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A Real-time Study of Future Temporal Reference in Spoken Ontarian French

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Abstract

In this paper I examine the use of future temporal reference in real-time in the majority French community of Hawkesbury, Ontario, Canada. The corpora, established in 1978 and 2005, contain sociolinguistic interviews of Francophone adolescents 15 to 18 years of age enrolled in French-medium schools. At issue in this research is the variation between the periphrastic and inflected future forms. Over the 28-year time span, the periphrastic future has assumed new prestige in this variety, now the preferred variant of the middle class. Moreover, this form has made significant gains into negative contexts, the formerly privileged and nearly exclusive site of the inflected future. In light of this unprecedented behavior, the question remains as to what will become of the inflected future. I discuss here a number of important signs discovered in the real-time data for Hawkesbury that lend further support for the waning force of the inflected future in Laurentian varieties of spoken French.

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1 Introduction

This article contributes both to the extant literature on future temporal reference in spoken Canadian French and to the growing body of diachronic investigations of this variable. This is achieved through an examination of data drawn from two corpora collected in 1978 and 2005 among Francophone adolescents in the community of Hawkesbury, Ontario, Canada. The time span of 28 years makes it possible to study language variation and change across two consecutive generations. This study differs from prior research in one important way: it is the first to offer a real-time account of the variable expression of future temporal reference in a community where French is the **majority** language at the local level but also a **minority** language at the provincial level.

While speakers of French may make use of numerous constructions to refer to future outcomes, such as periphrastic constructions (see Gougenheim 1971), the futurate present (see Le Goffic 2001) and the inflected or synthetic future, variationist research conducted in Canada, including the present study, has tended to focus on only two variants, the periphrastic future (PF, in 1a) and the inflected future (IF, in 1b):

- (1) a. Je **vas** les **revoir** par après. (H2-20)¹ ‘I’m going to see them again afterwards.’
- b. Il y **aura** plus du tout de français. (H1-09) ‘There won’t be any French left at all.’

The variation between the PF and IF, and to a lesser extent the futurate present, has captured the attention of several researchers of spoken varieties of Laurentian French (for Québec City, see Deshaies and Laforge 1981; for Montréal, see Emirkanian and D. Sankoff 1985, Zimmer 1994, Blondeau 2006, and Sankoff and Evans Wagner 2006; for Ottawa-Hull, see Poplack and Turpin 1999; for Ottawa-Hull and Québec, see Poplack and Dion 2009; for Ontario, see Grimm and Nadasdi 2011) as well as Acadian varieties (for Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland, see King and Nadasdi 2003), in regions where French holds either minority or majority status.² In particular, variationist work on Laurentian varieties has repeatedly found that the PF quantitatively outranks the IF and that it has furthermore crept into temporal contexts for which traditional grammars would prescribe the IF. These observations have led some researchers (e.g., Poplack and Turpin 1999) to propose that the inflected form is disappearing from the spoken language.

The real-time results for Hawkesbury indicate an overall decline in the proportionate distribution of the IF and, importantly, an unprecedented number of occurrences of the PF in negative contexts, the latter widely considered the “last preserve” of the inflected form. Moreover, the PF, generally perceived as less formal than the IF, is now favored more by middle-class speakers than by speakers of lower social classes. It appears that the PF has gained new social prestige in the community. In sum, the findings presented here provide further evidence supporting the waning force of the inflected form in Laurentian varieties of spoken French.

2 The Periphrastic and Inflected Futures: Previous Studies

Prescriptive grammars have ascribed a rather complex set of temporal functions to both future forms which serve to identify the speaker’s relationship with an event or the likelihood the event

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¹Speakers are identified by community (H=Hawkesbury), corpus (1=1978, 2=2005), and number.

²Laurentian French includes Québécois French and the varieties of French spoken in regions of Canada (west of Québec) and the USA. Acadian varieties, on the other hand, are situated in the eastern provinces of Atlantic Canada.

will occur (cf. Poplack and Turpin 1999). According to grammarians, the PF should be selected to express proximity to speech time, imminence, intentionality, and certainty of outcome. In contrast, the inflected future is said to signal neutrality, psychological separation from the event, and an absence of proof the event will take place.

