"C'est ça, right?": Shifts in discourse marker use in Ontarian Laurentian French

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English and French have coexisted in what is now Ontario, Canada since the 18th century. Due to their proximity and certain socio-political factors, English has had a strong influence on the lexicon, phonology, and semantic innovations of Ontarian Laurentian French (hereafter OLF), specifically regarding borrowings, calques, and linguistic transfer (Golembeski 1998, Mougeon 2004). Though many studies have explored this influence (Mougeon 2004, Golembeski 1998, inter alia), few have investigated the influence on oral lexical items, such as discourse marker (DM) use. Fewer still have looked at this use in relation to social factors, such as age, the language's majority/minority position in the area, and the formality of interviews. In my research, I investigate the use of English and French DMs in OLF conversation and compare DM patterning in the French-majority town of Hearst and French-minority city of Windsor across three generations, within both formal and informal interview contexts.

Sankoff et al. (1997) define DMs as spoken lexical items acquired through interaction and linked to speaker fluency, linguistic security and speech community integration. Recently, DMs have diverged from Standard French (1) to include English borrowings and calques adopted into French conversation. The result is the incorporation of English DMs such as *well* and *so* (2, 4), and the semantic shift in the use and placement of French DM *juste* (just) (3), illustrated below:

1. …les familles, **t'sé**, sont plus, **disons**, françaises
   *…the families, **y'know**, are more, **say**, French*

2. euh, **well** dans l'hiver j'aime faire du ski
   *uh, **well** in winter I like to ski*

3. Oui, c'est **juste comme** à cinq minutes de marche
   *Yes, it's **just like** a five-minute walk*

4. …pour les enfants, **t'sé**, tout ça, **so**
   *…For the kids, **y'know**, all that, **so***

My data, taken from the *Phonologie du francais contemporain* corpus (PFC; Durand et. al 2002), includes recordings of both a formal guided interview and informal guided conversation with eleven participants from Hearst (Poiré & Tennant 2016), and six participants from Windsor (Poiré et al. 2010). Following criteria introduced by Sankoff et al. (1997), I investigate the use of DMs including *yeah*, *well*, *ok*, *so*, *t'sais / tsé* (y'know), *disons* (say), *puis / pis* (then/and), *donc* (so), and *comme* (like). I also look to the use of *juste* (just) as a DM, as it has acquired meanings and positions mirroring those of its English counterpart (Canac-Marquis & Walker 2016). For each 6 to10-minute interview, I calculate the rate of DM use per minute and per one hundred words. I then categorize the DMs by language and compare the frequency of English versus French DMs (Sankoff et al. 1997). I finally look at DM use patterning by participant as it pertains to age, location, and the interview context (Canac-Marquis & Walker 2016).

Initial findings indicate a generational shift in the Windsor corpus, with older generations using French DMs (1) at an average rate of 5 DMs/100 words, middle and younger generations incorporating English DMs (2) at a similar rate, and younger generations decreasing overall DM use to only 2 DMs/100 words while increasing the use of certain DMs, such as *comme* and *juste* (3). While overall DM use in the Hearst data shows no change generationally, maintaining an average of 5 DMs/100 words, the increased use of *comme* and *juste* (3) by younger generations parallels that of Windsor, and an increased use of English DMs is present in the informal interviews. This suggests that location and context both play a critical role in the maintenance of OLF varieties. As stated above, this changing DM use of OLF speakers can signal linguistic

insecurity in OLF varieties, indicating the greater impacts of language contact on varieties and potential shifts in speaker ease and even fluency (Chambers & Lapierre 2011).

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