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The Future of Ontario French

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ABSTRACT

The present study is a Labovian sociolinguistic analysis of forms used to express the future tense in the spoken French of adolescents residing in Ontario, Canada. Two primary variants are examined: a) the periphrastic future (e.g. *elle va partir*); and b) the inflected future (e.g. *elle partira*). The general trend that emerges is that distribution rates of the periphrastic future are markedly higher than previous accounts of the variable and that many speakers are in fact categorical users of the periphrastic form in certain contexts. Note, too, that negation is not a strong predictor for all speakers with respect to the choice of the inflected future, a finding that is in strong contrast to previous analyses of the variable in Laurentian varieties of spoken French in Canada. After presenting the general results, we provide an in-depth analysis of the linguistic and social factors that condition variant use.

1 INTRODUCTION

Our study presents a variationist account of competing forms used to express future temporal reference in the spoken French of adolescents residing in the province of Ontario, Canada. Two variants are considered, namely the periphrastic future (e.g. *elle va partir*) and the inflected future (e.g. *elle partira*). The data used in our study come from Mougeon and Beniak's corpus of L1 French spoken in the Franco-Ontarian communities of Hawkesbury, Cornwall, North Bay and Pembroke.[1] The current analysis makes a unique contribution to the study of the future variable since, while in the past it has been the object of quantitative analysis (cf. Deshaies and Laforge, 1981; Emirkanian and D. Sankoff, 1985; Chevalier, 1996; Poplack and Turpin, 1999; King and Nadasdi, 2003; Zimmer, 1994), our research is the first to examine this case of variation on the basis of French language use restriction. In other words, we consider the extent to which an individual uses French in his or her daily activities.

[1] The authors wish to thank Raymond Mougeon for granting us access to his corpus of data. We would also like to extend thanks to Philip Comeau for his comments on a previous version of this work.

The general trend that emerges in Ontario French is that the use of the periphrastic future (hereafter, PF) is higher than what has been reported for the French spoken in Québec, Acadia or France. The presentation of results includes a detailed discussion of linguistic and social factors that condition the two future forms under study. Although we coded for a variety of linguistic factors, only one, namely affirmative versus negative polarity, was selected as significant following multivariate analyses with GoldVarb. Previous research (notably Poplack and Turpin, 1999) has documented the robust effect of this factor on the future variable. What is of particular interest in our own study is the interaction that exists between polarity and language use restriction. Cross-tabulation of locality and polarity reveal that the effect of this factor varies across the four communities (cf. Mougeon and Nadasdi, 1998). The effect of polarity is shown to be categorical in the French majority town of Hawkesbury, i.e. the inflected future (hereafter, IF) never occurs in affirmative utterances. Conversely, in the minority language community of Pembroke (where only 8% of the local population is francophone), affirmative/negative polarity has no significant effect on the choice of either variant.

2 THE VARIABLE

Examples of the periphrastic and inflected future taken from Mougeon and Beniak's Franco-Ontarian corpus are presented in 1a) and 1b):

1a) **Periphrastic future (PF)**
On dit qu'il **va passer** à la télévision bientôt. (H19)[2]
'They say it's going to be on television soon.'

1b) **Inflected future (IF)**
Peut-être j'**irai** à Ottawa puis essayer de trouver un bon emploi. (P06)
'Maybe I'll go to Ottawa then try to find a good job.'

A third possible form also exists for expressing a future event, the so-called futurate present:

1c) **Futurate present**
Gilbert **vient** icitte demain. (P14)
'Gilbert is coming tomorrow.'

Examples of the futurate present are indeed found in the corpus of Ontarian French, just as it is found in other Laurentian varieties of French (e.g. Poplack and Turpin, 1999[3]). However, due to the proportionately infrequent use of this form, these tokens were excluded as they were too rare to be submitted to quantitative analysis. (cf. Le Goffic, 2001 for an overview of the temporal functions as well as the conditioning contexts typically associated with the futurate present.)

[2] Speakers are identified according to locality: H = Hawkesbury, C = Cornwall, N = North Bay, P = Pembroke.

[3] In their study, Poplack and Turpin (1999) found the futurate present to be the least frequent of the available future forms, accounting for 7% of all future temporal references.

