

ARTICLE

Observing variation and change in Ontario French through internal, external and identity factors

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we present the results of an analysis of variation, whose main objectives are to ascertain the ethnocultural identities speakers declare and to measure the impact of internal, external and identity factors on the use of the connectors of consequence (*ça fait que* vs *donc* vs *alors* vs *so*). Our research emphasizes that while there is no consensus as to the terminology chosen to express these identities, it is important to consider ethnocultural identities as a complementary factor conditioning linguistic variation. It also demonstrates that for communities whose linguistic practices and norms straddle those of minority- and majority-French language communities, the minority/majority dichotomy needs to be nuanced, according to the social and ethnocultural identity dynamics that may characterize specific communities.

1. INTRODUCTION

There are some 550,000 Francophones in Ontario,¹ the largest French-speaking population in Canada outside Quebec, but they represent only about 4% of the total population of the province (Statistics Canada, 2017). In most communities where French is spoken, Francophones represent a distinct minority. However, there are a few enclaves where French speakers are in the majority and where English, although present, is not the dominant language of social or commercial interactions. For example, in towns such as Hearst (Northern Ontario), Casselman (Southeastern Ontario) and Hawkesbury (on the Quebec-Ontario border), Francophones make up to 87%, 79% and 78% of their respective

¹This total represents the number of French mother-tongue speakers, born in Canada. It does not include French mother-tongue speakers born outside of Canada. In 2011, nearly 77,000 persons born outside Canada were French mother tongue speakers in Ontario and 43% of the French-speaking population of Toronto was immigrants. As well, according to the 2016 census, nearly 1,500,000 persons declared being able to hold a conversation in both French and English in Ontario.

populations (Statistics Canada, 2017). French language and culture are therefore particularly vigorous in these communities. Nonetheless, as contact with English is also intense, the use of lexical and grammatical borrowings is a common phenomenon in spoken French in Ontario, as in the other varieties of French spoken outside Quebec.

The use of *so*, in alternation with (*ça*) *fait que* vs *donc* vs *alors*, is a typical example of grammatical borrowing and has been the subject of numerous studies.² The purpose of our research is to examine the internal and external factors that determine the use of these forms in the light of recent data extracted from the Casselman corpus, a majority Franco-Ontarian community. Furthermore, the original dimension of this research is that we also seek to statistically correlate the production of these connectors by Franco-Ontarian speakers with the ethnocultural and linguistic identities they claim.³

Our approach is motivated by the fact that the issue of the identity of Ontario's minority Francophones has been raised in a number of studies. According to Heller (1994: 156), language has always been the central element in the construction of a Franco-Ontarian identity and in the political motivation of Franco-Ontarians generally, especially since religion and the concept of 'race' began to lose their importance throughout French Canada during the 1960s. It should be remembered that, historically, all French-speaking communities outside the Maritimes considered themselves as being French-Canadian, one of the three co-founder groups of the country (Aboriginal, French, English).⁴ As early as the 1960s, at the time of the Quiet Revolution and the beginning of Quebec's independence movement, a distinct 'Québécois' identity, in opposition to the more general and historical 'French-Canadian' identity, began to surface. This inevitably forced French-speaking minority communities west of Quebec to redefine themselves in terms of their own historical experiences, traditions and even linguistic characteristics, and to look towards their own regional or provincial political and community structures, leading eventually to new identities such as Franco-Ontarian (or even Ontariois – on the 'Québécois' model), Franco-Manitoban, Fransaskois, etc. (Aunger, 1999).

In this article, we briefly discuss the relationship between language and identity and review some of the relevant research on Franco-Ontarian identity. We then describe the community of Casselman, the corpus under study, and the methodological aspects of our research. Subsequently, we deal with the different identities claimed by the participants. We present the results of the analysis of the variation between (*ça*) *fait que* vs *donc* vs *alors* vs *so*, taking into account the internal, external and identity factors conditioning their use. Finally, we conclude by mentioning points of convergence between our results and those of previously published research.

²We refer the reader to Blondeau *et al.* (2019) for an exhaustive presentation of previous studies.

³The terms *ethnocultural* and *linguistic* identities, as well as the relationships between identity and language are defined and explained in Sections 2 and 3.

⁴Francophones living in the Canadian Maritimes have always considered themselves primarily as Acadians and only secondarily as French-Canadians.

2. ON THE RELATIONSHIP OF LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY

Omoniyi and White (2006: 1) consider that: ‘Across the social and behavioral sciences in general there has been an increased interest in identity as a subject of inquiry [...]. In particular, as a dimension of linguistic inquiry, identity has moved to the fore as a priority subject for investigation’. Zenker (2018:1) adds that the relationship between language and identity has emerged as a transdisciplinary field of research that is concerned with how languages ‘shape and are shaped by diverse identities’. Block (2013) also considers that speakers’ identities are indexed in how they draw on repertoires of linguistic resources, which include language choice, accent, lexical choice and morpho-syntax.

A number of studies dealing specifically with language and identity have been published in the past forty years (Omoniyi and White, 2006; Coupland, 2007; Riley, 2007; Edwards, 2009; Eckert, 2012; Heller, 2013; Preece, 2016, among many others). For our immediate purpose, Omoniyi and White (2006: 2) conveniently present the most common positions on language and identity:

- Identity is not fixed;
- Identity is constructed within established contexts and may vary from one context to another;
- These contexts are moderated and defined by intervening social variables and expressed through language(s);
- Identity is a salient factor in every communicative context, whether given prominence or not;
- Identity informs social relationships and therefore also informs the communicative exchanges that characterize them;
- More than one identity may be articulated in a given context – in which case there will be a dynamic of identities management.

According to Drummond and Schlee, identity has been a concern in variationist sociolinguistics (VS) since the early 1960s (Labov 1963); however, they explain that the role played by identity in conditioning language variation and change, as well as how the notion of identity itself is defined, has changed throughout the decades and ‘continues to be at the very centre of contention in VS.’ (Drummond and Schlee, 2016: 51)

Eckert (2012) theorizes that there have been three waves of research on the relationship between language and identity in VS. The first wave (Labov, 1966; Wolfram, 1969; Trudgill, 1974; Thibault and Sankoff, 1993; etc.) treated social variables as indexed directly to broad social categories such as age, gender, socioeconomic status and ethnicity. Identity *per se* is usually not treated nor even mentioned. If these broad macro-sociological labels are conceived as identity labels, they are mere reflections of language use and as such, identities are considered as stable, unified and ‘essential’, since they are based on membership of individuals in specific social categories (Drummond and Schlee, 2016: 51).