However, despite this rather rigid categorization of variant usage, there is conflicting evidence in previous research suggesting that these distinctions are not fully operative in spoken Canadian French. Moreover, it has been shown that among the various linguistic and social factors that may condition the future forms, the only consistently significant factor shared throughout this body of work is that of polarity, where the PF is massively favored in affirmative utterances and the IF occurs almost exclusively in negative ones.

Apparent and real-times studies of future temporal reference in Laurentian varieties abound. The various corpora exploited³ include interview data from the provinces of Québec (Québec City, Montréal) and Ontario (Hawkesbury, Cornwall, North Bay, Pembroke) as well as the Ottawa-Hull region. The majority of this research has analyzed many of the same linguistic and social factors that may condition the use of one or the other variant (cf. Section 4). Nevertheless, there is a lack of uniformity within this research with regard to the factors that either show a clear preference for a particular variant or that are selected as significant following multiple regression analyses.⁴ For instance, Emirikian and D. Sankoff (1985) found that in Montréal the PF occurs more readily with certain temporal adverbs (e.g., *dans une semaine* ‘in one week’) but in Ottawa-Hull the PF is favored by the absence of temporal adverbs. Despite this difference, speakers in both communities tend to resort to the PF to express proximal outcomes. The effect of grammatical person has been selected as significant only in Ottawa-Hull, specifically the formal pronoun *vous* ‘you’ which strongly favors the IF. When the realization of an event is contingent upon another, some researchers (Poplack and Turpin 1999, Blondeau 2006) have detected a greater probability of occurrence of the IF.

Where consistency is met throughout all of the apparent-time and real-time studies vis-à-vis the linguistic factors is in the domain of sentential polarity. There is a nearly categorical association between PFs in affirmative contexts and IFs in negative contexts.⁵ It is interesting to note that real-time research has shown that the overwhelming effect of polarity has persisted for many years. This constraint remains stable in Blondeau’s (2006) study of the future variable across a 24-year period (1971–1995) as well as in Poplack and Dion’s (2009) study which tracks the variants over 120 years.

In contrast to the linguistic factors, there is slightly more consistency across the social factors contributing to variation. In Ottawa-Hull (Poplack and Turpin 1999) and Montréal (Emirikian and D. Sankoff 1985, Zimmer 1994), the oldest speakers tend to favor the IF (sometimes marginally) more than any other age bracket; conversely, younger speakers make greater use of the PF. Blondeau (2006) also found that the Montréal speakers in her panel study showed a preference for the PF in their younger years but that, as they aged, their use of the IF increased. Sankoff and Evans Wagner (2006), however, did not arrive at the same conclusion. The effect of speaker sex has been noted in Zimmer (1994), with the youngest group of male speakers favoring the PF and older females favoring the IF. In Ontario, however, it was found that adolescent females favored the PF more than their male counterparts (Grimm and Nadasdi 2011). Finally, a number of studies (e.g., Emirikian and D. Sankoff 1985, G. Sankoff and Evans Wagner 2006, Grimm and Nadasdi 2011) have observed higher IF usage among the more privileged classes.

3 The Franco-Ontarian Community

The present study was conducted using a sub-sample of data extracted from two corpora of so-

³The longitudinal corpora of Montréal French were constructed in 1971 (cf. Sankoff and Sankoff 1973), 1984 (cf. Thibault and Vincent 1990) and 1995 (cf. Vincent et al. 1995). The future variable in Montréal was studied using data from one, two, or three of these. For the Ottawa-Hull corpus, see Poplack (1989).

⁴The earlier studies (e.g., Deshaies and Laforge 1981, Emirikian and D. Sankoff 1985, and Zimmer 1994) either do not perform regression analyses or do not supply the results of these, providing token numbers and percentages only.