We have also taken care to exclude a number of forms whose morphology resembles the two main variants under study but which are not functional equivalents. For example, in cases where the verb *aller* is used as a verb of motion, as illustrated in 1d), or when the future form – often expressed with the periphrastic construction – has a habitual rather than a true future reference, as in 1e):

1d) ***Aller* as a verb of motion**
Si j'ai pas trop de devoirs, **j'vas aller jouer** dehors. (H18)
'If I don't have too much homework, I go and play outside.'

1e) **Habitual 'false' future**
Des fois elle **va** nous **montrer** des films. (C02)
'Sometimes she will show us movies.'

Additional examples of discarded occurrences of the inflected and periphrastic forms include fixed expressions, which generally preclude variation (1f) and hypothetical statements (1g). Given that our primary goal was to identify actual occurrences of the future variants produced by the speakers themselves, we also chose to exclude instances of the variable which appeared in reported speech (1h):

1f) **Invariable expression**
Si je gagnais [à la loterie], **on va dire** 500 $. . . (C08)
'If I won the lottery, we'll say $500. . .'

1g) **Hypothetical statement**
Disons que le joual pour ma part **j'vas [le] parler** pas couramment. (H09)
'Let's say joual, me, I won't speak it fluently.'

1h) **Indirect speech**
Il dit : «Non, les poissons **vont t'emmener** drette dans l'eau pis **tu vas t'noyer**.» (P15)
'He said, "No, the fish will pull you right into the water then you'll drown."'

Once all invalid instances of the variable were discarded, as shown in the preceding examples, we retained for the final analyses a total of 1,232 tokens of verbs with a verifiable future temporal reference.

2.1 Function of the periphrastic and inflected future forms

To both future forms prescriptive grammars (e.g. Grevisse, 1964: §655, §730–734) have ascribed a rather complex set of temporal functions which serve to identify the speaker's relationship with an event or the likelihood the latter will occur. Poplack and Turpin (1999) summarize the situations in which the periphrastic future ought to be selected, such as proximity to speech event, imminence, intentionality and certainty of outcome. King and Nadasdi (2003) also include the speaker's desire to demonstrate greater interest or involvement with an event. As for the functions associated with the inflected future, Poplack and Turpin (1999) indicate that the IF signals neutrality, psychological separation from the event and an absence of proof the event will take place. In spite of the various temporal contexts that normative grammar proposes should influence the use of either the PF or the IF, few studies

on the future variable in Canada conclude that the functions listed above motivate variant choice, including the present study.

2.2 Previous research

Both the inflected and periphrastic futures have a long history in French. While the synthetic form dates at least to the ninth century, attested in the *Serments de Strasbourg* (Fleischman, 1982), the analytic construction *aller* + infinitive appeared much later in the language. The PF was first used as a transparent verb of motion, but by the 15th century it was used colloquially, especially in the first person singular, to indicate prediction as well as imminent future outcomes,[4] and came to be used this way in higher registers, including literary usage, during the 16th and 17th centuries (cf. Gougenheim, 1929; Fleischman, 1982; Poplack and Turpin, 1999). Both descriptive and quantitative studies of spoken French, from Bauche's (1929) *Le français populaire* to more recent studies of European French (e.g. Söll, 1983; Lorenz 1989) and Québec French (e.g. Emirkanian and D. Sankoff, 1985; Zimmer, 1994; Poplack and Turpin, 1999), report higher incidences of the PF as well as increased usage of this form in contexts where traditional grammars would prescribe the IF. Such findings have lead researchers like Poplack and Turpin (1999) to suggest that the IF is disappearing in the same way that the *passé simple* has in most spoken varieties of Canadian French (with the exception of some Acadian varieties). However, it often remains the preferred future form in the written language (cf. Lesage and Gagnon, 1992).

A comparison of research from both sides of the Atlantic suggests that there is a clear difference between the French of France and Québec with respect to the distribution of the future variants. For example, Jeanjean (1988) recorded a nearly even distribution of inflected and periphrastic future forms in her study of Metropolitan French data collected by researchers in Aix-en-Provence, while in Söll (1983) the IF represents 34% of all future occurrences. Variationist research on the variable shows that the IF is used considerably less in spoken Canadian French. For Montréal French, Emirkanian and D. Sankoff (1985) recorded the average use of the IF at approximately 21% and Zimmer (1994) at 17%, whereas Poplack and Turpin's own study of Ottawa-Hull French, which served as the model for our research, found similar proportions (20%) as did Emirkanian and D. Sankoff. The variable has also been studied in Acadian French by King and Nadasdi (2003) who report the highest rate for the IF at 53%.