Second-wave studies (Labov, 1963; Milroy and Milroy, 1978; Eckert, 2000; etc.) attribute social agency to the use of vernacular or standard features. The vernacular is seen as an expression of identity, particularly local, ethnic or class identity. In

second-wave VS studies, researchers make use of ethnography and other qualitative methods to examine how certain linguistic forms are locally meaningful to social groups. Furthermore, these social categories are not pre-formulated frameworks of analysis (as in first-wave studies) but are based on participant observation: 'Rather than imposing identity categories on speakers, ethnographic observation enables us to work with identity categories that emerge from the data and that we know are salient to the speakers themselves at the local level' (Drummond and Schlee, 2016: 52).

If linguistic features index social *categories* in waves one and two, in third-wave VS, linguistic features index social *meanings*. According to Drummond and Schlee (2016: 55) social meanings are exemplified by *stances* (mental or emotional positions adopted with respect to something), personal characteristics, *personae* (the role(s) that one assumes or displays in public or society; one's public image or personality, as distinguished from the inner self) and social types. Third-wave research views language use as not reflecting identities *per se* but constituting them through linguistic practice, thus putting an emphasis on the social meaning of variable features. In third-wave VS, in order to study and understand identity, one cannot simply focus on one particular linguistic feature; rather, one must focus on something larger, namely *style* (Podesva, 2011). For others, the focus will be on *stance* (Bucholtz and Hall, 2010).

Even though our study is firmly embedded in the first-wave VS tradition, it differs from earlier research in that it specifically bears on ethnocultural and linguistic identities as categories potentially influencing language practice.

3. ON FRANCO-ONTARIAN IDENTITY MARKERS

Since the 1970s, much has been published on Franco-Ontarian identity.⁵ However, little or nothing has been published on identity in Ontarian French-majority communities. Furthermore, the only published research papers which deal specifically with Franco-Ontarian *identity markers* as such, at least that we are aware of, are those of Boissonneault (1996) and Dallaire (2004).

Boissonneault (1996) surveyed by written questionnaire 137 collegiate and 37 university-level students aged between 18 and 24 years, studying in French-language institutions in Northern Ontario. She was interested in obtaining data pertaining to their linguistic behavior relative to their linguistic and sociocultural attitudes. Among other questions, respondents were asked the following: 1) Do you consider yourself to be Francophone, Anglophone or Bilingual?⁶ 2) Do you consider yourself to be Franco-Ontarian, French-Canadian, Canadian, Anglo-Canadian or something else? For both questions, participants were asked to explain their choices.

Boissonneault (1996) considers the first question to reveal indicators of a 'linguistic' nature and the second question to reveal indicators of what she calls a 'structuro-cultural' nature. Boissonneault's structuro-cultural identity is based

⁵See Bigot (2019) for a list of references on Franco-Ontarian identity.

⁶We capitalize the term 'Bilingual' to indicate that it is an identity marker rather than a declared type of linguistic competence.

on work by Juteau-Lee and Lapointe (1983). It refers to the fact that, on the one hand, identity may be based on 'cultural' concepts such as language, religion, life-style and culture, and on the other hand, a Franco-Ontarian identity may be largely based on 'structural' criteria where underlying group boundaries are emphasized. These structural criteria outline different institutional spheres and refer to specific local, territorial or provincial realities.

Results of Boissonneault's research were as follows: as many as 74% of the students consider themselves to be Bilingual while only 23% to be Francophone. Boissonneault (1996: 184) explains this result by the fact that, outside Quebec, in minority communities, bilingualism is the most important identity marker. But we hasten to note that for 83% of the participants, bilingualism is defined as the mastery and frequent use of both languages, thus constituting a 'linguistic' identity rather than a strictly structuro-cultural one; only 17% of the respondents underscore other values of bilingualism, such as economic and professional advantages, equality between the two languages and cultures, etc. (*op.cit.*: 185). An aggregate of more than 90% of the students identify as being Franco-Ontarian, French-Canadian or simply Canadian (*op.cit.*: 184). Those claiming a Franco-Ontarian identity justify their choice either according to linguistic criteria (e.g. having French as mother tongue) or according to structuro-cultural criteria (e.g. being born in Ontario) (*op.cit.*: 186). Those identifying as French-Canadian underscore their belonging to the Canadian nation (*op.cit.*: 186); those identifying as Canadian also refer to their belonging to the Canadian nation, but, in this case, the criterion of language is devoid of all cultural values (*op.cit.*: 187). By cross-indexing linguistic and structuro-cultural indicators, Boissonneault (*op.cit.*: 188) reports that 67.8% of participants consider themselves mainly to be bilingual.

Dallaire's (2004) study bears on a large group of teenagers, interviewed during the 2001 edition of the *Jeux franco-ontariens* (Franco-Ontarian Games).⁷ Using data obtained through participant observation, oral interviews, drawings and answers to written questionnaires from a selected group of volunteers, Dallaire compiled results allowing her to establish an inventory of the main identities claimed by the participants. She was interested in knowing how participants conceive their Francophone identity and how they describe the Francophone community in Ontario.

Dallaire (2004) considers that there are two types of narratives which contribute to the contemporary construction of Francophone identities and communities in Canada: a *linguistic* narrative and a *cultural* one. She obtained 587 completed questionnaires, representing 77.3% of the 759 participants. They were asked a number of questions related to their identity.⁸ The results are as follows:

- 37.6% of participants identify themselves as being Franco-Ontarian;
- 19% identify themselves as being bilingual;

⁷The *Jeux franco-ontariens*, held annually in a different locale since the 1990s, is the largest meeting of Franco-Ontarian youth. Each month of May, all 106 French language secondary schools meet and compete in eight different categories such as quiz gaming, circus skills, visual arts, dance, improvisation, journalism, music, and sports.

⁸Unfortunately, Dallaire (2004) does not provide details on the specific questions that were asked to ascertain the various identities.

- 18.3% identify themselves as being Canadian;
- 10.5% identify themselves as being French-Canadian;
- 6.6% identify themselves as being Francophone;
- 3% identify themselves as being bilingual Canadian;
- 5.1% opt for other identities.

Dallaire (2004: 142) points out that Franco-Ontarian, French-Canadian and Francophone identities, all three of which refer to 'being a speaker of French', constitute 54.7% of the answers. However, the percentage of participants who identify themselves as having an 'other' ethnic background (24.5%) is vastly greater than the percentage of participants who opt for an 'other' identity (5.1%). This implies that a great number of French-speaking immigrant youths in Ontario have abandoned their original ethnic identity and have adopted new ones, more closely related to an Ontarian or Canadian reality.

Dallaire's study also allows us to better understand some of the participants' identities. The reasons motivating their choices are as follows:

- For those claiming a Franco-Ontarian identity: belonging to the province of Ontario (29.2%); using French spontaneously and/or routinely (21.6%); pride in one's local community (14.4%);
- For those claiming a French-Canadian identity: belonging to the Canadian nation (31.3%); using French spontaneously and/or routinely (18.1%); pride in the French-Canadian community (14.4%);
- For those claiming a Francophone identity: using French spontaneously and/or routinely (25.7%); other reasons (unspecified) (17.2%); pride in one's local community (11.4%);
- For those claiming a bilingual identity: active French-English bilingualism (70.1%); other reasons (unspecified) (9.4%); belonging to the Canadian nation (4.3%);
- For those claiming a Canadian identity: belonging to the Canadian nation (38.7%); active French-English bilingualism (16.9%); other reasons (unspecified) (11.3%).