⁵See the relevant discussion on why this may be in Poplack and Dion (2009).

ciolinguistic interviews (SLIs) gathered in 1978 and 2005 in the same French speaking communities. Hawkesbury, Cornwall, North Bay and Pembroke are all situated in the southeast corner of Ontario in close proximity to the Québec border. The SLIs were conducted with Francophone adolescents from 15 to 18 years of age enrolled in French-medium schools. Each interview is roughly one to one and a half hours in length, recorded on the school premises, and designed to elicit natural speech (Labov 1994). To facilitate maximal comparison across the 28-year period, a number of the same (types of) questions were posed to the informants.

The four communities mentioned above were selected to examine variation in settings with varying levels of Francophone concentration. In Hawkesbury, Francophones constitute a strong majority; in the other three localities, they are more or less in the minority.⁶ Thus in each community opportunities to use the ancestral language as opposed to English vary greatly. Given this, speakers are categorized into three groups, unrestricted, semi-restricted, and restricted, on the basis of how frequently they use French and English in their daily lives (cf. Mougeon and Beniak 1991). The use of French is extensive among the “unrestricted speakers,” whose proficiency is in many ways comparable to that of French speakers in Québec. “Semi-restricted speakers” favor French and English nearly equally and are the most bilingual cohort. Finally, the use of English is greatest among “restricted speakers,” for whom French is not spoken or is rarely spoken in the home and tends to be limited to educational contexts.

Hawkesbury, the locality selected for the present study, is a predominantly working-class town located northeast of the nation’s capital of Ottawa. This community is in a particularly unique position: while French is a minority language throughout Ontario as a whole, in Hawkesbury it is the dominant language of communication. Fully 85% of the local population spoke French as a mother tongue in 1978, a number that declined slightly to 80% in 2005.

4 Methodology

The data were extracted from 20 interviews recorded in 1978 and 50 interviews recorded in 2005. Whereas nearly all speakers in the 1978 Hawkesbury corpus were unrestricted (19/20) and therefore regular users of French in and outside the home, this is not the case for the 2005 corpus, which consists of 37 unrestricted speakers and 13 semi-restricted speakers. (There are no restricted speakers in Hawkesbury.) The distinction between these two groups is an important one, because, as will be detailed in the sections below, there exist some noteworthy differences with respect to sociolinguistic variation within each language restriction group.

4.1 Excluded Data

The periphrastic and inflected future forms are not limited to expressing the future alone. Indeed, they both have a number of morphologically equivalent structures that either do not refer to a future time or preclude/restrict variation. Examples of these are found in (2):

- (2) a. Habitual activity:
Des fois m’as lui parler en français des fois en anglais. (H2-41)
 ‘Sometimes I speak to him/her in French sometimes in English.’
- b. Hypothetical statements:
Mettons si t’as un système de son dans ton char, tu vas le barrer. (H2-13)
 ‘Let’s say if you have a sound system in your car, you’re going to lock it.’
- c. Invariable expressions:
 Elle fait souvent comme des lasagnes qu’est-ce que **tu voudras**. (H2-30)
 ‘She often makes like lasagna or whatever (you want).’
- d. Verbs of restricted variation:⁷

⁶During the period separating each recording year, the French-speaking population has declined in all communities: Hawkesbury: 85% > 80%; Cornwall: 35% > 27%; North Bay: 17% > 14%; Pembroke: 8% > 6% (cf. Mougeon et al. 2005).

⁷To rule out a possible lexical effect, the entire set of tokens for the verb *être* ‘be’ were excluded due to their predilection for the PF (N=128/149). This is especially true for cases of the verb which co-occur with

Dans cent ans **ça sera pas** ben ben beau. **Ça va être** pollué. (H2-50)
 ‘In a hundred years it won’t be very nice. It’s going to be polluted.’

Additional examples of discarded forms include those which appeared in reported speech; those which were repeated, corrected, or ambiguous; those found in instances where *aller* indicated spatial movement; those occurring in protasis clauses; and the few cases where the variant expressed a future time viewed from the past, such as descriptions of scenes in a movie or book.

