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The Variable Grammar of Negative Concord in Montréal French

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Abstract

This paper presents a new study of the grammatical and social factors conditioning variable negative concord in Québec French, with a particular focus on the French spoken in Montréal. It has been observed, since at least Daoust-Blais 1975, Lemieux 1985 and Muller 1991, that negative indefinites in certain varieties of French spoken in Canada and in Europe can optionally co-occur with the sentential negation operator *pas* 'not' without creating a difference in meaning: *J'ai (pas) rien contre ça* 'I have nothing against that'. The study of patterns of variation in negative concord constructions in varieties of English has received an enormous amount of attention in the field of sociolinguistics, particularly in variationist circles, and there have been numerous studies of patterns of variation in another aspect of the French negation system: the presence/absence of the preverbal clitic *ne*. In contrast, with the exception of Daoust-Blais 1975, Lemieux 1985, and Larrivée 2014, there has been very little quantitative investigation into the sociolinguistic factors conditioning the variable use of *pas* with negative indefinites. This paper therefore contributes to filling this empirical gap with a new quantitative study of variable negative concord in the *Montréal 84* corpus of spoken Montréal French (Thibault and Vincent 1990). In particular, we show that the use of the concord variant (versus the bare variant) is conditioned by both social factors (age and education level) and grammatical factors (lexical identity and syntactic embedding). Furthermore, we observe that the grammatical factors that are found to significantly condition the variation found in *Montréal 84* are properties that have been previously argued to play a role in the non-variable syntax of negative concord in other Gallo-Romance and Italian dialects. Therefore, in addition to shedding light on the linguistic encoding of social categories in 20th century Québec, our results shed light on the fine-grained typology of the syntax of negation in the Romance and Germanic languages.

The Variable Grammar of Negative Concord in Montréal French

Heather Burnett, Mireille Tremblay and Hélène Blondeau[*]

1 Introduction

This paper presents a new study of the grammatical and social factors conditioning variable **negative concord** in Québec French, with a particular focus on the French spoken in Montréal. It has been observed, since at least Daoust-Blais 1975, Lemieux 1985 and Muller 1991, that negative indefinites (which we will call *nwords* (Laka 1990)) in certain varieties of French spoken in Canada and in Europe[1] can optionally co-occur with the sentential negation operator *pas* 'not' without creating a difference in meaning. For example, as shown in (1), taken from the *Montréal 84* corpus of spoken Montréal French (Thibault and Vincent 1990), in the speech of the same speaker, the nword *rien* 'nothing/anything' can either appear **bare** in a sentence without negation (1a), or it can appear in the scope of *pas* (1b) to create a synonymous single negation (i.e., **negative concord)** interpretation.

(1) a. *La   loi   cent un moi   j'ai   **rien**   contre   ça.*
      The   bill   101   me   I'have   **nothing** against that
      'I have nothing against Bill 101.' (27 213)

   b. *C'est   pour   ça   que   j'ai   **pas**   **rien**   contre   la   loi*
      It's   for   that   that   I'have   not   nothing   against the   bill
      cent un.
      101
      'This is why I have nothing against Bill 101.' (27 221)

The study of patterns of variation in negative concord constructions in varieties of English has received an enormous amount of attention in the field of sociolinguistics, particularly in variationist circles (Labov 1972, Tottie 1991, Howe 1997, Nevalainen 2006, Childs et al. 2014, among many others). Furthermore, there have been numerous studies of patterns of variation in another aspect of the French negation system: the presence/absence of the preverbal clitic *ne* (i.e., *Il (ne) parle pas.* 'He doesn't talk') (Ashby 1976, Sankoff and Vincent 1977, Armstrong and Smith 2002, Martineau and Mougeon 2003, Poplack and St.-Amand 2007, Auger and Villeneuve 2008, among many others). In contrast, with the exception of Daoust-Blais 1975, Lemieux 1985, and Larrivée 2014, there has been very little quantitative investigation into the sociolinguistic factors conditioning the variable use of *pas* with nwords. This paper therefore contributes to filling this empirical gap with a new quantitative study of variable negative concord in the *Montréal 84* corpus. In particular, we show that the use of the concord variant (versus the bare variant) is conditioned by both social factors (age and education level) and grammatical factors (lexical identity and syntactic embedding). Furthermore, we observe that the grammatical factors that are found to significantly condition the variation found in *Montréal 84* are properties that have been previously argued to play a role in the non-variable syntax of negative concord in other Gallo-Romance and Italian dialects. Therefore, in addition to shedding light on the linguistic encoding of social categories in 20th century Québec, our results shed light on the fine-grained typology of the syntax of negation in the Romance and Germanic languages.