Dallaire (2004: 138) concludes that even in a large group of teenagers mostly favouring a Francophone identity, there does not seem to be a consensus as to the terminology chosen to express this identity.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Located in the United Counties of Prescott and Russell, Ontario, 56 kilometers east of Ottawa and 145 kilometers west of Montreal, the village of Casselman is a majority French-speaking community. Indeed, its population is made up of 79% of French mother-tongue speakers. As we pointed out earlier, the use of (*ça*) *fait que* vs *donc* vs *alors* vs *so* has already been examined in Ontario and Quebec French. Given the specific linguistic situation of this small community, it seems legitimate to wonder whether the linguistic practices of speakers observed in our corpus reflect those revealed in previous studies.

The relevance of our study is twofold. We report data from a recent corpus of unrestricted speakers belonging to a Franco-Ontarian community that is not only majoritarian, but which is also located geographically close to Quebec and is therefore likely to be influenced by the linguistic practices of both Franco-Ontarians as well as Quebecois.

Moreover, we will attempt to answer the following questions: 1) Does the use of (*ça*) *fait que* vs *donc* vs *alors* vs *so* by speakers of the Casselman community differ from that of Quebec and Ontario speakers examined in previous studies? 2) Can we correlate the use of these markers to the ethnocultural and linguistic identities claimed by the interviewees of our corpus?

5. METHODOLOGY

First, we present our database. We then deal with the dependent and independent variables taken into account in our analyses.

5.1 The Casselman corpus

The foundation of the town of Casselman dates back to 1830, when Martin Casselman, a descendant of a Loyalist family, moved to the United Counties of Prescott and Russel, in eastern Ontario, to develop the lumber trade. Although the first settlers recruited by the contractor were of English or Scottish origins, Francophones arriving from neighbouring Quebec rapidly formed the bulk of the population (Brault, 1965).

Since then, Casselman has steadily grown and the town now numbers 3,548 inhabitants, Francophones being in the majority. Since 2006, the percentage of Francophones has tended to decrease slightly. In ten years, mother-tongue French speakers have dropped from 83% of the population to 79% (Statistics Canada, 2007; Statistics Canada, 2017). During the same time period, the number of Anglophones has increased from 15% to 17%. Nevertheless, the community of Casselman has the second highest proportion of mother-tongue French-speakers in the province and French remains the dominant language in homes, schools, commerce and public services.

Our corpus consists of 62 informal semi-directed one-hour long at-home interviews with French-speaking interviewees, conducted between 2009 and 2010 by a young woman native of Casselman and known by most of the participants. Each participant was recruited by the 'snowball' technique (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981). This technique ensures a certain proximity between the interviewer and the interviewee. In recruiting participants, the interviewer had to make certain that gender, age and socio-economic status were more or less evenly distributed. Although speakers were aware of being recorded, their degree of self-monitoring was minimized as much as possible. All interviews were recorded with a Sony ICD-UX70 MP3 device, then transcribed in Word format according to a common protocol allowing easy data analysis through CasualConc, a free concorder software for MacOs.

Social data were collected orally at the beginning of each interview. All the adults were interviewed using the same questionnaire/guide. The questionnaire/guide was

Table 1. General distribution of the Casselman corpus speakers

Social factors	Men	Women
<i>Class</i>		
Upper-middle class	11	11
Middle-middle class	13	11
Lower class	09	07
<i>Age</i>		
55 and +	05	04
26 to 54	06	08
20 to 25	09	08
19 and -	13	09
<i>Language dominance</i> ⁹		
French dominant	21	19
Balanced bilingual	10	10
English dominant	02	0
Total	33	29

somewhat adapted for participants aged 20 years or less, but the questions nevertheless dealt with the same themes as those of the adult version. These dealt with personal data and family background, ethnocultural and linguistic identities claimed, educational background, including language of instruction, work experience, relationship with the province of Quebec and the rest of Canada, rate of consumption of French- or English-language media, level of language competence, degree of bilingualism, etc. The social class attributed to each speaker was determined from Blishen *et al.*'s (1987) classification, which is based on the speaker's employment, or that of his/her parents, for the younger generation. Table 1 presents the distribution of speakers according to the social factors considered in our study.

Finally, while 75% of adolescents in the corpus are born in Casselman, native-born Casselman adults represent only 53%. Nonetheless, all of the adult speakers born elsewhere have spent most of their lives in Casselman and consider themselves as full members of the community.

⁹This index is calculated from an average based on the criteria identified in the interviews: 1) Self-declaration of bilingualism; 2) Self-declaration of language dominance; 3) Frequency of family contacts in French or in English; 4) Frequency of social contacts in French or in English; 5) Working in a French-speaking or in an English-speaking environment; 6) Preference in speaking French or English; 7) Preference in reading in French or English, 8) Media preference (watching or listening to TV, movies, radio, music, etc.) in French or English. All 62 participants declared themselves to be bilingual at various degrees of competency.

5.2 The dependent and independent variables

Our dependent variables are the connectors¹⁰ and discourse markers of consequence (*ça*) *fait que* vs *donc* vs *alors* vs *so*. We follow most authors reviewed in Blondeau *et al.* (2019) in distinguishing between their grammatical connecting function, that of joining together clauses, phrases or words, and their discursive function, that of managing the flow and structure of discourse, by showing turns, joining ideas together, showing attitude and generally controlling communication.¹¹ As in Blondeau *et al.* (2019), we only take into account the occurrences of each of the variants expressing consequence. For example we eliminated occurrences such as ‘C’est *donc* ben beau...’ or ‘Ah *ça* *alors!*’ and *so* occurring in code-switches as in ‘I’m *so* sorry for you’. Finally, the four markers can appear with ‘là’ as in ‘(ça) *fait que* là...’, ‘*donc* là...’, ‘*alors* là...’ and ‘*so* là...’, however, the number of occurrences of these forms is quite limited (1 for ‘*so* là’, 1 for ‘*alors* là’, 30 for ‘*donc* là’ and 185 for ‘(ça) *fait que* là’ out of a total of 3 509 occurrences). We therefore do not discriminate forms with or without the adverbial particle.

As do Blondeau *et al.* (2019: 47), we invoke the notion of *functional equivalence* and while a strict semantic equivalence between the four forms cannot be totally presupposed, we postulate that they possess sufficient common features to fulfill the same linguistic functions.¹²

The speakers are grouped according to the following external factors:

- Social class: *working class* vs *middle-middle class* vs *upper-middle class*.
- Gender: *male* vs *female*.
- Age: *participants aged under 20* vs *aged 20 to 25* vs *aged 26 to 54* vs *aged 55 and over*.
- Language dominance: *French-dominant bilingual* vs *Balanced bilingual* vs *English-dominant bilingual*.
- Self-declared ethnocultural identity: *Franco-Ontarian* vs *French-Canadian* vs *Canadian* vs *Ontarian*.
- Self-declared linguistic identity: *Francophone* vs *Bilingual* vs *Anglophone*.