3 THE DATA

The data we have used in this study come from Mougeon and Beniak's 1978 corpus of francophone adolescents living in southeast Ontario, specifically in the four

[4] Note that it is not uncommon to encounter alternative nomenclatures for the periphrastic future, such as the *futur proche* or *futur prochain*, both of which underscore the purported relationship between this form and proximate outcomes.

communities of Hawkesbury, Cornwall, North Bay and Pembroke, situated near the Québec border. Within this region, the local francophone population varies substantially from 85% in Hawkesbury to 35% in Cornwall, 16% in North Bay and 8% in Pembroke (according to 1981 statistical data; see Mougeon and Beniak, 1991: 72). In total, 117 interviews were carried out for this corpus following a Labovian interview protocol during which each speaker discussed a variety of formal (e.g. politics, language) and informal (e.g. hobbies) topics for approximately one hour. The semi-informal sociolinguistic interviews were designed to '[tap] as natural and unreflecting a style of speech as could be obtained in the context of a semi-directed face-to-face interview on the school premises' (ibid: 70).

The unique aspect of this corpus is that in addition to the traditional social factors considered in variationist research (sex, age, etc.), all speakers are categorized into one of three groups of French language use restriction (cf. Mougeon and Beniak, 1991). Note that all speakers from the four communities are francophone, in that at least one of his or her parents is also francophone, and attend French-medium schools. To assess a speaker's degree of language restriction, she or he indicated via a questionnaire which language is spoken in 11 different situations of communication (e.g. addressing a sibling outside of the home, parent addressing the respondent, addressing friends at home). For some, French is the regular language of communication both in and outside of the home (the unrestricted speakers), whereas others make limited use of French and use it almost exclusively in the school setting (the restricted speakers). The third group (the semi-restricted speakers) makes fairly equal use of French and English in the various situations of communication described above. A complete understanding of the distribution of a linguistic variable in a minority speech community requires that relative degree of language restriction be taken into account.

3.1 Linguistic factors

All 1,232 tokens of the future forms retained in this study were coded for a number of linguistic and social factors (see section 3.2). We identified and coded for a total of seven linguistic factors, having used as our model a combination of methodologies developed for other studies focusing on the future variable in Canadian French. These include affirmative vs negative polarity, grammatical person, temporal reference, adverbial specification, certainty of outcome, presence of *quand* and *si*. These linguistic factors are exemplified below in sections 3.1.1 to 3.1.7.

3.1.1 Polarity

The extant literature on the future variable for most varieties of spoken Canadian French have shown that sentential polarity has an exceptionally strong effect on the choice of future forms. Where affirmative environments favour the periphrastic future, the inflected future is much less likely to occur in this context; rather, it is largely conditioned by the presence of an adverb of negation (e.g. *pas, plus,*

jamais). This distribution of the forms on the basis of polarity remains somewhat inexplicable, though researchers such as Deshaies and Laforge (1981: 28) propose that negation and the inflected future are compatible due to the hypothetical value they both project (for further discussion, see also Poplack and Dion, 2009). In light of the importance of this factor, occurrences of the variable in Ontario were identified as either affirmative (2a) or negative (2b).

2a) **Affirmative**
J'veux continuer à parler français. Ça va m'aider dans les classes. (C07)
'I want to continue speaking French. It is going to help me in class.'

2b) **Negative**
Ben on aura **pas** d'gaz d'après qu'est-ce qu'eux-autres i' dit (disent). (N31)
'Well, we won't have any gas according to what they say.'

3.1.2 Grammatical person

In keeping with the coding models designed in past research (e.g. Poplack and Turpin, 1999; King and Nadasdi, 2003; Nadasdi et al. 2003), we also considered grammatical person with a view to uncover any potential conditioning effect this factor may have on either future form. All grammatical persons were considered, including singular (3a) and plural (3b).