The paper is laid out as follows: In section 2, we identify the shape of the negative concord variable in Montréal French. Then, in section 3, we describe the quantitative study, and discuss its implications for our understanding of the variable syntax of negation in Romance and the question of change in progress in Québec French. Finally, section 4 gives some concluding remarks.

[1]See (among others) Gaatone 1971, Gadet 1992 and Larrivée 2014 for a discussion of negative concord in varieties of French spoken on French territory.

2 Circumscribing the Variable Context

As mentioned in the introduction, variable negative concord has been extensively studied for synchronic and diachronic varieties of English; however, it is important to observe that the properties of this phenomenon are subject to a fair amount of cross-linguistic variation. In particular, the shape of the variable can differ across dialects/languages along (at least) three dimensions: 1) the set of s**yntactic positions** in which negative indefinites can optionally co-occur with negation, 2) the **inventory of negative indefinites** participating in the alternation, and 3) the **inventory of non-negative indefinites** appearing in the scope of negation. In what follows, we will situate variable negative concord in Montréal French along these three dimensions.

The first dimension is syntactic position. Languages/dialects can differ according to the syntactic configurations in which concord is possible. For example, many of the Gallo-Romance dialects allow variable negative concord with nwords in a position preceding a finite verb hosting negation, as shown in (2) for Vimeu Picard (an Oïl dialect spoken in Northern France) and (3) for Languedocien (an Occitan dialect spoken in Southwestern France). Examples (2a–b) are from the Picartext corpus (cited in Burnett and Dagnac 2014), while (3a – b) come from the Sénaillac-Lauzès corpus (Sibille 2014).

(2) a. *Mais **parsonne**   n'a   voulu   m'acouteu.*
       But   **no one**   n'has   wanted   me'listen
       'But no one wanted to listen to me.'(G. Vasseur)
   b. ***Parsonne**   n'a   **mie**   bougè.*
       No one   n'has   **not**   moved
       'No one moved.'(G. Vasseur)

(3) a ***Jamai** volguèt dire   ço   que   sabiá.*
       never   wanted   tell   what   that   knew
       'He never wanted to tell what he knew.'
   b. *N'i   ajèt   planses que   **jamai** vengèron   **pas**.*
       Ne'there   were   many   that   **never** came   **not**
       'There were many that never came.'

Variable negative concord in Montréal French, however, does not have this property. As observed by Di Sciullo and Tremblay 1996 and Déprez and Martineau 2004, sentences such as (4), said with neutral intonation, elicit very strong judgments of ungrammaticality, and, correspondingly, we find no such utterances in *Montréal 84.* [2]

(4) a. **Personne a pas bougé.*
   b. **Jamais ils viendront pas.*

Variable negative concord in Montréal French monoclausal utterances is therefore limited to nwords that follow a finite or non-finite verb (such as (1)), and nwords appearing in elliptical constructions, such as in (5).

(5) a. ***Pas aucune**. Aucune aucune aucune influence.*
       'None. No, no, no influence.'   (66 863)
   b. *Qu'est-ce que tu vas faire avec ça?*
       'What are you going to do with that?'
       *Ben, non, **pas rien**. (rire)*
       'Well no, nothing. (laugh)'   (7 126)

Montréal French also allows negative concord across certain kinds of tensed clause boundaries,

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[2]Out of 78 occurrences of an nword in preverbal position in a matrix clause, none are concord sentences. It is worthwhile to note that in cases of constituent negation, speakers' judgments can differ: For example, Daoust-Blais (1975:57) marks **Pas personne est venu* as ungrammatical, while Larrivée (2004:32) marks a structurally similar sentence as grammatical. However, there are no such examples in *Montréal 84.*

namely complement clauses of Neg Raising/Transportation (Lakoff 1969) verbs (6a) and predicates selecting subjunctive complements (6b).

