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1 Using SLA to Analyze Grammatical Variation

Dennis Preston (1996:31) writes:

> SLA [Second language acquisition] is in some ways dramatically posi-
> tioned, I believe, to contribute to variationist understandings of lan-
> guage. Its respondents are on a fast-track of language change, allowing
> real- rather than apparent-time studies.

This study focuses on a sample of second language (L2) speakers in order to
identify which aspects of a grammar may be transmitted in a language con-
tact situation and what social characteristics of the speakers promote or im-
pede this transmission.[1] A second goal of this investigation is to describe the
competence in French of the first generation of Montreal Anglophones (na-
tive English speakers) that had access to French immersion schooling and to
understand which social factors determine their level of competence. We
address the following three research questions, and determine that the answer
to each is "yes."

(1) Does double marking, a pattern not taught in school, exist in L2 Mont-
real French?
(2) Does the rate of double marking correlate to the type and amount of ac-
quisition and contact?
(3) Does the variation provide evidence of acquisition of L1 grammar (as
opposed to mimicking of a salient surface structure)?

As members of a minority population in a city with a majority of French
native speakers, young Anglophone adults have many types of contact with
French speakers. Some grew up having regular interactions with French-
speaking relatives and close friends; others had no French speakers in their

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social environment as young children but made French friends as adolescents. Still others had little or no social contact with Francophones until adulthood, but now have a Francophone spouse or partner. Another major factor is schooling. We include speakers with the three types of school background: ordinary French classes in English schools, immersion programs in English schools, and French schools. We examine the effects of these differences in background in analyzing the French that the Anglophones have acquired.[2]

Prior studies of speakers from the same corpus have analyzed variable phonological patterns which distinguish Montreal French from "standard" European French (Nagy et al. 1995), the use of discourse markers (Sankoff et al. 1997), and have examined community members' reactions to different ways of speaking Montreal French (Thibault & Sankoff 1997). The goals of all of these studies are the same: to describe the competence in French of the first generation of Montreal Anglophones (native English speakers) that had access to French immersion schooling and to find correlations between their linguistic patterns and the following social factors: the first language of the majority of their social network, the language(s) used at work, the amount and type of French they have been exposed to in school and in their community, their scholastic level of French, and sex of the speakers. While we do not directly examine language attitudes, several comments in the interviews indicate that there are attitudinal reasons that the French of Montreal Anglophones differs from L1 French. For example, Lisa, a fluent French L2 speaker who attended a French high school, proudly describes the differences between herself and her Francophone classmates in high school, as illustrated by the quotes in (4-5):

(4) I did not fit in. My accent was different. (Tape 33B)
(5) It's just obvious in my speech [that I'm not French-Canadian]. (Tape 33B)

This is representative of many comments indicating that L2 speakers know that the French they have learned is not, in most cases, identical to L1 Montreal French. This anecdotal evidence is supported by Thibault & Sankoff's (1997) findings from a subjective reaction test, in which a cassette containing

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[2] This paragraph characterizing the speakers is adapted from Nagy et al. (1996), a study analyzing the same set of speakers.

excerpts from interviews in French with a number of different speakers (L1 and L2 French speakers) was played to several different audiences. There was a fairly low rate of agreement between the L1 and L2 French auditors: they made similar judgments for only six of 15 speaker/attribute combinations.

2 Double Subject Marking

We analyze the morpho-syntactic patterns of double marking to see how it corresponds to different manners of language acquisition. This is a process where a subject noun phrase (or pronoun phrase) is "echoed" by an atonic pronoun (Auger 1995). This pattern distinguishes Vernacular Montreal French from the European standard. In standard European French, both patterns exist, but doubling without emphatic intent is much rarer than in Montreal French (J. Auger, p.c.). Therefore, it is not expected that Anglophones who learned their French (only) in school will exhibit it. On the other hand, Anglophones who spend a great deal of time speaking French with Montreal Francophones will have picked up this pattern. Thus, it serves well to separate the effects of school-learning and "street-learning." (6-7) provide examples of two double marking patterns from a corpus of L1 Montreal French (Sankoff-Cedergren 1971 corpus): left-dislocation for emphasis (6) and doubling without pragmatic intent (7). The doubled pronoun is *not* indicative of emphasis or contrast in (7).