4.2 Linguistic Factors

In total, 911 tokens of the variants expressing futurity were retained for 2005 and 178 for 1978. With the exception of speech style (cf. Mougeon et al. 2009a, appendix A), these were coded using the protocol proposed by Poplack and Turpin (1999) and by King and Nadasdi (2003). The factors considered are described below.

4.2.1 Sentential Polarity

Given the vigorous effect of polarity in prior research, this factor was expected to play an influential role with respect to variant choice in Hawkesbury as well. Occurrences of the variants were coded and identified as either affirmative (3a) or negative (3b):

- (3) a. Je vas les revoir par après. (H2-20)
 ‘I’m going to see them again afterwards.’
 b. Il y aura **plus du tout** de français. (H1-09)
 ‘There won’t be any French left at all.’

4.2.2 Grammatical Person

Poplack and Turpin (1999) found a strong correlation between the formal 2PL subject pronoun *vous* ‘you’ and the IF. This pronoun is very rare in the Hawkesbury data (1978: N=2; 2005: N=0) and therefore no such result is expected. Other subject pronouns may, however, play a role, such as the more subjective first person pronouns, which, according to some, favor the PF. All grammatical persons, singular (1SG in 4a) and plural (3PL in 4b) were coded in the analysis:

- (4) a. Le français c’est en moi pis **je** pourrai jamais le faire sortir. (H2-02)
 ‘French is a part of me and I will never let it go away.’
 b. **Les élèves** vont être plus contents. (H2-29)
 ‘The students are going to be happier.’

4.2.3 Temporal Reference

According to traditional grammars, the PF is said to best express proximal actions, whereas the IF is required when no link with the present or near future exists. To test for this hypothesis, all verbs were categorized according to outcome: within the hour, the day, the week (5a), in greater than one week (5b), or at an unspecified time.

- (5) a. Elle va avoir un an dimanche. (H2-50)
 ‘She is going to turn one on Sunday.’
 b. M’as faire pas mal de ski cet hiver. (H1-12)
 ‘I’m gonna do quite a bit of skiing this winter.’

the demonstrative pronoun *ça* ‘this/that/it’ (PF: N=70/73). Further analyses must be pursued in order to determine if all tokens of this verb (and indeed any other high-frequency verb following a similar pattern) require total or partial exclusion or separate analysis. Tokens of the verb *falloir* ‘must, have to’ were also rejected, appearing exclusively in the affirmative (N=36), of which 35 are PFs. Given the comparatively reduced number of tokens retained from the 1978 corpus (N=178), there is no clear indication whether a particular verb is preferred by either future variant; the above exclusions were not applied.

4.2.4 Adverbial Specification

Temporal adverbs, if present, may also contribute to the variation in order to better situate an event in the future. Those that did appear were coded as specific (6a) or nonspecific (6b).

- (6) a. Ben, il (le film) va sortir **le 3 novembre**.
 ‘Well, it (the movie) is going to be released November 3rd.’
 b. Je vas avoir dix-sept **bientôt**. (H2-11)
 ‘I am going to be 17 soon.’

4.2.5 Certainty

Some claim that the PF is preferred when an action is judged certain to occur (Frontier 1997:533) whereas doubtful outcomes take the IF (Franckel 1984:66). Since there is some support for the effect of this factor in previous research, tokens were coded as either certain (7a) or uncertain (7b).

- (7) a. **Je suis sûr** que je vas déménager là. (H2-46)
 ‘I am sure I am going to move there.’
 b. Il va (y) avoir de la drogue **probablement**. (H1-01)
 ‘There are going to be drugs there probably.’

4.2.6 Presence/absence of *quand* ‘when’

The relationship between *quand* and the future forms has garnered some attention in previous studies. This relationship is often cited in grammars, too, such as Parmentier (1993), whose examples with *quand* never contain the PF. An example with *quand* is shown in (8).

- (8) **Quand** je vas être prof, je vas pas parler comme je parle aujourd’hui. (H2-24)
 ‘When I’m going to be a teacher, I’m not going to talk like I talk today.’