(6) a. *Je veux **pas** que personne l'ampute de quoi que ce soit.*
'I don't want anyone to amputate it of anything.' (91 858)
b. *Il est **pas** question qu'ils fassent **rien** les gars.*
'It is out of the question that they do anything, the guys.' (4 306)

The addition of extra clausal structure adds another variant to the variable, as shown in (7). Therefore, as is common in variationist studies of negative concord (see, for example, Howe 1997 and Childs et al. 2014), we limit our quantitative study to monoclausal utterances (lower concord).

(7) a. *Je pense que Jean a vu **personne**.* Bare
b. *Je pense **pas** que Jean a vu **personne**.* Upper concord
c. *Je pense que Jean a **pas** vu **personne**.* Lower concord
'I don't think that Jean saw anyone.'

Another way in which languages can differ concerns the inventory of negative indefinites that can optionally co-occur with negation without creating a double negation interpretation. Many Gallo-Romance dialects allow variable negative concord with a large set of constituents of a wide variety of syntactic and semantic categories, and Montréal French is no exception to this. As shown in the examples below, we find variable negative concord in *Montréal 84* with DPs such as *personne* 'no one' and *rien* 'nothing', the determiner *aucun(e)* 'no', adverbials *nulle part* 'nowhere', *jamais* 'never'[3], and the conjunction *ni...ni* 'neither...nor'.

(8) a. *Je mangeais **pas aucun** légume.* (4 1526)
'I didn't eat any vegetables.'
b. *Je réparerais **aucun** équipement électronique.* (6 160)
'I would repair no electronic equipment.'
(9) a. *Bah, je me suis **pas jamais** attardé à la loi-cent-un.* (62 216)
'Bah, I never paid attention to law 101.'
b. *Le gouvernement a **jamais** voulu rien faire.* (62 98)
'The government never wanted to do anything.'
(10) a. *Il a **pas** tué **personne** au parc Maisonneuve.* (88 124)
'He didn't kill anyone at Maisonneuve park.'
b. *Dans le fond, on connaissait **personne**.* (112 38)
'At the end of the day, we knew no one.'
(11) a. *Je le sais pas encore, je peux **pas rien** dire.* (72 184)
'I don't know it yet, I can't say anything.'
b. *Puis elle voulait **rien** savoir de...* (34 1409)
'So she didn't want to know anything about...'
(12) a. *J'ai vu que ça marchait **pas** à **nulle part**.* (108 327)
'I saw that it didn't work out anywhere'
b. *Il y a la perfection **nulle part**.* (75 500)
'Perfection is nowhere.'
(13) a. *J'aime **pas** beaucoup **ni** le thé **ni** le café.* (108 623)
'I don't like either tea or coffee very much.'
b. *On a **ni** l'un **ni** l'autre.* (131 364)
'We have neither one nor the other.'

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[3]Native speaker judgments also suggest that the quantity adverb *pantoute* '(not) at all' allows variation when it appears in an elliptical construction as in (i) (Burnett and Tremblay 2012); however, in *Montréal 84,* all occurrences of these kinds of structures are bare. Therefore we exclude *pantoute* from the quantitative study.

(i)   Q: *T'as-tu aimé le film?*   'Did you like the movie?'
         A: ***Pantoute!/ Pas pantoute!***   'Not at all!'

However, Montréal French does not allow co-occurrence of *pas* with the adverbial *plus* 'no more' (14a), and when *pas* co-occurs with the exceptive prepositions *rien-que* and *que* 'just', the inter-pretation is double negation not concord, as shown in (14bc).

(14) a. **On l'a **pas plus** revu.*
        Intended: 'We didn't see him anymore.'
    b. 1. *Il-y-a-tu d'autres choses qui fait ou: que vous préférez aussi cette job là?*
          'Are there other things that make it such that you also prefer that job?'
       2. *Bien le salaire aussi [...] Le salaire est meilleur ça c'est: Mais j'aime la job quand même tu-sais: <hum> **Pas rien-que** pour le salaire: la: J'aime la job quand même.*
          Well the salary too […] The salary is better that's: But I like the job anyways, you know. <hum> Not just for the salary: there: I like the job anyways. (27 141)
    c. *J'aime la job **pas que** pour le salaire.*
       'I like the job not just for the salary.'