(6) Left dislocation (for contrast):   **Les maringouins, ils** mesuivent.
                                              Mosquitoes, <u>they</u> follow me.
(7) Double marking: **Les maringouins ils** me suivent.
                                              Mosquitoes follow me.

(8-10) illustrates that this same pattern exists in the L2 French of Anglophones. These examples are taken from Mike (Tape 37), but all speakers in our corpus exhibit the pattern.

(8) **Moi j**'ai plus de problèmes quand je dis quelque chose puis là je cherche les mots.
    Me I *have more problems when I say something, then I look for the words.*

(9) Comme **les cours de français c'**était différentes que le français que mes
     amis a parlé.
     *Like **the French class it** was different from the French that my friends
     spoke.*
(10) **Mon cours de français c'**était le plus facile.
     My French class it was the easiest.

3 Methodology

3.1 Participants in the Study

Our data is taken from interviews with 20 young adult Anglophone natives of
the metropolitan Montreal region. The speakers are from two groups, one a
self-selecting group of volunteers and the other a sample of the 1990 gradu-
ating class of a Montreal area high school. This high school is situated on the
border between an Anglophone and a bilingual neighborhood which has re-
ceived an influx of Francophone speakers in the past several decades. It is an
English language high school with two levels of French immersion as well as
French taught as a subject (for those less advanced in French). The other
participants were recruited by newspaper ads seeking bilingual speakers
placed in *Voir* and *The Mirror*, two free Montreal publications. The meth-
odology for interviewing the two types of participants is the same.

   All speakers currently live in the Greater Montreal area and speak Eng-
lish with their parents. They differ, however, in their mode of acquisition of
French, the type of exposure they had to French as children, their current
degree of contact with Francophones, socially and in the workplace, and in
the degree to which they use French in their daily lives.

3.2 Interview Protocol

Each participant was interviewed in French by a native Francophone (the
second author, M. Fonolossa, L. Gagnon, or G. Sankoff) and later in English
by a non-Montrealer Anglophone (the first author). Each interview lasted
about one hour. Topics of both interviews include scholastic and family
background, use of French in the workplace, attitudes toward French politics,
people, and culture, and incidents where language differences have played a
significant role. All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed, providing

two types of data: information about the participants' background and a re-cording of how they speak in both French and English.

3.3 Compiling the Data Sample

Ten English interviews were examined. For each, the first fifteen minutes of the second side of the first tape was examined. All instances of doubled sub-jects were counted, including emphatics, left-dislocations, etc. The total number of clauses produced in that 15-minute period was counted, and the percentage of double-subjects calculated. Certain types of clauses, which do not permit double marking (e.g., inverted questions, relative clauses, and frozen phrases like "I don't know," "I'm sorry") were excluded.

A slightly different sampling method was used for the French data, since transcriptions were available. Beginning on page 5 of the interview tran-scription, the first 100 clauses were examined. Each clause was coded for the presence or absence of a doubled-subject and for the independent variables discussed in Section 3.4.[3] No distinction was made between left-dislocated subjects (for emphasis or contrast) and doubled subjects. This decision was made for both pragmatic and theoretical reasons. First, the auditory cues that distinguish the two patterns in L1 French may not be reliably present in L2 speech. A brief pause may distinguish Left-Dislocation from doubling in L1 French, but L2 speech has many more pauses which cannot reliably be dis-tinguished. Similarly, L2 speakers do not use the same patterns of liaison as L1 speakers, so that cue cannot be used. Second, the two patterns may simply be different stages along a grammaticalization continuum, so it is not neces-sary to consider them as different structures.

3.4 Coding the Independent Variables

No further analysis of the English interview data was conducted, as the goal was simply to illustrate the frequency of doubled-subjects in English. For the French interviews, we considered the linguistic factors in Table 1. These factors were chosen to enable comparison to other research on the same vari-able (Auger 1995, Nadasdi 1995, Sankoff 1981, Givón 1976). However, the

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[3] Only doubled subjects at the left edge of the sentence were counted. Any exist-ing right-dislocations were coded as single subjects, since they could not possibly be instances of the double marking phenomenon we are examining.

comparisons must be examined with the understanding that the variable is not
defined in exactly the same manner in each of these studies.[4]