4.2.7 Presence/absence of *si* ‘if’

As with *quand*, the presence of a conditional *si* clause implies that an outcome is contingent on the existence of another, and may promote the use of the IF. An example with *si* is shown in (9).

- (9) **Si** t’as de la famille qui vit là tu pourras pas aller les voir. (H2-41)
 ‘If you have family there you won’t be able to go and see them.’

4.2.8 Speech Style

Mougeon et al. (2009a) devised a topic typology according to which formal subjects (e.g., language use/preference, in 10a) are distinguished from informal subjects (e.g., past times, friends, in 10b). Researchers have commented on the “flavor of formality” the IF may carry (Sankoff and Evans Wagner 2006:11). This factor was included in order to test for a similar association.

- (10) a. Si tu parles pas anglais ça leur dérangera pas. (H2-05)
 ‘If you don’t speak English it won’t bother them.’
 b. Ma « friend »... on se verra plus je suis comme inquiète. (H2-30)
 ‘My friend... we won’t see each other any more I’m like worried.’

4.3 Social Factors

The data were also coded for four social factors: school grade (grade 9, 12), sex, social class (working, lower-middle, middle), and language restriction (unrestricted, semi-restricted). These factors are often considered in variationist research on Ontarian French (Mougeon & Beniak 1991).

5 Results

This section presents the results of a quantitative analysis of the linguistic and social factors outlined above for Hawkesbury in 1978 and 2005. The 2005 data were submitted to multiple regression analyses using the statistical package GoldVarb X. Due to the small number of tokens for 1978 (N=178), probabilities were not calculated and as such the results are displayed in the form of totals and percentages. Grimm and Nadasdi's (2011) results for an aggregate analysis of the future variable in all four communities (Hawkesbury, Cornwall, North Bay, and Pembroke) in the 1978 corpus are provided as a point of comparison.

5.1 Linguistic Factors

For the aggregated data from Franco-Ontarian communities included in the Mougeon and Beniak 1978 corpus, sentential polarity was the only linguistic factor selected as significant. The PF is favored at .59 (N=1070/1125) in affirmative contexts and strongly disfavored in negative contexts, the factor weight being .02 (27/107). No other linguistic factor (cf. Section 4 above) produced significant values (Grimm and Nadasdi 2011).

Table 1 shows that for polarity, the 1978 results from Hawkesbury do not match those of the 1978 sample of aggregated data from the four Franco-Ontarian communities. At that point in time the variants were in complementary distribution: all affirmative future verbs (N=154) were expressed using the PF and all instances of negation are in the IF (N=24). This absence of the PF in negative environments was also noted by Emirkanian and D. Sankoff (1985) for Montréal French.

In 2005 sentential polarity is selected as significant (all speakers), along with grammatical person and certainty. With respect to the first factor group, affirmative contexts have remained a highly favoring context for the PF; however, a focus on negative environments offers a remarkable finding: in 2005 26% of all negative tokens of the variable are in the PF. This is striking, as previous research on varieties of Laurentian French has consistently found that negative utterances are impervious to the PF. That the PF has encroached into this context deserves special attention and will be addressed in more detail in Section 5.3.

As for grammatical person, 1SG favors the PF, while both third person contexts disfavor it. This result may offer some support to prior claims that the PF and first person pronouns are compatible, both purportedly being more subjective. Note that in 1978 it was 3SG subjects that occurred most frequently with the PF.

Degree of certainty also appears to contribute to variation. Although it has been suggested that the PF is more suitable to relating events deemed more certain to take place and that the IF is associated with more doubtful realizations, the 2005 figures show the reverse: a highly favoring effect of the PF for uncertain events (.84). Further inspection reveals an interaction between this factor group and polarity. When all negative tokens are excluded, the PF is used in 100% of the uncertain contexts and in 98% of the certain ones. Thus the claim that the PF is more suitable to express outcomes more certain to occur is not substantiated.

