

## THE FUTURE OF ONTARIO FRENCH

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Our study presents a variationist account of the future variable in Ontario French. Two variants are examined, namely the periphrastic future (e.g.: *elle va partir*) and the inflected future (e.g. *elle partira*). The data used in our study are taken from Mougeon & Beniak's corpus of French spoken in Hawkesbury, Cornwall, North Bay and Pembroke, Ontario. The current analysis makes a unique contribution to the study of the future variable since, while it has been the object of quantitative analysis in the past (cf. King and Nadasdi 2003; Chevalier 1996; Emirkanian and Sankoff 1985; Poplack and Turpin 1999; Deshaies and Laforge 1981), ours is the first to taken language use restriction into account.

We will first present overall results for the variable, followed by a discussion of relevant factors. The general trend that emerges in Ontario French is that the use of the periphrastic future is higher than what has been reported for the French spoken in Quebec, Acadia or France (the overall use of the periphrastic variant is 89% in Ontario; no other region reports rates higher than 73%). The presentation of results also includes an in-depth discussion of linguistic and social factors that condition variant choice. Although we coded for a variety of linguistic factors, only one factor, namely positive versus negative polarity was selected during GoldVarb analysis. Previous research (notably Poplack & 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 this factor and language use restriction. Cross-tabulation of locality and polarity reveal that the effect of this factor varies across communities (cf. Mougeon & Nadasdi, 1998). The effect of polarity is shown to be categoric in the French majority town of Hawkesbury, i.e. the inflected future is never used in positive utterances. Conversely, in the minority language community of Pembroke (where only 8% of the local population is francophone), negative/positive polarity has no effect on variant choice!

Our paper closes with a discussion section that examines the reasons why minority language students' speech is discontinuous with that of majority language francophones. In this discussion, we consider in particular the domains in which minority language speakers use French.

### References

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