The dependent variable	
1) Form of the subject	Double marking
	(dislocation or doubling)
	Single subject
Independent linguistic variables	
2) Grammatical person	1st - 6th person, masc.
	3 sg. Fem
	3 pl. fem.
	3rd sg. pronoun "ce"
3) Type of subject	Noun
	Pronoun
4) Clause	main clause
	subordinate clause
5) Definiteness of subject	Indefinite
	Definite
	Non-material
6) Parenthetical between subject and verb	Parenthetic
	No parenthetic
7) Adverb between subject and verb	Adverb
	No adverb
8) (Non-subject) clitic between subject and Verb	Clitic
	No clitic
9) Negative particle between subject and verb	Negation
	No negation marked there
10) Animacy of the subject	Animate
	Material but inanimate

Table 1: Linguistic factors

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[4] Nadasdi (1995) excluded instances of the 3rd person pronoun *ça* in his analysis
of double marked subjects in L1 French because of its peculiar behavior. He also
excluded all instances of left-dislocation and all ambiguous cases.

Because the envelope of variation differs in each study, it is not appropriate to compare actual values (weights or percentages) across studies. However, the direction of the trends should be comparable.

The social factors considered are the same as those used in Nagy et al. (1996), allowing later comparison of their effects on a phonological and a morphological variable. The list in (11) is, therefore, adapted wholesale from Nagy et al. (1996).

(11) Method of coding "immersion" variables:

Environmental immersion scale
>2 points for Francophone spouse, significant other or current roommate
>1 point for French friends
>2 points for using French at work
>1 point if French is the dominant language in a bilingual workplace
>.5 point if English is the dominant language in a bilingual workplace

Formal acquisition scale
>3 points each for French elementary school or high school
>2 points each for an immersion elementary or high school
>1 points each for English schools with only the regular French program
>1 point for post-secondary education in French

Language used at work
>Where both languages are used, the one reportedly used more appears first.

Language of friends
>"S" in this column means a spouse, partner or roommate is Francophone.
>"F" indicates the speaker has Francophone friends.

French grammatical gender marking score
>Subjects were rated on their production of correct gender marking on 20 nouns in an extract of conversation from the French interview.

	Age	Envir. Imm. Scale	Formal Acq. Scale	Lang. at Work	Lang. of Friends	Gender Marking Score	% Double subjects
Women							
Liz	23	6	7	F/E	F	100	5
Sandra	24	6	6	F/E		100	21
Jeanne	22	6	6	E/F	F	95	14
Lynne	24	4	5	E/F	F	95	5
Alicia	21	2	4	F/E	F	80	8
Kathy	25	2	4	F/E		100	5
Janet	21	1	4	E/F		90	4
Tammy	24	1	4	F	S	75	3
Glenda	22	0	4	F/E		85	8
Joan	30	1	2	E/F	S	85	19
Men							
Vincent	26	7	7	E/F	S	100	17
Ted	23	6	7	F/E	S	95	22
Kurt	22	1	5	F/E		80	10
Jack	33	0	4	E		65	4
Mike	23	2	3	E/F	F	75	13
Greg	24	0	3	E/F	F	75	8
Larry	26	0	3	E/F		75	3
Ross	22	0	3	F/E	S	90	4
Peter	20	0	2	E/F		65	9
Don	34	0	2	E		75	4

Table 2: Social characteristics and rates of double marking

3.5 Quantitative Analysis

For the French data, 100 tokens for each of 20 speakers were coded for all the variables mentioned in the previous section. Goldvarb 2.0 for Macintosh, a statistical package making use of a logistic regression algorithm to determine the relative effects of each factor, was employed. Factor weights presented were determined using the "one-level" analysis, but the statistical significance of each group was determined using the "step-up, step-down" analysis. The results are presented in Section 5. For the English language data, no analysis beyond a count of the raw data was conducted, as will be discussed in Section 4.

4 Double Marking in English

Fingers are often pointed at possible interference from L1 when L2 patterns are examined. Therefore, we make a brief digression to examine double marking in English before looking at the L2 French patterns. Double marking without emphatic or contrastive intent is rare in English, but it does exist, particularly in southern American dialects (Wolfram & Christian 1976, Southard & Mullar 1998). We have no independent evidence of its existence in Montreal English, however, (12) provides examples of doubled subjects in English from several of the speakers whose French we are examining. The context indicates that no contrastive or emphatic interpretation is appropriate.