3a) **1st person singular**
Jamais **j'perdrai** ma langue. (H01)
'I'll never lose my language.'

3b) **3rd person plural**
I' vont devenir plus intelligents. (N30)
'They are going to become more intelligent.'

3.1.3 Temporal reference

Various grammarians have attempted to assign a specific temporal function to both the IF and PF. For instance, Grevisse and Goosse (2008) and Parmentier (1993) note that the latter frequently marks a near future, while other future occurrences are generally linked to the IF. However, Grevisse and Goosse (2008: §887) also recognize that this distinction does not necessarily apply in spoken French, where the IF is regularly replaced by periphrastic constructions such as *aller* + infinitive. To capture any possible division between form and distance from speech time, we coded for a number of future references, including events deemed to occur in the proximate future, namely within the hour (4a) or the day; more distant futures, such as within the week or greater than one week (4b); and also indeterminate future references (4c). Following King and Nadasdi (2003), a further category of futurity was also added to include continuous events or states which the speaker believes will persist now and into the future (4d).

4a) **Within the hour**
Y'en a qui sont bien, t'sais. J'vas pas dire des noms. (N18)
'There are some who are good, you know. I'm not going to say any names.'

4b) **Greater than one week**
J'aurai la possibilité peut-être **cet été,** puis j'aimerais aller en Californie. (P17)
'Maybe I'll have the chance this summer, then I'd like to go to California.'

4c) **Indeterminate future reference**
Peut-être i' va penser que j'suis Franco-ontarien. (C04)
'Maybe he is going to think I am Franco-Ontarian.'

4d) **Continuous future**
I' va **tout (le) temps** n'avoir de l'essence. (C17)
'There is always going to be gasoline.'

3.1.4 Adverbial specification

While the presence of an adverbial element is generally a prerequisite in order for the futurate present to specify the future realization of an event (cf. Poplack and Turpin, 1999; Le Goffic, 2001), we nevertheless took its variable presence into consideration while coding our data (this is also the case in other research on the variable in L1 Canadian French, e.g. Emirkanian and D. Sankoff, 1985; King and Nadasdi, 2003; Blondeau, 2006). The decision to include this factor was also motivated by Parmentier's (1993) treatment of both the futurate present and the periphrastic future, which, he states, "signal immediate outcomes with adverbs such as 'immediately' and 'right away'" (175, our translation). To determine whether a relationship exists between the future variants in Ontario and temporally situated events via an adverb, we coded for adverbials that identified specific (5a) and non-specific (5b) time periods. Variants with no temporal specification were coded as such.

5a) **Specific adverb**
J'ai pas l'impression que ça va changer tant qu'ça dans **l'an 2000**. (N03)
'I don't have the impression that things are going to change much in the year 2000.'

5b) **Non-specific adverb**
Bientôt i' vont avoir beaucoup de Français dans Cornwall. (C38)
'Soon there are going to be a lot of French people in Cornwall.'

3.1.5 Certainty

In the extant literature it has been proposed that the inflected future marks more hypothetical future events (e.g. Deshaies and Laforge, 1981) whereas those certain to occur are best expressed by the periphrastic future (e.g. Frontier 1997). Franckel (1984: 66) speaks to the semantic distinction apparently dividing the future forms with respect to certainty, stating that the IF belongs to the domain of the unasserted/uncertain whereas the PF belongs to the realm of the certain, verifiable and factual. Using a combination of transparent syntactic 'flags' identifying degree of certainty (e.g. adjectives and adverbs) as well as, when necessary, the researchers' intuitions, the future variants were coded as certain to occur (6a), uncertain (6b) or unverifiable.

6a) **Certain**
J'suis **sûr** que je vas savoir qu'est-ce qu'i'parle. (C07)
'I'm sure I'm going to know what he's talking [about].'

6b) **Uncertain**
Peut-être que j'vas l'utiliser quand que j'ai un emploi. (P19)
'Maybe I am going to use it when I have a job.'