None of the other factor groups included in the analysis (temporal reference, adverbial specification or speech type) were significant.⁸ It is particularly surprising that subject type was not selected as significant. One would expect that the more formal inflected form (i.e., associated with written French and formulaic expressions) would be positively correlated with formal topics (e.g., Poplack and Dion 2009). However, none of the analyses selected this factor group as significant. This may be due to the increased prestige attached to the PF (see Section 5.2 below), which may in turn be "blurring" a potential effect of formality.

According to prior research on French in Ontario, speakers within the same community but differentiated according to language restriction will not necessarily adhere to the same linguistic and extralinguistic constraints on variation (Mougeon and Nadasdi 1998). As such, separate analyses were performed in order to determine just how the variants patterned in each group. These analyses show that the overall effect of polarity is virtually identical for all groups in Hawkesbury. Thus a mid-level degree of restriction in the use of French has no impact on the observance of the polarity constraint. The results for grammatical person and certainty obtain for the unrestricted speakers but not for the semi-restricted speakers. However, although grammatical person was not

⁸The presence/absence of *quand* and *si* were excluded from the analysis due to poor distribution (few occurred with the IF).

selected as significant for the semi-restricted speakers, and certainty could not be subjected to multivariate analysis due to knockout factors, the frequencies show consistent effects.

	Hawkesbury all speakers 1978 (N=178)			Hawkesbury all speakers 2005 (N=911)			Hawkesbury unrestricted only 2005 (N=680)			Hawkesbury semi-restr. only 2005 (N=231)		
	FW	N	%	FW	N	%	FW	N	%	FW	N	%
Polarity												
Affirm.	n/a	154/154	100	.66	786/798	99	.66	588/596	99	.67	198/202	98
Negative	n/a	0/24	0	.01	29/113	26	.01	25/84	30	.01	4/29	14
Person												
1Sg.	n/a	59/68	72	.62	264/282	94	.69	194/203	96	[]	70/79	89
3Pl.	n/a	22/30	73	.44	350/395	89	.43	265/299	89	[]	85/96	88
3Sg.	n/a	66/72	92	.44	160/182	88	.38	124/142	87	[]	36/40	90
Certainty												
uncertain	n/a	40/42	95	.84	150/153	98	.81	124/127	98	KO	26/26	100
certain	n/a	114/136	84	.42	663/756	88	.42	488/552	88	KO	175/204	86

Table 1: Linguistic factors contributing to the selection of the periphrastic future (PF).

5.2 Social Factors

Of the various extralinguistic factors (social class, sex, school year, language restriction, locality) accounted for in their analysis of the future variable for the entire 1978 corpus, Grimm and Nadasdi (2011) found only social class and speaker sex to be significant. The multivariate analysis revealed a linear correlation between social class and the PF: it is favored most strongly by working-class adolescents (.59, N=425/459), less by the lower-middle class (.48, N=504/568) and less still by the middle class (.35, N=153/186). With respect to speaker sex, female adolescents favor the PF (.58, N=545/605) more than male adolescents (.42, N=552/627). This goes against the pattern reported in Zimmer (1994), who found that the youngest group of female speakers used the PF nearly 15% less than males of the same age group. The finding for speaker sex in the aggregated data in 1978 suggests that a shift in the sociostylistic value of the PF was in the making. In 2005 speaker sex is not selected as significant (cf. Table 2).

	Hawkesbury all speakers 1978 (N=178)			Hawkesbury all speakers 2005 (N=911)			Hawkesbury unrestricted only 2005 (N=680)			Hawkesbury semi-restr. only 2005 (N=231)		
	FW	N	%	FW	N	%	FW	N	%	FW	N	%
Class												
Middle	n/a	17/19	90	.57	301/322	94	.63	222/233	95	[]	78/88	89
Lwr-Mid	n/a	73/88	83	.53	284/315	90	.57	193/208	93	[]	91/107	85
Working	n/a	64/71	90	.38	230/274	84	.32	198/239	83	[]	32/35	91
Grade												
9	n/a	44/48	92	.61	376/401	94	.60	278/295	94	.62	98/106	93
12	n/a	110/130	85	.41	439/510	86	.42	335/385	87	.40	104/125	83
Lg. Restr.												
unrest.	n/a	153/177	86	.57	415/441	94	--	--	--	--	--	--
semi-rest.	n/a	1/1	100	.35	170/196	87	--	--	--	--	--	--

Table 2: Social factors contributing to the selection of the periphrastic future (PF).