(12) **My friend Martine she**'s French (Greg, Tape 2)
   The Québecois they know how to party. (Ted, Tape 61)
   My sister she's a music teacher in Joliet. (Vincent, Tape 69)

While most of the speakers produced at least one doubled-subject sentence in English, none produced very many. The range of percentages is shown in Fig. 1. The percentage of doubled-subjects in French is also shown. Little correlation exists between the percentage of double marking in English and in French (Correlation coefficient = 0.47; p>.05). Given the extremely low frequency of doubling in English and the lack of correlation between percentages in the two languages, we discount the English pattern as a source of
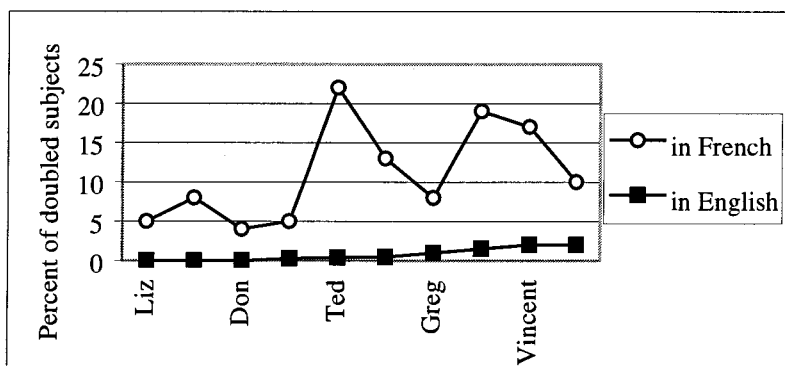

Figure 1: Lack of correlation between double marking in L1 and L2

influence on the French pattern and do not consider it as a contributing factor to our model of the French L2 grammar.[5]

5 Results and Discussion

5.1 The Community Grammar for L2 French

No large-scale quantitative study of this variable for native French speakers is available for comparison. What is available is a small-scale study of Montreal speakers (Sankoff 1981) which does not provide quantitative information on the effects of the linguistic variables examined, a study of four Montreal Francophones with some quantitative information (Auger 1995), a descriptive piece by Givón (1976), and a large-scale quantitative analysis examining the speech of Franco-Ontarians (Nadasdi 1995). We examined the effects of as many of the factors studied in these works as possible so that comparison is possible between L1 and L2 speakers.

Our first observation is that the grammar of this group of L2 speakers as a whole resembles the L1 grammar in terms of the effects of a number of linguistic variables. (We can't compare the overall rate of doubling between L1 and L2 speakers because different types of sentences were excluded from the envelope of variation in the different studies.) Table 3 presents the factor weights and frequencies for each variant of the linguistic variables. The application value is *No doubling: larger values mean fewer doubled subjects*. The input value is 0.959, indicating a very low overall rate of doubling. In the rightmost column, a "yes" indicates that the effect of the linguistic variable in this L2 sample resembles that reported for L1 data in terms of the direction of the effect (if not the absolute size of the effect).

The first variable examined is grammatical person: number, gender, and referentiality. Overall, we find that there is a higher rate of doubling for third person forms than first and second person, a finding reported by Givón (1976) for L1 French data. (The dotted line divides the high weights from the low weights, and also, more or less, splits the third person singular forms from the others. While third plural feminine falls below the line, its weight is based on only 12 tokens.)

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[5] Thanks to Yves Roberge for pointing us toward this finding.

