-a*, followed by the family name: *Fisja Besson* (Besson Junior).

These examples show how HF of Shabo settlers apply to French roots models of morphological derivation typical for Russian.

c) *Lexicon*

Most transfer phenomena from Russian occur at the lexical and morpho-syntactic levels:

(33) *le grafik* 'timetabl

(34) *kino* 'cinema'

Borodina studied the vocabulary of the agricultural and wine making lexical domains, testing the hypothesis that these lexemes are part of 'cultural knowledge' and therefore would be maintained through generations. HF speakers of Shabo, once exposed to these items in their daily activities, conserved Franco-Provençal terms their parents and grandparents had used in Switzerland (some of them had been listed by Dulamangiu). This suggests that the use and shared recognition of these words through several generations serve as markers that HF speakers share a linguistic identity as HF speakers. They use Franco-Provençal words such as:

(35) *le sel* instead of standard French "baquet, bassine" ('tub')

(36) *la patez* instead of "le torchon de cuisine" ('kitchen towel')

(37) *la léché* instead of "le fourrage" ('feed for livestock')

(38) *la tin* instead of "une cuve" ('tank')

In looking at the Heritage French of Generations 1 and 2 as a system, on the basis of Borodina's and Shishmarev's surveys and other archival materials, some properties of linguistic structure remain stable, while others change more readily. Changes in some of these vulnerable properties, particularly word order, can be attributed to transfer, given the similarities between the linguistic system of Russian and the language spoken by Shabo settlers. HF has incorporated both lexical and syntactic aspects of the language with which it was in contact.

HF of the 3rd Generation

As mentioned above, we lack detailed information on the HF of the 3rd generation. Nevertheless, several observations about the process of language change stand out:

Between the second and the third generation, a break occurred in the transmission of the HF within the heritage community. Between the years 1940 and 1950 many 2nd-generation and 3rd-generation HF speakers left the Soviet Union and returned to Switzerland, sometimes after years in Nazi camps during the Third Reich. Others moved to Germany, where their

descendants live today. Very few families remained in Shabo or were able to re-emigrate directly from Shabo to Switzerland after the Second World War.

These social upheavals constituted a rupture in speaking and transmitting HF, which led to difficulties among the third generation in conducting a conversation in HF. However, the language was not entirely lost. People born in Shabo before the Second World War, who are eighty and more years old today, remember that during their stay in camps, parents made efforts to maintain the community. Due to their special political status, Swiss settlers from Shabo had permission to live together. Thanks to this status, Shabo families managed to maintain their heritage language. Children had French classes and adults in the 2nd generation spoke Heritage French with their family members even in the camps, but they were losing fluency since they had to learn German, which they spoke during the day, at work, and with other settlers, most of whom were German-speaking “*Volksdeutsche*” (term used by the 3rd Reich to name all people of German descent independently from their citizenship) Certainly, the case of Shabo settlers is different from that of Yiddish speakers, since the Swiss were not in concentration camps, but rather in work camps, but a parallel could be drawn with the case of the Jewish community, which managed to maintain their mother tongue (Avineri, 2014).

Several families who went to Switzerland after the war switched to German in their everyday life. In the interviews given to journalists in 1992, they preferred to answer in German and spoke Heritage French only to their relatives and friends from Shabo. This language choice indicates that transmission of French after the last Shabo-born generation was unpredictable. Some families continued speaking French at home to some extent. In other cases, French elements were restricted to a few core vocabulary items related to the home front, to life in Shabo before the war, and also to songs and other cultural features that, as researchers have noticed, are retained as ethnic relics (Fishman, 1991).

Back to Switzerland, Shabo settlers attested to having felt like “second class citizens.” They testified that local people would systematically criticize their French, which retained elements of the Shabo variety. These comments led to a lack of a sense of ownership over French, their heritage language. We can only suppose the following features of their HF by analyzing opinions on their language by documented by people who had known them since their arrival to Switzerland from 1941 to 1947:

– heritage speakers from Shabo who came to Vaud and spoke French with a specific “accent” and a “foreign” intonation,²

– heritage speakers who remained in Shabo after 1944 and still speak French and patois.

The following remark of a person having visited Shabo in 1957 is noteworthy: “In the USSR we met families of wine growers with names from our homeland (“*de chez nous*”) Besson, Miéville, Michoud, Dogny; some of them speak patois and have a Vaud accent.”

The following conclusions can be drawn about the language use of the 3rd generation of HF Swiss speakers of Shabo:

1. Without exposure to written standard French from institutions such as school and church, the lexicon and grammatical forms used in spoken HF are the only linguistic data to which heritage speakers have access.