Montréal French thus distinguishes itself from other linguistic varieties which allow concord with these elements, such as Picard, Languedocien (Aveyron) and English, for *p(l)us/no more* (15a–c), and Languedocien (Lot), for *que* (15d).

(15) a. *Un   homme comme vous   n'dévrouot   **mie**   **pu**   pérleu   picard.*
        A   man   like   you   n'should   **not**   **no more** speak   picard
        'A man like you should no longer speak Picard.' (G. Vasseur, cited in Burnett and Dagnac 2014)
    b. *l'avem **pas**   **plus**   revist*   (Speaker 748)
       it'have **not**   **no more** seen
       'We didn't see him anymore.' (Gilliéron and Edmont 1902-10)
    c. You should**n't** speak English **no more**.
    d. *Vendián **pas que** de sucre, d'oliva, de sal.*
       'They sold only sugar, olive oil and salt.' (Sénaillac-Lauzès corpus, Sibille 2014)

In studies of variable negative concord in varieties of English, it is common to treat the concord variable as constituted of three variants: (what we have been calling) the bare variant (16a), the concord variant (16b), and a third variant featuring the NPI/free choice indefinite *any* embedded under negation (16c).

(16) a. I found a proof of the theorem in **none of these texts**.   (Labov 1972:782 (29b))
    b. I did**n't** find a proof of the theorem in **none of these texts**. (Labov 1972:784 (29'))
    c. I did**n't** find a proof of the theorem in **any of these texts**.   (Labov 1972:782 (29a))

Although written French features a range of non-negative NPI/free choice indefinites (such as the *quelque chose, quoi que ce soit, n'importe quoi* or *quelconque* series), inspection of the *Montréal 84* corpus shows that utterances containing these items are not in variation with utterances contain-ing bare nwords or concord structures. For example, there are no examples of *quelqu'un* (0/11), *n'importe qui* (0/0), *qui que ce soit* (0/0) or *quiconque* (0/0) under negation in *Montréal 84*. Thus, sentences like *J'ai pas vu quelqu'un* cannot be in robust variation with *J'ai (pas) vu personne.* Likewise, out of 125 occurrences of *quelque part* in the corpus, there are no sentences in which this element takes scope under negation. [4] Therefore, in the quantitative study, we look only at variation between the bare variant and the concord variant.

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[4]There are 3 occurrences of *quelque part* following negation; however, in these sentences the indefinite takes wide scope over negation, resulting in an interpretation that is not synonymous with the concord struc-ture with *nulle part*.
    (i) *Je veux pas les forcer à aller en quelque part, tu-sais si mettons moi ( ) "Je veux que tu sois doc teur,tu vas aller à l'université puis tu vas avoir ton doctorat", <humhum> puis le gars ça lui tente pas pantoute tu-sais.*   (127 237)

This being said, setting aside *personne* and *nulle part*, there are other nwords for which it may be reasonable to think that there is an additional variant in the mix. For example, in certain syntactic constructions (such as clefts), *quelque chose* 'something' can appear with *pas* and the resulting structure has an interpretation that is extremely similar, if not identical, to bare and concord structures with *rien* (17).

(17) a. *C'était **pas quelque chose** de bon parce-que s: ça payait jamais tu-sais.*   (90 64)
      'It wasn't something/anything good because we never got paid, you know.'
   b. *Là maintenant c'est **pas rien** d'étonnant.*   (51 320)
      'Now it's not anything surprising.'
   c. *Puis c'est **rien** d'extraordinaire parce−*   (59 1695)
      'So it's nothing extraordinary because−'

Likewise, DPs headed by the articles *un(e)* and *de* can appear within the scope of negation and create an interpretation similar to that found with *aucun(ne)* (19−20), and this possibility is also available for the disjunction *ou* 'or', which can create an extra variant for sentences with *ni...ni* (20).

(18) a. *Mais rien-que le fait de dire "J'en veux **pas un** legume"*   (1 86)
      'But just the fact of saying 'I don't want any vegetable''
   b. *Je mangeais **pas aucun** légume.*   (4 1526)
      'I didn't eat any vegetable(s).'