Linguistic factor group	Factor	Weight	# single /total	= L1 effect?
Grammatical person	"il y a"	0.745	107/108	
	1st sg.	0.669	703/719	
	"on" 'nous'	0.681	109/113	
	3rd pl. m.	0.670	130/145	yes
	1st pl.	0.618	12/13	
	3rd sg. M.	0.332	168/217	
	3rd sg. f.	0.276	108/142	
	"ça"	0.255	420/477	
	3rd pl. f.	0.206	8/12	
Noun or pronoun?	Pronoun	0.562	1582/1675	yes
	Noun	0.176	183/271	
Clause	Subord.	0.787	273/281	yes
	Main	0.445	1492/1665	
Definiteness	Indefinite	0.647	575/618	yes
	Definite	0.430	1190/1328	
Parenthetic (pre-verbal)	No	0.511	1750/1909	yes
	Yes	0.097	15/37	
Adverb (pre-verbal)	No	0.505	1757/1930	yes
	Yes	0.068	8/16	
Clitic *non-sig.* (pre-verbal)	Yes	0.600	128/135	(yes)
	No	0.492	1637/1811	
Negation *non-sig.* (pre-verbal)	"ne"	0.785	41/42	No L1 data
	Ø	0.493	1724/1904	
Animacy *non-sig.*	Animate	0.520	1192/1285	
	Immaterial	0.463	537/612	(no)
	Material	0.436	36/49	

Table 3: Goldvarb analysis to show effects of linguistic factors

The second factor examined is whether the first form of the subject is a noun or pronoun. Native speakers recorded in 1971 produce a higher rate of doubling when the subject is a noun (45%) than when it is a pronoun (10%) (Sankoff 1981). We find the same effect for the L2 speakers: 32% doubling for nouns and 6% for pronouns.

The third factor examined is the position of the subject: whether it is in a main or subordinate clause. Nadasdi (1995) and Sankoff (1981) found fewer

doubled forms in subordinate clauses, as did we. The fourth factor, the definiteness of the subject, also produced an effect in our L2 sample that resembled the L1 pattern reported in Sankoff (1981).

The next three factor groups all examine the effect of material intervening between the subject and the verb. In the first two cases, doubling is more likely when material does intervene, both in our data and for L1 speakers (Nadasdi 1995, Sankoff 1981). There is not a significant effect for the presence of other clitics in the L2 data: these L2 speakers do not use preverbal clitics nearly as frequently as native speakers do.

In all cases where all variants of the linguistic variable are robustly present in the speech sample, we find that the L2 speakers have acquired the appropriate effect–the linguistic constraints apparent in the L1 language also exist in the L2 language, illustrating that these speakers have acquired more than just a set of frozen forms that make them sound like Montrealers. The few cases where the effects are not apparent (the last three factors in Table 3) are instances where our sample does not provide enough data to satisfactorily test the effect of the variable. Importantly, there are *no* instances where the L2 speakers exhibit significant contradictory effects of the variables in comparison to the L1 speakers.

5.2 Correlation with Exposure to French

We turn now to the effects of each social variable. Across the different divisions of the group of speakers, the factor weights are ordered as predicted– more contact with L1 speakers leads to more use of the vernacular. The weights and frequencies are shown in Table 4. These values are calculated from the same Goldvarb run as the weights for the linguistic variables presented in the previous section.

We find men use more of the vernacular or non-standard doubled form. We also find that people who use French at work, and therefore have contact with Francophones, have a higher rate of doubling than those who use English at work. Interestingly, the highest rate of doubling is found for speakers who use both languages at work. Perhaps they feel the most pressure to fit in by sounding "local."

There is an interesting effect of the two scales, which, as noted in Sec. 1.4, are strongly correlated. Speakers with higher scores on the Formal Acquisition Scale have higher weights, indicating less doubling, suggesting that the

Group	Factor	Weight	Frequency	# single /total
Sex	female	0.600	0.910	893/984
	male	0.398	0.910	874/964
Work language	English	0.737	0.960	190/198
	French	0.619	0.970	97/100
	both	0.462	0.900	1480/1650
Formal acquisition	5-7	0.558	0.870	583/673
	3-4	0.495	0.940	919/978
	2	0.386	0.890	265/297
Environment scale	0	0.695	0.940	642/681
	1-2	0.453	0.910	627/688
	3-4	0.449	0.840	92/97
	5-7	0.299	0.950	406/482
Grammar grade [N.S.]	75-80%	0.532	0.930	633/680
	95-100%	0.507	0.870	593/679
	85-90%	0.459	0.910	356/391
	65-70%	0.444	0.930	185/198
Friendship [N.S.]	French friends	0.549	0.890	598/673
	no French friends	0.487	0.920	901/981
	French S.O.	0.434	0.910	268/294

Table 4 : Goldvarb analysis to show effects of social factors

more one studies French in school, the less prevalent are the vernacular features. In contrast, speakers with high scores on the Environment Scale, indicating exposure to French in many non-school environments, have lower weights, indicating more doubling present in their speech.