3.1.6 Presence of 'quand'

The relationship between *quand* and its potential role in conditioning one or the other future form has also garnered some attention in the previous studies we consulted (e.g. Deshaies and Laforge, 1981; Emirkanian and D. Sankoff, 1985; Chevalier, 1996; King and Nadasdi, 2003). In addition, this relationship is frequently cited in grammars, such as Parmentier (1993) and Sandhu (1995), whose examples show that, when used to express a future outcome, the conjunction *quand* accepts only the inflected future and never the periphrastic *aller* + infinitive. We considered two environments in which the dependent variable may occur with *quand*,[5] whether it appears adjacent to the conjunction or in a subordinate clause that follows. Both environments are exemplified in 7).

7) **Variable introduced by 'quand'**
Quand j'serai dix-huit ans, j'prendrai un voyage ou quelque chose. (N02)
'When I'm 18 years old, I'll take a trip or something.'

3.1.7 Presence of 'si'

The last linguistic factor we coded for concerns the presence or absence of conditional *si* clauses. In the extant literature (e.g. Grevisse, 1964), there is a strong tendency for the synthetic form to co-occur in *si* + present + future sequences. We considered such sequences, shown in 8), with a view to reveal the extent to which this 'rule' is observed in spoken Ontarian French.

8) **Presence of '*si*'**
Si le Québec (se) sépare, beaucoup de Québécois **déménageront**. (C10)
'If Québec separates, a lot of Québécois will move.'

3.2 Social factors

For coding purposes, we considered in our analyses the same social factors that have been used in other variationist studies undertaken with the Mougeon and Beniak corpus. These factors include locality, sex, school year (grade 9/grade 12)

[5] We also admitted in this factor group a handful of equivalent constructions, namely *une fois que* and *mais que*. Note too that no distinction was made between *quand* and its more popular spoken counterpart *quand que*.

Table 1. *Distribution of future variants in Laurentian varieties of Canadian French*

FUTURE TYPE		ONT	Ottawa-Hull[6]	Montréal[7] (E&S 1985)	Montréal (Zimmer 1994)	NL & PEI
Inflected	N	135	725	291	227	362
	%	11	20	21	17	53
Periphrastic	N	1,097	2,627	1,093	1,135	323
	%	89	73	79	83	47

Legend: ONT = Ontario, NL = Newfoundland, PEI = Prince Edward Island.

socio-economic class (as defined by parents' occupation) and language use restriction (unrestricted, semi-restricted, restricted).

4 RESULTS

Before presenting the overall results for the relevant linguistic and social factors, we will first provide information regarding the general distribution of the future forms in Ontario.

As stated above, the future variable has been the object of several quantitative studies in Laurentian as well as Acadian varieties of French spoken in Canada. This collection of research is reflective of data collected in both majority (Ottawa-Hull, Montréal, Québec) and minority settings (Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island). Table 1 provides the overall distribution of the variants, if available, from these studies. The results for our study are also included for cross-variety comparison.

It can be seen in Table 1 that, in comparison with all other speakers of Canadian French, Franco-Ontarians are in the lead with respect to use of the PF. While in previous studies the use of the PF ranges from 47% (Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island) to between 73% and 83% (Ottawa-Hull and Montréal), this same variant represents fully 89% of all tokens in the Mougeon and Beniak Franco-Ontarian corpus. This, therefore, reserves a mere 11% for the IF, which traditionally represents between 17% and 53% of future occurrences in all other varieties of French in Canada. Thus, as compared to previous research in Canada (and France), Franco-Ontarians demonstrate the greatest use of the periphrastic future and consequently the lowest use of the inflected future.

Of all seven linguistic factors retained for multivariate analyses using GoldVarb (cf. D. Sankoff, Tagliamonte and Smith, 2005), only polarity produced statistically

[6] The combined distribution of the PF and IF corresponds to 93% of possible future tokens. Occurrences of the futurate present account for the remaining 7%.

[7] According to Zimmer (1994), periphrastic habitual forms with *aller* were not excluded in Emirkanian and Sankoff (1985). As such, these numbers may not reflect the distribution of future occurrences only. This is also the case in Chevalier's (1996) study of the distribution of the future forms in spoken New Brunswick Acadian French, the results of which we have elected to omit in Table 1.