The last two independent variables were determined by two questions explicitly addressing ethnocultural and linguistic identities, as in the following examples:

- (1) Interviewer: Et puis, comment est-ce que tu te définis? Est-ce que tu te définis comme une Nord-Américaine, une Canadienne, une Ontarienne, une Canadienne-française, une Franco-Ontarienne ou même une Québécoise... ?¹³

Speaker 11: Ah mon dieu! Je suis pas Québécoise. Je suis Canadienne.

¹⁰We use the term ‘connector’ here rather than ‘conjunction’ in that while *donc* is, grammatically speaking, a conjunction, *alors* is an adverb and (*ça*) *fait que* is an adverbial phrase.

¹¹www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/discourse-markers

¹²In her study of these forms in New Brunswick French, Chevalier (2007:60-61) considers that they indeed collectively commute in equivalent contexts.

¹³It is quite likely that most interviewees would have difficulties in specifying their ethnocultural identity. Therefore, in order to obtain relevant data, we provided the interviewees with examples of various possible ethnocultural identities. However, they were not limited to the proposed choices, and could answer whatever

- (2) Interviewer: Toi, est-ce que tu te considères comme...quelqu'un de bilingue?
 Speaker 28: Oui. Je suis... disons je suis ben bilingue; comment dire... disons, je suis... un des plus bilingues dans la famille.

The above categories are relevant to our analysis because they are those claimed by Francophone minority communities (Boissonneault, 1996; Dallaire, 2004).

We are well aware that the ethnocultural identities taken into account here appear relatively static. Indeed, ethnocultural identities may vary according to a given interlocutor. For example, someone could claim to be Franco-Ontarian in the presence of other Franco-Ontarians but claim to be French-Canadian in front of Anglo-Canadians, or even to be simply Canadian in the presence of Quebecois. However, we believe that these identities may well reveal how speakers represent themselves, at least, in the context of the interviews on which our corpus is based. All of the identities claimed were spontaneously given in the presence of the same interviewer, thus eliminating the problem noted above. These avowed identities may therefore be relevant to verify whether this type of factor potentially conditions the use of a particular variant. Note that only two interviewees hesitated in answering the ethnocultural identity question. In these two cases, we took into account the claimed identity declared most often during the interview. Also, notice that our 'ethnocultural identity' label is more or less equivalent to Boissonneault's (1996) 'structuro-cultural' identity and to Dallaire's (2004) 'cultural' narrative.

As shown in Section 3, claiming a 'bilingual' identity can theoretically be interpreted as an ethnocultural identity. However, in all cases, participants who claim to be bilingual refer only to their proficiency in both French and English and never to an ethnocultural identity. For this reason, we consider bilingual competence to constitute a linguistic identity (what languages one knows and uses) and not as an ethnocultural identity (who one is or to what ethnocultural community ones belongs), as for Boissonneault (1996).

As in Blondeau *et al.* (2019), we also measure the impact of the grammatical function of the variants: *connector* vs. *discourse marker*, as in the following examples:

Connector function:

- (3) Speaker 25: [...] je suis pus dans la région à cause, justement, à cause de mes études, *ça fait que* c'est dur de savoir.
 (4) Speaker 6: L'hôpital est resté ouvert, *donc* je pense que ça, ça démontre que les Franco-Ontariens peuvent avoir une voix en Ontario.
 (5) Speaker 9: Il était une autorité dans le domaine pis je voulais avoir M. Paccioco, *alors* j'étais prêt à prendre le cours en anglais, ça me dérangeait pas du tout, du tout.

they wanted. Finally, note that in this particular example, both ethnocultural and linguistic identities were offered as possibilities.

- (6) Speaker 12: Carry, elle a rencontré, comme, un de ses anciens chums, là-bas, so elle a cheaté sur son mari.
Discourse marker function:¹⁴
- (7) Speaker 19: Des fois les parents sont pas là; mon frère, lui, il est à l'université; ça fait que... Avant, des fois, il venait me chercher à l'école.
- (8) Speaker 13: J'ai de la parenté que...sont anglophones donc...¹⁵
- (9) Speaker 30: Ben, là, je commence à douter mes connaissances, parce que tu me demandes des choses ça me vient pas alors...
- (10) Speaker 5: Je veux toujours aller en Afrique, comme juste aider pis, tout ça, so...

Our analysis consists of three parts. Through a multivariate analysis using the Goldvarb Yosemite freeware,¹⁶ we first measure the impact of internal factors (associated with the grammar), then we measure the external or social constraints (associated with social meaning),¹⁷ and finally we measure the impact of identity factors.¹⁸ In our opinion, identity factors are neither internal (Labov, 1994) nor external (Labov, 2001). Rather, they are *cognitive* factors (Labov, 2010). We believe what languages speakers consider they know and use (their linguistic identity) and to what national, regional or local ethnocultural group they feel they belong (their ethnocultural identity) is revealed by certain linguistic forms they tend to favour, which does not mean that the above identities are necessarily fixed. We thus formulate the hypothesis that the specific use of (*ça*) *fait que*, *donc*, *alors* or *so* may be apprehended as an act of identity (Labov, 2010: 193).

6. RESULTS AND ANALYSES

We begin by observing the identities claimed by the participants of the Casselman corpus. Subsequently, we present the results of the multivariate analysis we used to determine the internal, external and identity factors that condition the use of (*ça*) *fait que* vs *donc* vs *alors* vs *so*.

¹⁴Discourse markers can be placed at the beginning of a sentence to start a conversation or a new part of the conversation. They also can be placed at the end of a sentence to end a conversation or a part of the conversation. See Blondeau *et al.* (2019, pp. 37-38) for a more detailed review of semantic and pragmatic research on (*ça*) *fait que*, *donc*, *alors* and *so*.

¹⁵Examples (8), (9) and (10) are uninterrupted. Each marker can be considered as a 'social monitor' used [with both a turn-taking [...] and turn-yielding function.] (Erman, 2001, p. 1345).

¹⁶Goldvarb Yosemite allows modeling the distribution of the occurrences of each variant according to the importance of internal and external factors. (Sankoff *et al.* 2015).

¹⁷See Labov (1982) about the independence of internal and external factors.

¹⁸However, we will see that in some cases, interactions between factors do exist. These will be processed directly in the analysis, at the appropriate time.

Table 2. Linguistic identities of the Casselman participants¹⁹

Linguistic identity	Number of participants	% of participants
Francophone	9	21
Bilingual	33	79
Anglophone	NA	NA

6.1 Identities claimed by the Casselman participants

The results regarding the linguistic identities are summarized in Table 2.