2. The fact that this third generation did not receive schooling in the heritage language is a critical factor in speakers' reduced proficiency and confidence.
3. The 3rd- and 4th-generation Heritage speakers in Shabo identify with Swiss culture, but feel remote from it at the same time due to insufficient exposure to the heritage language during childhood. Borodina (1964, p 282) quoted these words of Alfred Dogny, living in Shabo, who explained in 1959:

Nous, nous sommes descendants de la Suisse, fondatés de 1822 du Tardan, et maintenant on est seulement né ici en Bessarabie, à Chabag. On n'est pas comme des français, on est comme des russes. On a oublié la langue française, on l'oubliera toujours, parce qu'on n'a de qui parler. Qui viendra parler?.. Je suis Alfred Dogny et j'aimais toujours la langue française, j'aimais, à présent j'ai oublié la langue française...Excusez-moi, mais je ne suis pas un français, je suis un russe, un russe né en 1907, c'est ma langue russe, et maintenant j'ai oublié la langue française, je dois *s točkami govorit' i vot vam skažu točno, što ja francuz ne tot, što nužno*.

[We are the descendants of Switzerland, [we were] founded in 1822 by Tardent, and now we were just born here in Bessarabia, in Shabo. We are not like French people, we are like Russians. We have forgotten French language, we will always forget it, because we have nobody to speak to. Who will come here to speak? I am Alfred Dogny and I have always loved the French language, I loved it and now I have forgotten it... Sorry, but I am not a Frenchman, I am a Russian, a Russian born in 1907, this is my Russian language, I have forgotten French language, I must [in Russian] *speak with hesitations and I will tell you that I am surely not the French person that you need.*]

What should be foregrounded is that these people are bilinguals who, at least partially, acquired two languages in childhood and maintained a sense of connection to these languages despite sociohistorical rupture. The case of the 3rd and 4th generation is instructive. After the camps and the arrival to Vaud, they affirmed having used HF to maintain the family tradition. G.D., born in Shabo in 1934 and interviewed in Lausanne in 2019, attested on the years 1930s-1940 in Shabo:

Mon père a toujours roulé les r. C'est normal, entre eux, ils parlaient toujours russe, avec tout le monde. A la maison, c'était le français, pour pas le perdre. Et somme, ça n'a pas été comme toutes les colonies comme en Amérique latine ou aux États-Unis où ça s'est fondu. Mais là, on a voulu garder le lien avec ma Mère Patrie.

[My father has always rolled his r's. It's normal, they used to speak Russian to everybody [in Shabo in the 1930s]. We spoke French at home in order to not forget it. It was different from the other colonies in Latin America or in the US, where it got lost. We wanted to maintain the link with our home country.]

Another process parallel to the loss of language proficiency in HF is shifting language attitudes. Members of the third generation speak the language to some degree but do not confidently think of themselves as speakers of the language.³ Moreover, women maintained HF better than men (Borodina, 1962). Borodina collected some opinions of Shabo Swiss settlers on their language. She attested to a remark made by Dogny that HF is “not real French.” Still, a common characteristic possessed by all the heritage Swiss informants who participated in these surveys was their own self-identification as French speakers and, perhaps just as important, as culturally Swiss. Swiss Shabo settlers knew Swiss culture and felt that they belonged to it. They respected Swiss holidays and celebrations, collected pictures of Switzerland, - played Swiss games such as *jeu de boules* (Swiss national game, also called ‘pétanque’, where players or teams play their boules/balls towards a target ball), and they admired William Tell’s statue.

Borodina’s materials suggest that positive feelings towards French played a significant role in learning French. The use of the HF was helpful in maintaining group identity since French was important for school, church, and association activities and for social interaction. But we observe the vulnerability of the Swiss French heritage community experiencing a complete break in language transmission by the mid-20th century.

4th generation

The massive re-emigration to Switzerland and Germany (when they were not allowed to return to Switzerland) played a decisive role in the break of transmission of HF between Generations 2 and 3, as well as between grandparents and grandchildren. Only a few families maintained their HF, and most of them lived outside Shabo, in Switzerland, Germany and in the U.S. Below are speech samples of family members with the surname Buxcel, who emigrated to the United States but whose members still speak HF, interviewed by a journalist in 2014:

a) Phonemic issues:

1) Features due to the influence of Russian:

HF speakers systematically use Russian *R* instead of the French *r* as in the sentence:

(39) Ils étaient de bons travailleurs, les Russes (‘They were good workers, Russian people’)

The French consonants become voiceless in the end of the word, as in Russian. For example, they pronounce *s* instead of *z* in the word (40) *tuberculos* (‘tuberculosis’).