Table 2. *Distribution of the inflected future (IF) according to polarity.*

	LOCALITY											
	Hawkesbury 85%[9]			Cornwall 35%			North Bay 16%			Pembroke 8%		
POLARITY	N	T	%	N	T	%	N	T	%	N	T	%
affirmative	0	154	0	16	513	3	13	229	6	26	229	11
negative	24	24	100	36	48	75	9	16	56	11	19	58

significant results in Franco-Ontarian French (The PF is favoured in affirmative contexts with a factor weight of 0.587, but strongly disfavoured in negative environments with a factor weight of 0.024.) This result is quite unusual in Canada. The bulk of the previous studies on the future, conducted with the help of large-scale corpora of varieties of both Canadian French and Acadian French, generated statistically significant results for a combination of linguistic factors other than or including polarity, however not polarity alone.[8] It should nevertheless be noted that it is not surprising that we found no effect for adverbial specification, since its role seems to be linked to the futurate present, which we have not examined in the current study. The robust effect of polarity is especially prevalent in the French majority community of Hawkesbury, where there is categorical use of the IF in negative utterances (N = 24) and of the PF in affirmative utterances (N = 154). The breakdown for each community is shown in Table 2.

This striking find parallels in part the results of Emirkanian and D. Sankoff's 1985 study of spoken French in Montréal, where all affirmative future tokens were expressed only via the PF. Thus, our findings are in line with the general trend according to which the PF and IF variants are losing—or have lost—the temporal distinctions prescribed in contemporary prescriptive grammars (e.g. Grevisse and Goose, 2008) and that they have adopted a strictly modal function in Hawkesbury. In other words, polarity itself predetermines the future variant to be selected rather than the temporal character of the utterance. If this modal division is indeed the future of the future in spoken French, we must conclude that, due to the absence of variation, linguistic change *vis-à-vis* the future in Hawkesbury is now complete. The effect of polarity on variant usage in the other three communities will be discussed below where we examine interactions with language use restriction. Note finally that the highly robust effect of polarity is likely the reason that no other linguistic factors were selected. In other words, polarity alone explains the

[8] The exception to this is Blondeau's (2006) longitudinal study of the future forms produced by 12 Montréal French speakers in 1971, 1984, and 1995. Blondeau also found that, among the linguistic factors considered (e.g. temporal reference and adverbial specification) when both negative and affirmative contexts were analysed, only polarity was statistically significant to condition variant choice.

[9] Percentage of local francophone population in each community, according to 1981 statistics data.

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Table 3. *Social factors contributing to the selection of the periphrastic future (PF).*

	Factor Weight	N	**Total**	%
Locality				
Cornwall	.53	509	561	91
North Bay	.53	223	245	91
Hawkesbury	.44	154	178	87
Pembroke	.40	211	248	85
Range	*13*			
Sex				
Female	.58	545	605	90
Male	.42	552	627	88
Range	*16*			
Class				
Working	.59	425	459	93
Upper-middle	.48	504	568	89
Middle	.35	153	186	82
Range	*24*			
FACTORS NOT SELECTED AS SIGNIFICANT				
School yr.				
9	[NS]	444	504	88
12	[NS]	653	728	90
Restriction				
restricted	[NS]	261	294	89
semi-restr.	[NS]	446	495	90
unrestricted	[NS]	390	443	88
Total		1,097	1,232	

linguistic variation. What is more, when the results for Hawkesbury are excluded from statistical analyses, we find that polarity continues to be the only significant linguistic factor in the remaining three communities.

4.1 Social factors

GoldVarb identified the following social factors as significant to variant choice, specifically locality, sex and socio-economic class. School year and language restriction were not selected as statistically significant. These results are presented in Table 3.

With respect to school year, it is no surprise that this factor was statistically insignificant in our study. Mougeon and Beniak (1991) excluded from their studies the possible effect of school year, reporting the difference in age between grade 9 and grade 12 students to be too narrow. Despite the results of our initial analyses, and because language restriction plays such an important role in variant distribution in most studies of this particular variety of French, we believed a more refined analysis of the data would nevertheless produce telling results. This was indeed the case, as

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we will see later, especially with respect to the overall relationship between polarity, locality and language restriction.