Thirty-three out of 42 participants (79%) declare themselves to be bilingual, and nine out of 42 (21%) declare themselves to be Francophone. As expected, none claim to be Anglophone. This result contrasts sharply with the percentages of interviewees we obtained for language dominance. Indeed, the distribution of speakers according to their language dominance shows that of 59 speakers,²⁰ 37 (62.7%) are French-dominant bilinguals, 20 speakers (33.9%) are balanced bilinguals and two interviewees (3.4%) are English-dominant bilinguals. On the one hand, this may show that for some speakers, the frequency and preference of use of French does not necessarily determine their linguistic identity and that this identity reflects more what they think they are than what language they actually speak in their everyday life. On the other hand, it is possible that terms such as 'Francophone', 'Anglophone' and 'bilingual' may be interpreted differently by individual speakers. For example, many speakers believe that to be bilingual one must master both languages equally well, or to be 'Francophone', one must speak only French, etc.

Finally, the distribution of linguistic identities by age group is relatively balanced. Four out of nine Francophones are under the age of 25, and five are aged 25 and over. Regarding the bilingual speakers, 16 out of 33 speakers are under the age of 25, compared to 17 aged 25 and over.

We now consider the ethnocultural identities, as well as the justifications that are provided. Results are summarized in Table 3.

Five ethnocultural identities are declared: 59% of interviewees consider themselves to be Franco-Ontarian, 21% define themselves as being Canadian, 14% of the speakers identify as being French-Canadian. One female participant

¹⁹We excluded all the participants (20 in all) whose identity could not be ascertained from their speech production, either because the interviewer failed to ask the appropriate questions or because the interviewee failed to answer the appropriate questions.

²⁰We excluded 3 speakers out of 62, for lack of information on their language dominance.

Table 3. Ethnocultural identities and their justifications of speakers of the Casselman corpus

Ethnocultural identities	Number of participants	% of participants	Justifications ²¹
Franco-Ontarian	25	59	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I speak French 2. I live in Ontario 3. I have a distinct identity/culture 4. I'm bilingual 5. I'm not Quebecois 6. I'm proud of being Franco-Ontarian 7. I'm a native of Canada
Canadian	9	21	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I live in Canada 2. I'm not Quebecois 3. I'm bilingual
French-Canadian	6	14	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I speak French 2. I live in Canada 3. I have French-Canadian origins
Ontarian-Canadian	1	2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I speak French 2. I live in Ontario 3. I'm not Quebecois
Ontarian	1	2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I live in Ontario 2. I'm not Quebecois

sees herself as being an Ontarian-Canadian, and one young male claims to be simply an Ontarian.²²

In Boissonneault (1996) and Dallaire (2004), the main ethnocultural identities identified are also Franco-Ontarian, Canadian and French-Canadian, in that order. In Boissonneault (1996), these categories constitute 90% of the responses vs. 94% for the Casselman corpus vs. 66.4 % for Dallaire (2004). In our opinion, the difference with Dallaire (2004) can be explained by the fact that in her study, one of the choices of ethnocultural identity was being Bilingual (19% of the subjects). In our study, no participant claimed to be Bilingual as an ethnocultural identity, even if they could have chosen it (see note 13).

The reasons motivating the identities professed by the speakers in Casselman also resemble quite closely those given in Dallaire (2004). For example, in both cases, being born in Ontario, using French on a daily basis and pride in one's community were the most frequent reasons invoked by those professing to be Franco-Ontarian.

Not only does a Franco-Ontarian identity rank highest among the Casselman subjects, it is also the one that receives the highest number of specific justifications or markers. Indeed, we distinguish seven identity characteristics, in

²¹The justifications provided by the participants are summarized and do not reflect their exact words. In addition, they are presented in order of importance, according to the number of speakers who referred to them.

²²Note that the 'Ontarian Canadian' identity was not part of the choices usually given by the interviewer and that it spontaneously emerged during the interview.

order of importance (frequency): 1) Ability to speak French, 2) Being a native of Ontario, 3) Having a distinct identity/culture, 4) Being bilingual, 5) Not being Quebecois, 6) Pride of being Franco-Ontarian and 7) Being a native of Canada. With regards to the Canadian identity, it includes the following aspects: 1) Residing in Canada, 2) Not being Quebecois and 3) Being bilingual. A French-Canadian identity boils down to the following aspects: 1) Ability to speak French, 2) Residing in Canada and 3) Having French-Canadian origins. The female speaker selecting the Ontarian-Canadian identity focuses on three elements: 1) Ability to speak French, 2) Residing in Ontario and 3) Not being a Quebecois. Finally, the participant who claims to be an Ontarian explains his identity by the fact of living in Ontario and not being a Quebecois.

The ability to speak French is clearly the central element of both Franco-Ontarian and French-Canadian identities. It should also be noted that these identities include marks of cultural identification (such as the community origins or the identification of a culture distinct from that of other communities), linguistic identification (such as having French as a mother tongue or the criterion of bilingualism), but also geographical identification (living in Ontario and/or in Canada).

Franco-Ontarian, Canadian, Ontarian-Canadian and Ontarian identity characteristics include a negative one: not being Quebecois. Much as many Anglo-Canadians often identify themselves as not being American (Resnick, 2012), many Francophones outside Quebec and the Maritimes tend to identify themselves as not being Quebecois. The reasons for this are numerous and diverse, an important one being that most majority-English provincial governments have for a long time ignored the existence of French-speaking communities within their borders and it has been part of the Canadian myth that French speakers in Canada largely come from Quebec, and to a lesser extent, from the Maritimes. Therefore, a number of French-speakers outside Quebec still feel the need to specify that while they speak French, they are not Quebecois.

The development of a new Franco-Ontarian identity has taken quite some time and many older speakers still tend to consider themselves as French-Canadian rather than Franco-Ontarian. Indeed, 50% of Casselman speakers 55 years old or older identify as French-Canadian while 60% of speakers 25 years old or younger identify as Franco-Ontarian.

6.2 Factors conditioning the use of (*ça*) *fait que* vs *donc* vs *alors* vs *so*

We first attempt to measure the impact of the function of the variants: *connector* (3,426 occurrences) vs. *discourse marker* (83 occurrences). The total number of occurrences observed is 3,509. Results are presented in Table 4.

In the Casselman corpus, internal variation is significant for three out of the four variables. On the one hand, (*ça*) *fait que* (eff. = 0.51) and *donc* (eff. = 0.51) are slightly more frequent to express the grammatical function of consequence; on the other hand, *so* (eff. = 0.84) is used more often as a discourse marker than as a connector of consequence. The results for *alors* are not significant since it is almost systematically used as a connector.