When the results for Hawkesbury in 1978 and 2005 are compared (Table 2), we witness a change in the relative social prestige attached to the IF and the PF. In 1978, middle and working-class speakers favored the PF equally at 90%, a rather puzzling result in light of the social class stratification in the aggregate data from all four localities mentioned above. This difference could be attributed to the fact that the middle-class speakers in Hawkesbury (1978) only produced 19 tokens of the PF, a number far lower than that reported for the other classes. By 2005, the middle-class speakers, and to a lesser extent the lower-middle class speakers, led in the use of the PF over the working-class. This result indicates that the IF is now associated with working-class speech. It appears, then, that the PF is undergoing a process of valorization, one that has subsequently eroded the former association of the IF with formal styles and with the speech of individuals from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. This is in line with other real-time research that has also re-

ported on the valorization of a non-standard feature (e.g., the use of the 1SG conjugation *je vas* ‘I go’ as opposed to prescriptive *je vais* and non-standard *m’as*, cf. Mougeon et al. 2009a).

The figures in Table 2 also show that the PF is more likely to occur in the speech of the younger (grade 9) adolescents, a result that remains constant in all of the analyses. Further exploration will investigate whether this is attributable to a pattern of age-grading (Blondeau 2006). Also relevant is the finding that the unrestricted speakers prefer the PF more than the semi-restricted speakers. This is consonant with other real-time research on Hawkesbury French, which has found that semi-restricted speakers are more frequent users of non-standard variants than unrestricted speakers (cf. Mougeon et al. 2009b).

When the analyses of social factors are broken down according to speaker group, social class is selected as significant for the unrestricted speakers only. In fact, the results for this factor group parallel those for the community as a whole. In contrast, social class was not selected as significant for the semi-restricted group. However, a review of the percentages reveals that the working-class semi-restricted adolescents use the PF more than the other social classes. It may be the case that the comparatively smaller total number of occurrences of the PF for this group is complicating the larger picture.

To sum up, the factor weights and percentages calculated for the linguistic and social factors show a fair degree of uniformity across the speaker groups in Hawkesbury. Furthermore, the results for social class suggest that the unrestricted middle-class speakers are at the vanguard of the increasingly valorized PF.

5.3 The Uncertain Future of the Inflected Future

Grimm and Nadasdi (2011) observed that Franco-Ontarians produced more occurrences of the PF than speakers of any other Laurentian variety and, conversely, the least number of occurrences of the IF. Table 3 shows that, in 1978, speakers in Hawkesbury opted for the PF 3.5% to 8.5% more and the IF 3.5% to 8.5% less than any other majority French community. The proportionate use of the PF has risen in Hawkesbury such that, by 2005, this form now represents 89.5% of all future tokens, reserving 10.5% for the IF. While this decline was not selected as significant by GoldVarb, it may nevertheless constitute a possible sign of the IF’s erosion in spoken French.

		Ott-Hull 1999 ⁹	Montréal 1985	Montréal 1994	Ontario 1978	Hawkesbury 1978	Hawkesbury 2005
Periphrastic Future	N	2,627	1,093	1,135	1,097	154	815
	%	78%	79%	83%	89%	86.5%	89.5%
Inflected Future	N	725	291	227	135	24	96
	%	22%	21%	17%	11%	13.5%	10.5%
	Total	3,352	1,384	1,362	1,232	178	911

Table 3: Distribution of the future variants in Laurentian varieties of French.¹⁰

The distribution of the variants in Hawkesbury in 2005 stands in contrast to other real-time studies conducted within a 30-year period or less. For example, Blondeau (2006) discovered an increase in IF usage among 12 speakers of Montréal French interviewed in 1971, 1984, and 1995. In contrast, Sankoff and Evans Wagner (2006) reported that their cohort of 60 speakers of Montréal French interviewed in 1971 and 1984 showed little change in the usage of the future forms. The findings for Montréal French differ from those for Hawkesbury, likely because the Montréal studies track change over the lifespan of the same individuals (panel study) and the Hawkesbury study compares speakers from the same age cohort at two points in time (trend study), 1978 vs.