Let us first consider the significant effect of sex and class. With respect to sex, we found that the 'typical pattern' where female subjects tend to produce more formal structures (cf. Labov, 2001) does not obtain in our data. This finding stands out from prior research on Franco-Ontarian French, where, in comparison to their male counterparts, females regularly favour more prestigious forms in the spoken language, for instance *alors* as opposed to *ça fait que* and the first-person conjugation *vais* [vɛ] over informal *vas* [va] and *m'as* [ma] (cf. Mougeon and Beniak, 1991). As regards the future variable, we note instead a slightly higher preference for the more formal inflected form among male adolescents. This may be due to the disproportionate number of females (N = 14) to males (N = 24) in Cornwall, which outranks all other communities in the use of the PF. That said, the difference between the factor weights calculated in Table 3 for males and females in the four localities is minimal.

In terms of speaker class, there is a linear correlation between variant choice and class. In the middle class range, we see the lowest percentage of the PF and the highest percentage of the IF. Yet among the working-class speakers, there is greater use of the PF and much less of the IF. This result suggests that, while both variants are standard features in French, the IF is considered more formal in Ontario French. A similar pattern also holds in Montréal (Emirkanian and D. Sankoff, 1985), where tokens of the IF are more abundant in the speech of those belonging to the highest class.

4.2 *Language use restriction*

It is at first blush surprising that language use restriction does not correlate with variant choice. Previous research on Franco-Ontarian French has consistently reported significant results for this factor when examining grammatical variation (see Mougeon and Beniak, 1991; Nadasdi, 2000).

In the case at hand, there are indeed reasons to expect the variants to be correlated with language use restriction. On the one hand, we might anticipate greater use of the PF by restricted speakers since previous research has found that this group frequently displays a preference for structures that are morphologically less complex. For example, Mougeon and Beniak's (1991) study of irregular third-person-plural verbs (e.g. *ils peuvent*) found that restricted speakers frequently simplify these forms such that they resemble the dominant morphological pattern according to which there is no difference between third-person singular and plural morphology (e.g. *ils peut*). Similar results were obtained in Nadasdi's (2000) analysis of clitic pronouns, since he reports a clear tendency for restricted speakers to use fewer clitics than their unrestricted counterparts. As such, one would expect greater use of the PF among restricted speakers, given the morphological complexity of the IF. However, studies that have examined the alternation between formal and informal variants have consistently found restricted speakers to use fewer informal variants (and

Table 4. *Variant distribution according to language use restriction and polarity.*

	POLARITY			
	AFFIRMATIVE		NEGATIVE	
RESTRICTION	N	%	N	%
Restricted				
Periphrastic	254	91	7	50
Inflected	26	9	7	50
Total	280	100	14	100
Semi-restricted				
Periphrastic	430	95	16	36
Inflected	21	5	28	64
Total	451	100	44	100
Unrestricted				
Periphrastic	386	98	4	8
Inflected	8	2	45	92
Total	394	100	49	100

consequently more formal variants) than unrestricted speakers of Ontario French. For instance, the restricted speakers have been shown to make less frequent use of schwa deletion (cf. Mougeon, Nadasdi, Rehner, and Uritescu, 2002), /l/ deletion (cf. Tennant, 1995), *ça fait que* (cf. Mougeon and Beniak, 1991), *rien que* (cf. Rehner and Mougeon, 1998) and subject-doubling (cf. Nadasdi, 2000). It could therefore be expected that one would find greater use of the IF in the speech of the restricted speakers. Still, as we have seen, no significant difference was documented for the future variants according to language-use restriction.

Before explaining this anomaly, we wish to remind the reader that the use of the periphrastic and inflected futures in spoken Canadian French, as witnessed in the speech communities of Ottawa-Hull, Montréal and Québec, is largely conditioned by syntactic polarity. While the PF is the dominant variant in affirmative utterances, the IF is almost always present when the polarity of a given sentence is negative. Still, this general pattern does not obtain for all speakers when we examine the effect of polarity according to language use restriction. In fact, as language restriction increases, the usage rate for the PF in negative utterances also increases – as much as 50% among the restricted speakers. Conversely, the lower the degree of language restriction, the less likely the PF will be used in negative utterances (see Table 4).

As this table reveals, the IF constitutes the dominant future form used among unrestricted speakers in negative utterances: 92%. This pattern largely imitates the marked preference for the IF in negative utterances in majority French-language speakers elsewhere in Canada. Among the semi-restricted speakers, we see that they produce intermediary results which follow the same general trend as the unrestricted speaker group, since they too show a marked preference for the IF in negative utterances. However, this constraint is ostensibly absent in the speech of the restricted speakers.