(19) a. *Ça a **pas de** sens.*   (1 130)
      'It has no sense.'
   b. *J'ai **aucun** sens.*   (91 738)
      'I have no sense.'

(20) a. *Il a **pas** eu la chance: je-veux-dire **ou** bien le talent d'aller aux études.* (1 212)
      'He didn't have the chance, I mean, or the talent to study.'
   b. *Il a (**pas**) eu **ni** la chance **ni** le talent d'aller aux études.*

Thus, we see a distinction within the set of nwords between *personne* and *nulle part* on the one hand, which appear in utterances that have no indefinite variant, and *rien, aucun* and *ni...ni* that appear in utterances that may have such variants. However, we leave determining the role of non-negative indefinites in the variation to future work.

3 Quantitative Study

This section presents the results of a quantitative study of variable negative concord in the *Montréal 84* corpus of spoken Montréal French (Thibault and Vincent 1990). *Montréal 84* is composed of 72 sociolinguistic interviews of speakers of a variety of ages, education levels and occupations.[5] From this corpus, we extracted all the occurrences of the nwords that show a bare/concord alternation: *personne, rien, aucun(e), nulle part, jamais, ni...ni*. From this set, in addition to the exclusions discussed above, we excluded examples that received clearly double negation interpretations,[6] as well as *negative spread* constructions, i.e., utterances containing strings of multiple nwords (*Personne va nulle part.* 'No one goes anywhere.'). These constructions are well-known to pattern differently from negative concord constructions cross-linguistically (see Giannakidou 2006 for an overview). Thus, we leave the question of integrating the negative spread constructions into

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[5]See Thibault and Vincent 1990 for information concerning the constitution of this corpus and the definitions of the different socio-economic categories.

[6]For example: *Un gars qui parle bien pour moi c'est un gars comme Robert Charlebois. <hum> Un gars qui: bien Robert Charlebois a: a déjà sacré comme tout le monde, il doit sacrer encore de toute façon <humhum> mais: un gars qui a: qui prend **pas** des mots: longs comme ça: pour **rien.*** (113 606)

a broader theory of (non)variable negative dependencies in Montréal French as a project for the future.

We also excluded nwords in repetition sequences, since nwords that are not first in the sequence cannot co-occur with negation. For example, in an utterance like *Ah, non. Jamais, jamais* (8 1244), the second *jamais* was excluded. Likewise, nwords modified by an adverb referencing the top endpoint of a scale such as *absolument* 'absolutely', *presque* 'almost', *pratiquement* 'practically', and *quasiment* 'almost' were excluded, since modification by this class of adverbs uniformly blocks negative concord in Québec French (Déprez and Martineau 2004:10) and cross-linguistically (Giannakidou 2006).

(21) a. *Nécessairement, il connaît **absolument rien**.*   (2 293)
          'Necessarily, he knows absolutely nothing.'
      b. *Oui, parce-que: j'ai **presque jamais** été au travail.*   (91 273)
          'Yeah, because: I almost never went to work.'

With these exclusions, the resulting dataset of nwords consists in 2,399 occurrences over 6 nwords, with the overall rate of concord being 11%.

Nword	Bare variant	Concord variant	Total	% Concord
nulle part	3	15	18	83%
personne	49	71	120	59%
ni...ni	37	13	50	26%
rien	800	137	937	15%
aucun	134	16	150	11%
jamais	1,113	11	1,124	1%
Total	2,136	263	2,399	11%

Table 1: Negative concord in *Montréal 84* by nword.

As shown in Table 1, there are enormous differences in the rate of the use of the concord variant depending on the identity of the negative indefinite. In particular, we can distinguish three subsets of nwords: {nulle part, personne}, whose members prefer to appear in concord structure (83% and 59% respectively), {ni...ni, rien, aucun}, whose rates of concord are between 10–26%, and {jamais}, which strongly disprefers to be used in a concord structure. Recall that we suggested that concord sentences with *ni...ni*, *rien,* and *aucun* may be in variation with sentences containing non-negative indefinites, thus it is possible that the presence of weak indefinite constituents in the language has an effect on the distribution of bare nwords in that language. However, we leave the elaboration of this hypothesis to future work.