Not surprisingly, there is no correlation between a person's ability to mark gender correctly on nouns and their frequency of use of doubled subjects, as shown by the fact that this social variable is determined to be non-significant. The scores on the gender test measure a person's scholastic ability–their ability to learn/memorize aspects of the language that *are* explicitly taught in school, in contrast to this untaught variable.

One surprising finding is the non-significance of the effect of having French friends. We would have predicted more use of the doubled forms by speakers with French friends, and especially for speakers with a Francophone partner or room-mate.[6] Overall, however, this set of internal and external

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[6] The lack of effect may be due to an interaction between this factor group and the Environment Scale group – they represent strongly related factors. However, by that

factors produces a fairly accurate and comprehensible model of the observed variation. The total χ^2 is 798.

5.3 Evidence of Acquisition of French Grammar

The final point that we make is that speakers with more immersion in French culture show stronger effects of the linguistic factors that influence the L1. This was determined by looking at the *size of the effect* of each linguistic variable for groups of speakers at different points along the Environment Scale. Table 5 lists the linguistic variables, one in each row. The four middle columns show the average *difference* in the percent of doubling between the two contexts specified by the linguistic variable (e.g., adverb present vs. adverb absent) for all the speakers with scores in each range of the Environment Scale.

Support for our hypothesis comes in the form of larger numbers (bigger differences) in the rightmost columns than in the leftmost columns, indicating that there is a stronger effect of the linguistic variables for the more immersed L2 speakers than the less immersed ones. The rightmost cell of each row indicates whether the data for the corresponding linguistic variable supports the hypothesis that more exposure to vernacular French produces stronger effects of the linguistic variables. Where the differences shown are small, speakers appear not to have internalized the L1 rule regarding the relative frequency of doubling in those contexts. These speakers may be mimicking a surface doubled form without having learned when it is grammatically appropriate to do so.

We find strong support from three of the linguistic variables. In each of the first three rows, the numbers increase from left to right, showing stronger effects of these internal variables for speakers who have more contact with Montreal Vernacular French. In the fourth and fifth rows, there is weak support: for clitics: the numbers are in increasing order, but are not different enough in value to allow us to claim a significant effect; for parentheticals, the numbers generally increase from left to right, but with an inversion of the first two columns, which have very similar values. The effects of the linguistic variables in the last three rows do not support our hypothesis as the values

argument, the Work Language factor group should also be non-significant, but it is not.

do not increase from left to right. However, no significant effect was found for Animacy, so the fact that the numbers in this row are not in increasing order cannot be taken as contradicting our hypothesis. (Levels of statistical significance are not provided because the numbers being compared are percentages, which do not lend themselves to statistical analysis.)

| Linguistic factor group | Diff. in % between 2 variants | | | | Support for hypothesis? |
| | Environment Scale score | | | | |
	0	1-2	3-4	5-7	
Adverb	20	24	--	85	Strong
Definiteness	0	0	7	14	Strong
Noun v. pronoun	15	30	39	33	Strong
Clitic	1	4	6	10	Weak
Parenthetical	49	42	97^7	53	Weak
Main vs. subord. clause	7	9	6	4	No
Grammatical person	8	16	3	16	No
Animacy	5	41	96	17	No

Table 5: Differences in percent of doubling between contexts

Further work is necessary to refine this method. In particular, we would like to be able to compare the effects of the factor weights rather than the frequencies. However, we do not currently have enough data to conduct a Goldvarb analysis on sub-samples. Additionally, while it would be more convincing if we could directly compare the size of the effects to the effects found in L1 speech, that is not possible as no comparable analysis of L1 Montreal speech exists. In spite of these limitations, the method appears promising, and has allowed us to formulate a tentative answer to our third question: Yes, there is an approach to L1 norms as speakers become more immersed in French. More generally, we conclude that this group of L2 French speakers is well on its way to acquiring this pattern of Montreal Vernacular French, and that this progress can be attributed to contact with native French speakers.

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[7] The large value shown for the speakers with a score of 4 is misleading: there are only 5 doubly-marked tokens with parentheticals for this group.

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