Table 4. Internal factors conditioning (*ça*) *fait que/donc/alors/so*

Factor	<i>(ça) fait que</i>			<i>donc</i>			<i>alors</i>			<i>so</i>		
Input	0.459			0.216			0.077			0.243		
Log.	-2414.870			-1833.249			-951.795			-1926.268		
Sig.	0.001			0.000			NS			0.000		
Function	<i>n</i>	%	<i>eff.</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>eff.</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>eff.</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>eff.</i>
Connector	1590	46.4	.51	761	22.2	.51	267	7.8	NS	808	23.6	.49
Disc.mark.	23	27.7	.31	5	6	.19	3	3.6	NS	52	62.7	.84
Total	N = 1613/46%			N = 766/21.8%			N = 270/7.7%			N = 860/24.5%		

These results diverge somewhat from two previous studies. Dessureault-Dober (1974) shows that the connectors (*ça*) *fait que*, *donc* and *alors* mainly express a grammatical function in Montreal French.²³ In Moncton French, Roy (1979) demonstrates that the choice of (*ça*) *fait que* and *so* is not readily determined by linguistic function. However, Blondeau *et al.* (2019:50) show that in the small French-speaking minority community of Welland (Ontario), the forms (*ça*) *fait que* and *alors* are more often used as connectors, while *so* is more frequent as a discourse marker, much as is the case in Casselman. They also note that in Montreal French, the language of the majority, (*ça*) *fait que* is more often used as a discourse marker than as a connector. In other words, in terms of internal variation, our results converge with those recently collected in Welland, but diverge from those of Montreal. Blondeau *et al.* (2019: 62) argue that in the Welland corpus: ‘the discursive use of *so* may have been a gateway for this connector. In turn, there would have been a strengthening of the association of the two main competitors of *so* with the grammatical function’ (our translation).

Our second analysis concerns the external or social factors conditioning the variation between the four connectors.

These results provide us with the following information: (*ça*) *fait que* is the form most often used, as it accounts for nearly half of the total occurrences (47.2%) and has a dispersion rate of 97%. This converges with Martineau and Séguin (2016), who have argued that this variant is typical of most Francophone communities in Canada. However, the results of Blondeau *et al.* (2019: 48) show that if in Montreal, (*ça*) *fait que* is indeed the most frequent variant, in Welland, this variant is only the second most frequent, after *alors* (40%). It must be remembered that in Casselman nearly 80% of the community are French-speakers and that it is geographically close to Quebec, favouring linguistic contacts with Quebecois and this may directly influence Casselman speakers’

²³We are well aware that analyses of discourse markers in the 1970’s were embryonic at best and that Dessureault-Dober (1974)’s analysis may not have been sufficiently detailed to discriminate the various uses and functions of discourse markers.

Table 5. Social factors conditioning (*ça*) *fait que/donc/alors/so*

Factors	<i>(ça) fait que</i>			<i>donc</i>			<i>alors</i>			<i>so</i>		
Input	0.445			0.156			0.003			0.088		
Log.	-1850.907			-1425.692			-320.910			-1130.586		
Sig.	0.000			0.000			0.002			0.000		
<i>Class</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>eff.</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>eff.</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>eff.</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>eff.</i>
Up-mid.	577	48.9	.50	400	33.9	.75	39	3.3	.62	164	13.9	.28
Mid-mid.	474	36.8	.38	255	19.8	.53	116	9	.76	443	34.4	.65
Working.	482	62.1	.70	34	4.4	.13	3	0.4	.06	253	32.8	.60
Rank ²⁴	3 (.32)			1 (.62)			3 (.45)			3 (.37)		
<i>Sex</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>eff.</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>eff.</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>eff.</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>eff.</i>
Male	926	54.7	.60	295	17.5	.44	27	1.7	.32	442	26.2	NS
Female	607	39.1	.39	394	25.4	.57	131	8.4	.70	418	27	NS
Rank	4 (.21)			3 (.13)			4 (.38)			NA		
<i>Age</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>eff.</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>eff.</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>eff.</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>eff.</i>
55 and +	263	71.1	.68	80	21.6	.64	25	6.8	.92	1	0.3	.05
26-54	417	66.3	.76	86	13.7	.32	125	19.9	.98	0	0	-
21-25	273	33.1	.39	262	31.8	.72	6	0.7	.43	282	34.3	.73
19 and -	580	40.8	.40	261	18.4	.41	2	0.1	.11	577	40.6	.91
Rank	2 (.37)			2 (.40)			1 (.87)			1 (.86)		
<i>Lng Do.</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>eff.</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>eff.</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>eff.</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>eff.</i>
Fren.dom.	1037	55.5	.61	421	22.5	.55	107	5.7	.62	301	16.1	.30
Bal.bil.	494	40.2	.47	268	21.8	.50	51	4.1	.23	417	33.9	.68
Engl.dom.	2	1.4	.01	0	0	KO	0	0	KO	142	98.6	.99
Rank	1 (.60)			4 (.05)			5 (.20)			2 (.66)		
Disp. %²⁵	97 (n = 57)			56 (n = 33)			24 (n = 14)			42 (n = 25)		
Total	N = 1533/47.2%			N = 689/21.3%			N = 158/4.9%			N = 860/26.6%		

speech. It is therefore not surprising that (*ça*) *fait que* is the most common variant in Casselman, as it is in Montreal.

Regarding *donc* and *alors*, the analysis reveals a number of interesting facts. First, both variants have general results very close to those for Montreal: *donc* represents 21.3% of the occurrences of the Casselman corpus and 19% of Montreal corpus, and

²⁴Rank determines the order of the constraints influence. It is calculated according to the number in parenthesis, which represents the difference between the largest and the smallest values of the effect.

²⁵Disp. represents the percentage and the exact numbers (n) of speakers using the variant.

alors counts for 4.9% of the occurrences in Casselman and 5% in Montreal (Blondeau *et al.* 2019: 48). In the Casselman corpus, both forms are rejected by the working class (eff. = 0.13 for *donc* and eff. = 0.06 for *alors*) and both are favoured by women (eff. = 0.57 for *donc* and eff. = 0.70 for *alors*), which confirms their normative value. In Welland and Montreal, both forms are also rejected by the working-class. However, while *alors* is favoured by women in Welland (eff. = 0.61), the difference between men and women is non-significant in Montreal (NS). Moreover, while in Casselman, men tend to reject *donc* (eff. = 0.44), this connector is favoured by men in Welland (eff. = 0.73) and Montreal (eff. = 0.65) (Blondeau *et al.*, 2019: 51–53). Blondeau *et al.* (2019: 61) argue that in Montreal French (*ça*) *fait que* may have lost its covert prestige, since women now use it more often than men. In counterpart, men would now seem to prefer *donc*. In the case of Casselman, the social reconfiguration of (*ça*) *fait que* has not yet taken place.²⁶ We know that according to Labov's Principle 2: 'For stable sociolinguistic variables, women show a lower rate of stigmatized variants and a higher rate of prestige variants than men' (Labov 2001: 266). This may explain why, in Casselman, *donc* and *alors* are still favoured by women.