HF speakers in Shabo pronounce a palatalized [l'] instead of the French [l], for example in the word (41) *alors*.

b) Morpho-syntactic issues

Differences on this level mostly concern word order, which is similar to Russian word order, and the non-reflexive use of verbs that are reflexive in standard Swiss French:

(40) Tu dois marier, instead of the reflexive verb “te marier” (‘You should marry’)

(41) Ma sœur Aline, elle a marié Louis Annen. Instead of “s’est mariée avec” (‘My sister Aline married Louis Annen’)

c) Word order

(42) Pour un moment je l’ai abandonné, instead of Je l’ai abandonné pour un moment. (‘I left him alone for just a moment’)

(43) J’étais pas né encore, instead of J’étais pas encore né. (‘It was not born yet’)

(44) C’était en automne déjà, instead of C’était déjà en automne. (‘It was already autumn’)

The following morphological phenomena were also noticed:

Variations in gender:

(45) Cette maison était très hospitalieux ('This house has been very hospitable')

Errors in morphology, formation of words by analogy:

(46) Le plafond était tout peinturé ('The ceiling was painted') instead of "peint."

These features were identified in the HF of members of the family Buxcel, who were able to produce entire phrases. It should be outlined that the majority of the HF speakers from Shabo only produced individual words and short sentences in the variety.

Features of HF as spoken by members of the Shabo community in the 2010s A survey conducted among the Shabo heritage community in Germany in February 2018 and in Lausanne in 2019–2020 showed that at that time, identification as a member of the Shabo heritage community rested on cultural markers (food, arts, commemoration days, kitchen traditions, use of "trophy words" from their HL). A speaker born in Shabo, interviewed in September 2019 in Lausanne, attested that until 2018, Shabo settlers and their descendants in Vaud would sing Russian songs they had learned from their parents. Such are items of cultural life as *shashlik* ('barbecue'), *foršmak* ('fish pâté'), *mamalyga* (sweet corn). Speakers we met gave several rationales for using these items: "I remember the word when I remember how my mother cooked it", "I'm transmitting the know-how along with the word [when I use this term]."

These attitudes show a historical and personal connection to the language that is salient rather than individual speakers' actual proficiency (Valdés, 2001, p. 1). Although the 4th generation of HF speakers do not demonstrate a high level of proficiency in the HF, what is important is a feeling of affiliation (Polinsky, Kagan, 2007).

3. SUMMARY OF RESULTS

In the following section some general results are summarized. I will limit the material to phonemic, lexical and morpho-syntactic issues comparable between surveys.

1. Shabo settlers' use of Heritage French falls into stages that show parallels with the ideological context of the heritage community in the colony. The HL was shaped by setting up a community in a foreign environment and defining themselves in opposition to neighbors, Russians and Germans, and political circumstances.

2. The Heritage French acquired by the Swiss settlers marked features resulting from interference between their own mixed variety of standard French and patois and from Russian. It could be argued that the differences between HF and French under the influence of the Russian language are not accidental; they point to a systematic reorganization of vocabulary, syntax and phonemics. In some cases, the Heritage French includes new formations absent in French, Franco-Provençal and Russian.

3. People born in Shabo have probably never reached native standards in morphology and syntax despite their rapid lexical and semantic development. Following Polinsky (2006), we can characterize their competence as "incomplete acquisition." At the same time, heritage speakers may create new formations that do not bear a clear similarity to specific phrases in either of the languages they have access to (Rakhilina, Vyrenkova, & Polinsky, 2016, p. 6).

4. As with members of other heritage communities (See Scontras, Fuchs, Polinsky (2015), especially for Korean, and Wang (2009) for Chinese), Swiss French-speaking settlers of Shabo identify with the heritage culture, but feel remote from it at the same time due to the quantity and quality of their exposure to the heritage language during childhood.

4. DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to examine the use of French among four generations of the Swiss settlers in Shabo and to demonstrate the changes it underwent in contact with Russian. Although our corpus is limited, our analysis attempted to show the systematic character of the changes in their French, which concern phonology, morphology and syntax. We also presented data representing the maintenance and progressive loss of Heritage French by the Swiss settlers of the colony of Shabo. Analysis of survey data shows these phenomena between the second and third generations. Even if we lack informants' language samples, the heritage speakers interviewed demonstrate that Heritage French has an affective and social dimension, and our findings support the idea that studying the Heritage French of the Swiss settlers requires not only the language spoken by heritage speakers, but also knowledge of their attitudes towards the language and their home country.