3.1 Social and Grammatical Factors Tested

Given the low number of occurrences of both *nulle part* and *ni...ni* in the corpus, we set occurrences of these two nwords aside in the statistical analyses. The final dataset featured in the analyses below consists of 2,331 occurrences over 4 nwords.

As mentioned above, *Montréal 84* is annotated with socio-economic information, including the participants' age, sex (male/female), level of education (low, medium, high, and in progress), and occupation (professionals and company heads (*professions libérales et patrons d'entreprise*), employed with university diplomas, technicians and forepeople, white collar workers, blue collar workers, people without stable employment). In this study, we investigated whether age (as a continuous factor), sex and education level significantly conditions negative concord. We also checked for interactions between these factors. Since occupation is highly correlated with education in the dataset, we did not include this factor in the analyses. The choice to focus on the effect of education rather than occupation in this paper was motivated by the possibility of comparison

with the results of Lemieux 1985's quantitative study of negative concord with *rien* in the earlier Sankoff-Cedergren (1971) corpus (Sankoff and Vincent 1977), which looked at the effects of education rather than profession.

As discussed in section 2, one of the most important ways in which negative concord systems can vary typologically is in which syntactic configurations can license the concord relationship. We saw above that such a relationship can only be established between an nword and negation in Montréal French when the nword follows the finite verb or is in an elliptical construction. However, we might wonder whether, within these linguistic contexts, certain syntactic configurations favour concord more than others. Indeed, research into the (non-variable) syntax of negative concord in Italian dialects has shown that the degree of syntactic embedding can have an effect on the grammaticality of a concord structure. For example, Zanuttini (1997) shows that in Piedmontese, the postverbal sentential negation marker *nen* cannot co-occur with an nword such as *gnun* 'no one' if *gnun* is the direct object of a 'simple' verb (i.e., it does not consist of an auxiliary and a past participle (Zanuttini 1997:76)) (22a). However, if the nword is embedded under a participle (22b) or within a prepositional phrase (22c), then negative concord is grammatical.

(22) a. *A   *veddu*   **nen**   **gnun**.
     I   see   **not**   **no one**
     Intended: 'I don't see anyone.'
   b. *I*   *l'hai*   **nen**   *vist*   **gnun**
     I   it.have   **not**   seen   **no one**
     'I have not seen anyone.'
   c. *A*   *parla*   **nen**   *cun*   **gnun**
     he   talks   **not**   with   **no one**
     'He doesn't talk with anyone.'   All cited from Zanuttini 1997:77

To investigate whether the same syntactic constraints that hold at the grammaticality level in Piedmontese hold at the preferential level in Montréal French, we coded for syntactic embedding: elliptical constructions and direct objects or modifiers of a 'simple' verb or auxiliary verb (23a) were coded as having no embedding. Nwords embedded under participles, infinitives and within prepositional or determiner phrases were coded as embedded (23b–d).

(23) a. *Ou il-y-aura **pas personne** dans la maison.*   **No embedding**
     'Or there will be no one in the house.'   (66 1203)
   b. *Ça l a **pas** arrangé **rien**.*   **Embedding**
     'It didn't fix anything.'   (15 1369)
   c. *Tu peux **pas** voir **personne**.*   **Embedding**
     'You can't see anyone.'   (93 191)
   d. *Puis: il embarque **pas** dans **rien**.*   **Embedding**
     'So he doesn't get involved in anything.'   (4 851)

Another grammatical factor that has been argued to play a role in variation in the negative system is modification, particularly whether the nword is modified either by a relative clause or by a *de* phrase (24a).[7]

(24) a. *Il y a rien **d'insultant** dans ça.*   **Modified**
     'There's nothing insulting in that.'   (50 1249)
   b. *Il y a rien dans ça.*   **Not Modified**

We therefore investigated whether syntactic embedding or modification (or any interaction between the two) plays a role in variable negative concord. To accommodate the enormous lexical effect described above, we included *nword identity (jamais, rien, personne, aucun)* as a random

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[7]See, for example, Bruneau 1949, Marchello-Nizia 1997 and Martineau 2009 for arguments that the presence of a partitive *de* phrase significantly conditions the use of certain kinds of postverbal negators in Old French and other Gallo-Romance varieties, also Lemieux 1985 for concord with *rien*.

effect in the analyses of linguistic factors. We ran step-up step-down analyses with Rbrul (Johnson 2009), with the concord variant (*J'ai pas vu personne*) as application/response value.