In our Casselman corpus, *alors* is much more characteristic of speakers aged 26 and above (eff. = 0.98 for speakers aged 26 to 55 and eff. = 0.92 for speakers aged 55 and above) than *donc*. In fact, *alors* is almost absent in the discourse of speakers 25 and younger (only eight occurrences produced by the two youngest generations).

It is quite possible that we are witnessing a change in progress, where *donc* (21.3%) is gradually replacing *alors* (4.9%). Notice that this also converges with the results of Blondeau *et al.* (2019: 48), which show that, in Montreal French, *alors* (representing only 5% of the total occurrences) is also becoming marginal.

Furthermore, we note that all social factors are significant. First, language dominance is the most important factor (rank = 1). Indeed, (*ça*) *fait que* decreases as the use of *so* increases, as in Blondeau *et al.* (2019: 55) for Welland, but not for Montreal, where *so* is not attested. In fact, (*ça*) *fait que* is almost absent among English-dominant bilinguals (eff. = 0.01) and is less frequently used by balanced bilinguals (eff. = 0.47) than by French-dominant speakers (eff. = 0.61). The effect of age is also very salient (rank = 2), and we find the opposite phenomenon for the variant *so*. Speakers aged 26 and over regularly use (*ça*) *fait que* (eff. = 0.76 for the 26 to 54 age group, eff. = 0.68 for those 55 and over), as opposed to the youngest (eff. = 0.39 for 20–25 years and eff. = 0.40 for those under 20). This result supports the hypothesis of a change in progress, where the French vernacular variant seems to be gradually replaced by borrowed *so*. Lastly, as in most previous studies,²⁷ the social value of (*ça*) *fait que* remains strong, since this form is representative of the working class

²⁶Our results converge with those of Mougeon, Nadasdi and Rehner (2009), which show that in Hawkesbury (a Franco-Ontarian community bordering Quebec), women still use *donc* more often than men.

²⁷Roy (1979), Dessureault-Dober (1974), Mougeon and Beniak (1991), Golembeski (1999), Mougeon, Nadasdi and Rehner (2009), and Blondeau *et al.* (2019).

(eff. = 0.70) and of men (eff. = 0.60). Its status as the typically vernacular variant seems therefore constant across Laurentian French varieties.

Regarding *so*, several previous studies have shown that this variant is characteristic of French minority communities in general,²⁸ of working/middle classes,²⁹ of balanced bilinguals or English-dominant speakers³⁰ and of the youngest speakers of Welland.³¹ Our results show similar trends. First, the global percentage of use of *so* (26.6%) is almost identical to that of Welland (26%) (Blondeau *et al.*, 2019: 48). *So* is rejected by the upper-middle class (eff. = 0.28); English-dominant and balanced bilinguals are those who use it most often (eff. = 0.99 and eff. = 0.68), as expected. Finally, Table 5 indicates that speakers aged 26 and over disfavour the English variant (eff. = 0.05), unlike the younger age groups (eff. = 0.91 for those aged under 20 and eff. = 0.73 for those aged 20–25.). The age constraint is the most important one in conditioning the use of *so* (rank = 1 (0.86)), and it is followed by language dominance (rank = 2 (0.66)) and social class (rank = 3 (0.37)). This result reinforces the hypothesis of a change in progress in favour of the English variant, hypothesis that Blondeau *et al.* (2019: 59) have recently formulated: ‘Without losing its non-standard character, *so* has gained in value through the latent prestige it holds within the Franco-Ontarian community, which tends to promote bilingualism’ (our translation).

Our final analysis addresses the identity factors conditioning the use of (*ça*) *fait que* vs *donc* vs *alors* vs *so*.

The results presented in Table 6 reveal a complex situation. Regarding (*ça*) *fait que*, we observe the following: speakers identifying as French-Canadian (eff. = 0.92) use it more than those identifying as Franco-Ontarian (eff. = 0.40) or Canadian (eff. = 0.35). On the other hand, it is slightly favoured by Bilinguals (eff. = 0.53), but not by Francophone speakers (eff. = 0.40). We believe the reason behind this distribution lies in the fact that (*ça*) *fait que* is the prototypical French-Canadian vernacular variant and therefore characteristic of the speakers claiming a traditional French-Canadian ethnocultural identity. Furthermore, the weight of ethnocultural identity favouring (*ça*) *fait que* (rank = 1 (0.52)) is much higher than that of linguistic identity (rank = 2 (0.13)). In other words, ethnocultural identity seems to influence the choice of the variant more than linguistic identity.

The case of the normative variants *donc* and *alors* is equally complex. Both forms are favoured by participants identifying as Franco-Ontarians or as Canadians, two ethnocultural characteristics. However, *donc* and *alors* are clearly distinguished when linguistic identities are taken into account: *donc* is characteristic of Bilinguals (eff. = 0.63), *alors* of Francophones (eff. = 0.93). In the case of *donc*, linguistic identity is the most important factor (rank = 1 (0.49)), while ethnocultural identity is more powerful for *alors* (rank = 1 (0.69)). How can this

²⁸Martineau and Séguin (2016); Blondeau *et al.* (2019).

²⁹Mougeon and Beniak (1991); Mougeon (2006); Blondeau *et al.* (2019).

³⁰Roy (1979); Mougeon and Beniak (1991); Mougeon (2006); Mougeon, Nadasdi and Rehner (2009); Blondeau *et al.* (2019).

³¹Blondeau *et al.* (2019).

Table 6. Identity factors conditioning (*ça*) *fait que/donc/alors/so*³²

Factors	<i>(ça) fait que</i>			<i>donc</i>			<i>alors</i>			<i>so</i>		
Input	0.548			0.249			0.022			0.063		
Log.	-1354.587			-1186.207			-375.332			-655.134		
Sig.	0.000			0.000			0.000			0.000		
<i>Eth/C. Id.</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>eff.</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>eff.</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>eff.</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>eff.</i>
Fr-On.	621	45.9	.40	431	31.9	.51	123	9.1	.71	177	13.1	.70
Canadian	201	39.9	.35	227	45.0	.66	33	6.5	.58	43	8.5	.57
Fr-Can.	314	92.4	.92	25	7.4	.23	1	0.3	.02	0	0.0	KO
Rank	1 (.52)			2 (.43)			1 (.69)			1 (.70)		
<i>Ling. Id.</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>eff.</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>eff.</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>eff.</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>eff.</i>
Franco	273	55.0	.40	24	4.8	.14	123	24.8	.93	76	15.3	.71
Biling.	863	50.8	.53	659	38.8	.63	34	2.0	.32	145	8.5	.44
Rank	2 (.13)			1 (.49)			2 (.61)			2 (.27)		
Disp. %	93 (n = 39)			62 (n = 26)			31 (n = 13)			33 (n = 14)		
Total	N = 1136/51.7%			N = 683/31.1%			N = 157/7.1%			N = 220/10%		

be explained? Thanks to a Crosstab analysis³³ of both social and identity factors, the results show that the majority of occurrences of *donc* are produced by balanced bilinguals belonging to the two higher social classes (53.7% of utterances). In the case of *alors*, the Crosstab analysis also shows that 57% of the utterances are produced by French-dominant speakers, mostly aged 26 to 54 years. In our opinion, these results seem to show that social class and age outweigh identity factors.