Possible future lines of inquiry for this topic include:

- a) a study of individual multilingualism as opposed to the community multilingualism covered in this article. Such an analysis would help to understand how the French variety was transmitted from one family member to another, usually from grandmother or mother to child.
- b) One should be able to compare the Heritage French of Shabo with another Heritage French-speaking community to compare the process of language maintenance. Such a comparison would show the particulars of the Shabo macrolinguistic situation, since we saw how political circumstances impacted language choice.

Another topic that results from this study is the utility of combining a variety of approaches, in our case the analysis of recordings, written production, and observations. These approaches are complementary, and each provides a different lens with which to examine the same phenomenon.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Preparation of this paper was made possible during my sabbatical leave at the University of Maryland Department of Linguistics, under the supervision of Professor Maria Polinsky.

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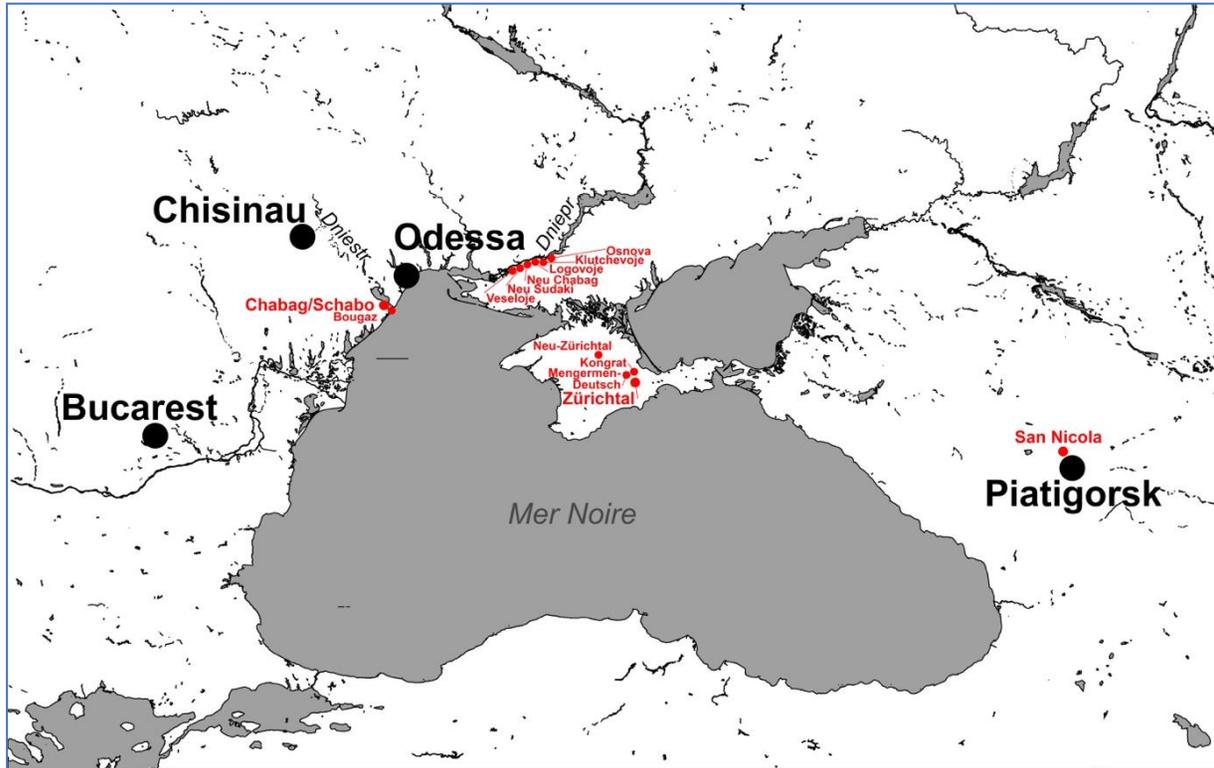
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APPENDIX A.

Map: Swiss Settlements on the Northern Black Sea Coast. © Natalia Bichurina.

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NOTES

1. All translations into English are by the author.
2. This opinion was expressed by an orthodox priest in Lausanne and Vevey who had known several families from Shabo since their arrival in Switzerland between 1941 and 1947 (Interview from 2020). The same was told by descendants of the Shabo settlers living in Lausanne and in Stuttgart interviewed between February 2018 and September 2019.
3. We only cite the vision that Shabo HF speakers had of their abilities. For a theoretical approach to the terms of speakers and non-speakers, see Jaffe, 2015a.