⁹The Ottawa-Hull study also examined a third variant: the futurate present (P). I have factored out these tokens and readjusted the percentages in Table 3 for reasons of comparison. Actual figures reported in Poplack and Turpin (1999:148) are as follows: PF (N=2627, 73%), IF (N=725, 20%) and P (N=242, 7%).

¹⁰For Ottawa-Hull, see Poplack and Turpin (1999); Montréal, see Emirikian & D. Sankoff (1985) and Zimmer (1994); Ontario, see Grimm and Nadasdi (2011).

2005, a time span of one generation.

The findings over time for polarity are particularly exciting. In 1978, the PF was categorically used in affirmative contexts (N=154/154) whereas the IF was categorical in negative contexts (N=24/24). Although in 2005 affirmative environments continue to favor the PF (N=786/798, 98.5%), the PF *no longer* resists negative environments (N=29/113, 26%). This represents both a change over time in the community as well as a notable departure from the relevant findings reported in previous studies. The rise of the PF to 26% in negative environments is exceptional, given that negation has long been viewed as one of the last strongholds of the IF in spoken French in Canada. A comparison against studies on majority French in Canada shows that the PF is extremely rare, if not entirely absent, in negative environments (with the exception of Acadian varieties, cf. King and Nadasdi 2003). In previous apparent-time research, the PF in negative contexts is never more than 8%. Furthermore, this appears to be a longstanding effect. The *Récits du Français Québécois d'Autrefois*, a collection of audio recordings of Québécois born in the mid to late 1800s, contain exceedingly few examples of negated PFs (N=5/457, 1%) (Poplack and Dion 2009). Thus the leap from 0% to 26% in negative contexts observed in Hawkesbury provides new evidence in support of the increasingly weakened status of the inflected form.

6 Conclusion

Over the past three decades the expression of future temporal reference has sparked the interest of many researchers of Canadian French. While the bulk of their work was conducted using the apparent-time construct, a growing number of real-time studies are now available. The present study is the most recent to document the alternation between the PF and the IF in real time. What's more, it is the only study in which the future variable has been examined across two time periods for a community where French is the majority language located in a predominantly English-speaking province. These results offer a crucial point of reference for forthcoming analyses of the future variable in the remaining three minority French communities in the 2005 corpus (Cornwall, North Bay, and Pembroke) and also serve as a basis of comparison for work on this variable among Francophone adolescents elsewhere (e.g., Poplack 2009).

A recurrent theme one often encounters in previous research is the fate of the IF. On the basis of their findings for Ottawa-Hull, Poplack and Turpin (1999) predict that it is approaching the end of its time, only to join other morphological verbal forms, such as the *passé simple*, which, with the exception of a handful of frozen or archaic expressions, are now moribund in most varieties of spoken French (cf. Comeau and King 2009 for an analysis of the *passé simple* in a variety where it is still productive). If we apply this prediction specifically to the variety of French spoken in Hawkesbury, three key findings prop up the hypothesis that the use of the IF is declining:

1. The PF has gained new social prestige as the preferred variant in middle-class speech.
2. The PF has made unprecedented gains in negative contexts where the IF once reigned.
3. The IF has receded by 3% between 1978 and 2005 (13.5% to 10.5%).

Taken together, these points do suggest that the IF may soon find itself ousted from the vernacular, fit for hyperformal registers and written French. However, it may also be the case that, as the adolescents speakers in Hawkesbury age and increase their exposure to formal language in the workplace, the IF will become more productive in spoken French, as was found by Blondeau (2006). While the fate of the inflected future remains a matter of prediction, what is evident from the discussion above is that in Hawkesbury the periphrastic future has strengthened its position as the default marker of futurity.

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