As for *so*, it is characteristic of speakers who mainly identify as Franco-Ontarian (eff. = 0.70) and is also significant for those identifying as Canadian (eff. = 0.57). On the other hand, it is rejected by speakers identifying as French-Canadian (eff. = KO). Table 3 indicates that speakers identifying either as Franco-Ontarian or as Canadian were the only ones justifying their identity by referring to the fact of being bilingual, as opposed to the other identities, where bilingualism is absent in the list of justifications. These results thus seem logical to us.

In terms of linguistic identity, it is surprising to note that Francophone speakers make greater use of *so* (eff. = 0.71) than Bilinguals (eff. = 0.44), where the opposite would be expected, since balanced bilinguals are equally at ease in both languages. However, it must be remembered that the majority of Casselman speakers consider

³²As for Table 2, we excluded all the participants (20 in all) whose identities could not be ascertained from their speech production. Furthermore, we chose to include both Ontarian and Ontarian-Canadian identities, claimed by only two speakers, within the Franco-Ontarian contingent. Indeed, a closer analysis of the interviews of these two speakers revealed that their justifications of their identities are identical to those declared by speakers identifying as Franco-Ontarian. See Table 3.

³³See Tagliamonte (2006: 151) for more information about multivariate and crosstabulation analysis.

themselves to be Franco-Ontarians, an ethnocultural identity whose major characteristic is the primary use of the French language. Moreover, the weight of linguistic identity (rank = 2 (0.27)) is much lower than that of ethnocultural identity (rank = 1(0.70)). The English variant *so* therefore appears to have become a shibboleth of Franco-Ontarian identity.

7. DISCUSSION

Our objectives were to identify the ethnocultural and linguistic identities of the Casselman speakers, and to determine the internal and external factors that condition their use of (*ça*) *fait que* vs *donc* vs *alors* vs *so*. We also sought to determine if the identities claimed by our participants could potentially explain the use of forms among (*ça*) *fait que* vs *donc* vs *alors* vs *so*.

First, we showed that a Franco-Ontarian identity is predominant for Casselman speakers, and that it is followed by Canadian and French-Canadian identities, as in Boissonneault (1996) and Dallaire (2004). Despite the use of a different methodology, we nevertheless found markers of structural and cultural identification similar to those of Boissonneault (1996) and Dallaire (2004), which confirms the unifying character of ethnocultural identities.

Our study has also highlighted several elements converging with earlier papers, and particularly with the recent research of Blondeau *et al.* (2019). Indeed, we note that the linguistic practices of Casselman speakers share similarities with both those of Montreal and of Welland, Ontario. Our general results concerning *donc* (21.3% of occurrences) and *alors* (4.9%) are particularly close to those of Montreal (*donc* = 19% and *alors* = 5%). Regarding *so*, its percentage of occurrences among the four markers in Casselman (26.6%) is nearly identical to the one for Welland (26%). Moreover, the percentage of occurrences of (*ça*) *fait que* for Casselman (47.2%) is almost exactly half-way between that of Montreal (76%) and that of Welland (27%).

The particular linguistic practices of Casselman speakers, partially reflecting both majority Franco-Montreal and minority Franco-Welland speakers, is also highlighted when we take into account internal and external variation. Our research emphasizes the singularity of communities such as Casselman, whose linguistic practices and norms straddle those of minority- and majority-French language communities. If, in the case of communities such as Welland and Montreal, the minority/majority dichotomy is demographically and linguistically quite evident, the case of Casselman demonstrates that such a dichotomy needs to be nuanced, according to the social and identity dynamics that characterize specific communities. The French spoken in Casselman reflects the fact that it is a majority-French language community but situated in a majority-English language province, while Montreal is a majority-French language city in a majority-French language province and Welland is a minority-French language community in a majority-English language province.

Moreover, as we have seen, the data extracted from the Casselman corpus (although incomplete for some speakers) demonstrate the importance of considering ethnocultural identities as a complementary factor conditioning linguistic variation. While it is difficult to measure the degree of awareness that

speakers have of their ethnocultural identities when speaking, given the high degree of significance for (*ça*) *fait (que)* and a French-Canadian identity (eff. = 0.92), and for *so* and a Franco-Ontarian identity (eff. = 0.70), it seems these forms play a role as linguistic markers confirming the membership of a specific community.

However, although our results show that there is indeed a statistical link between linguistic variation and ethnocultural identities, for the moment, our methodology does not allow us to account for conflicting choices as in (11):

- (11) Interviewer: Pis, toi, tu t'identifies comme quoi...comme personne ? Tu t'identifies-tu comme étant un...mettons, un Franco-ontarien, un Canadien, un Canadien-français... ? Comment tu t'identifies ? Speaker 26: Moi, un Canadien-français. Je suis fier d'être Franco-ontarien mais je suis plus... je me battrais plus pour fran/un Canadien-français.

Speaker 26 displays both a French-Canadian and a Franco-Ontarian identity, with a strong tendency to favour the former. Such an example is an illustration of Omoniyi and White (2006: 2), who point out that identity is constructed within established contexts, that it may vary from one context to another and that more than one identity may be articulated in a given context. It also shows that there is still much work to be done to tease out the various possibilities. Indeed, we think it will be necessary to develop a scale to more precisely measure the management dynamics of identities claimed by speakers, in order to better exploit the weight of (socio)linguistic and ethnocultural identities as cognitive factors that can potentially explain linguistic variation. Furthermore, because identities are not fixed and may change over a lifespan, it would be quite interesting to take into account ethnocultural identities in real-time sociolinguistic studies.

It is important to note that much of the research on Franco-Ontarian identities deals with an increasingly important 'Bilingual' ethnocultural identity among young Franco-Ontarians (Heller, 1994; 2013), where they live in Franco-Canadian, Anglo-Canadian and, in fact, Anglo-American cultures. This is mostly true for the majority of Franco-Ontarians who live in decidedly small French-speaking minority communities. Because Casselman is a heavy majority French-speaking community, this may explain why such a bilingual ethnocultural identity has not been revealed in our corpus, since all of the participants who declare themselves as 'bilingual' only refer to their linguistic abilities and not to their ethnocultural adhesion.

As a final point, we fully realize that first attempts often raise methodological questions, particularly when using corpora that are not specifically designed to broach sensitive and problematic subjects such as identities, as in the case of our Casselman corpus. Nonetheless, we hope we have opened a new gate for forthcoming variationist analyses.

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