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The quantitative distribution of our data indicates that a linear correlation also exists with respect to locality and the rate for the PF in negative sentences (see Table 2). As mentioned previously, the PF is at all times absent in negative utterances in the community of Hawkesbury, where the greatest number of unrestricted speakers live. However, in Pembroke, where we find the greatest concentration of restricted speakers, the percentage of tokens associated with the PF in negative utterances is at its highest.

5 CONCLUSION

In spite of external pressures to abandon the ancestral language in favour of English, the dominant language spoken in the province of Ontario, our research shows that it is nonetheless possible for minority speakers to maintain a morphologically complex form – in this case, the synthetic inflected future. This is especially true for the restricted speakers, who have largely lost French in daily communication outside the French education system. In fact, we submit that the school system itself is responsible for perpetuating the use of the IF among restricted speakers and that the standardizing effect of school has consequently prevented restricted speakers from learning the variable context in which polarity exerts such a strong influence. Simply put, the restricted speakers appear unaffected by the polarity constraint, which can only be acquired when a speaker has greater exposure to features of popular speech. In no other corpus of French in Canada is there equal representation of both future variants in negative contexts, as was found in the restricted speaker group. That said, we do recognize that the total token count for negative utterances in this group is limited, with a total of 14 occurrences.

We also note that the majority language speakers in Hawkesbury express the future in a way that resembles if not advances linguistic trends occurring in other majority French speech communities in Canada (with the exception of Acadian French). The categorical division between the PF and IF based on polarity not only demonstrates that language change is complete in Hawkesbury, but that access to the minority language in and out of the home helps to ensure that minority speakers retain greater stylistic flexibility in speech.

Our data reveal that the future tense in spoken Ontarian French demonstrates trends similar to and also different from other French-speaking communities in Canada. One significant finding concerns variant distribution. Compared to all francophone populations in Canada, we see that the IF is least frequent in Ontario. It accounts for only 11% of future tokens, and yet it constitutes no less than 17% of future tokens in other Laurentian varieties. This proportion translates into an obvious preference for the PF as the default future form irrespective of its purported temporal value.

Despite the reported differences between restricted and non-restricted speakers, it is nonetheless interesting to discover that the percentage distribution for the future variants among them is nearly the same. Token proportions in the restricted speaker group are 11% for the IF and 89% for the PF. With respect to the non-restricted speakers, these figures are 12% and 88% for the IF and the PF respectively

(see Table 3). Though the exact token counts differ, it should not go unnoticed that when the future is being expressed throughout the minority communities, the degree to which it is used is constant.

The most significant finding we have to contribute to extant literature on the future variable in Canadian French, to the exclusion of Acadian varieties, is that polarity continues to maintain its known status as the most influential linguistic factor to condition variant choice. In Ontario, however, this 'constraint' is not operative in all three language use restriction groups. As identified in the previous studies we have consulted, the PF is the dominant choice in affirmative sentences and the IF is near categorical in negative sentences. Our data show that in Hawkesbury, where the largest concentration of non-restricted speakers reside, the polarity constraint is strongest in this community, the divide being effectively categorical. In other words, all negative future verbs are of the inflected form, whereas the periphrastic future is without exception present in affirmative sentences. This result leads us to believe that linguistic change for the polarity constraint in Hawkesbury is now complete.

Unlike the Hawkesbury speakers, the restricted speakers' use of the variants patterns quite differently. We noted an equal distribution of the variants in negative sentences—an unprecedented observation in Canadian French. To this end, we assume that the polarity constraint is absent in this group of speakers. This is likely due to limited contact with spoken French on a daily basis outside the walls of the French-language school system. The general finding that restricted and unrestricted speakers use the same percentage of variants, but not in the same contexts, underscores the importance of conducting cross-tabulations for each language restriction group (cf. Mougeon and Nadasdi, 1998).

Finally, given the heterogeneous character of the trends we have described for the speakers in Hawkesbury and the restricted speakers elsewhere, we can safely assert that the future variable constitutes yet another evident case of linguistic discontinuity in minority French in Ontario.

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