3.2 Results

With respect to social factors: both education level (Table 2) and age (logodds: 0.011; $p < 0.01$) were significant. In other words, there is a slight effect of older speakers favouring the use of *pas* with nwords and a larger effect of less educated speakers favouring negative concord.

Total	2,331		Input	0.11
Factor Group	**Factor**	**Factor Weight**	**% Concord**	**N**
Education level	Low	0.613	14	750
	Medium	0.539	11	710
	In progress	0.487	7	149
	High	0.362	5	722
$p < 0.001$	**Range: 25**			

Table 2: Non continuous social factors conditioning use of negative concord in *Montréal 84*.

These results line up with those found by Lemieux 1985, who also found that both age and education level significantly condition negative concord with *rien* in her study of the Sankoff-Cedergren corpus. Furthermore, Daoust-Blais 1975 reports a higher rate of concord with both *personne* (70.6%) and *rien* (15.4%) in the Sankoff-Cedergren corpus than we have found in *Montréal 84* (59% and 15% respectively); therefore, there are reasons to believe that is a change in progress in favour of devernacularisation. This being said, Daoust-Blais' results are difficult to interpret in relation to ours because she only looked at a subset of Sankoff-Cedergren, so we do not know what the overall rate of concord is in the 1971 corpus. Thus, more detailed study of the Sankoff-Cederegen corpus is required to establish the existence and direction of change.

With respect to the grammatical factors, the only significant factor was **syntactic embedding**:

Total	2,331		Input	0.11
Factor Group	**Factor**	**Factor Weight**	**% Concord**	**N**
Syntactic Embedding	Embedded	0.751	41	334
	Unembedded	0.249	5	1,997
$p < 0.001$	**Range: 50**			

Table 3: Grammatical factors conditioning the use of negative concord in *Montréal 84*.

Thus, we see that the same syntactic configurations that create grammaticality contrasts in certain Italian dialects also create frequency contrasts in the French dialect under study.[8] Interestingly, the pattern described by Zanuttini for Piedmontese, which, in our study, we find instantiated in Mont-

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[8]Likewise, Lemieux (1985:114) finds a significant difference in the use of *pas* with *rien* in utterances with 'simple' verbs rather than with verbs composed of an auxiliary and a participle in the Sankoff-Cedergren corpus. In our study, this distinction is a subcase of the (un)embedded distinction; therefore, there are reasons to think that syntactic embedding is also significant in the 1971 corpus.

réal French, only holds for one of Piedmontese's two postverbal negation markers. In addition to *nen*, whose distribution in concord structures is sensitive to the level of syntactic embedding of the nword, this Italian dialect has another marker, *pa*, which has different syntactic properties and whose distribution is not constrained in the same way. That is, negative concord is possible with *pa* when the associated nword is the direct object of a 'simple' verb (i.e., *A veddu **pa gnun*** 'I don't see anyone' (Zanuttini 1997:77)). We therefore suggest that the results of our quantitative study give a new argument in favour of pursuing a syntactic analysis of Québécois *pas* along the lines of Piedmontese *nen*, rather than *pa*; however, we leave further exploration of this idea to future work.

4 Conclusion

This paper presented a new quantitative study of variable negative concord in Montréal French, as observed in the *Montréal 84* corpus. We showed that variable concord in this dialect distinguishes itself from other instantiations of this variable in Gallo-Romance dialects and dialects of English through 1) the syntactic configurations in which variation is possible, 2) the set of nwords that allow variation, and 3) the set of non-negative indefinites that can appear under negation. We then showed that, in addition to being highly conditioned on nword identity, variable concord was conditioned by speaker education, age and syntactic embedding of the associated nword. The conditioning social factors correspond to similar findings by Lemieux 1985 in the 1971 Sankoff-Cedergren corpus and suggest that there is a change in progress. Additionally, the conditioning grammatical factor corresponds to previously observed patterns of (non-variable) negative concord in Italian dialects. Our results thus provide new insight into both the social conditioning of variation in the Québec French negation system and the typological relationships between this system and other systems of negation and negative concord in Romance.

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