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1 Introduction

The theoretical focus of this paper concerns the extent to which speakers modify their grammars across their lifespans as adults, and how this relates to community—that is language—change. The particular case we examine is the alternation in French between the inflected future and the periphrastic future, an instance of variation that is the result of a long term trend in which the older inflected form, inherited from Latin, has been retreating in favor of the periphrastic form with *aller* 'to go'. Both forms are still productive in Québécois French, as illustrated in example (1), drawn from our 1971 Montréal corpus, in which a speaker alternates within one sentence.

(1) Aussitôt qu'il **_va y avoir_** *des postes ouverts **j'appliquerai** pour un poste régulier.*
          PERIPHRASTIC   INFLECTED
   'As soon as there are posts available I'll apply for a regular position.'
                                                                    [1,84,221][1]

Studies of other sociolinguistic variables that we review below have shown that the relationship between individual and community change can take many forms (Blondeau, Sankoff and Charity 2002). The community may be undergoing relatively slow change that is virtually imperceptible at the level of individual speakers, as we found with auxiliary selection (Sankoff, Thibault and Wagner 2004). On the other hand, in the study of the rapid change from apical to posterior (r), we found that although community change outpaced individuals, a sizeable minority of speakers in adult life were following along behind the younger speakers in using the innovative

[1] Examples are labeled according to speaker number (here #74); year of recording (here 1971); and line of transcript.

variant to an ever increasing degree (Sankoff, Blondeau and Charity 2001; Sankoff and Blondeau in preparation). The expression of the future, as we have analyzed it across the 24-year span of the three Montréal corpora, reveals yet another possible relationship between the community and the individual speaker across time.

2 Inferences from Synchronic Distributions

Before presenting the specifics of the case, it is important to clarify the theoretical issues involved. Studies that have not had longitudinal data to rely on have traditionally attempted to infer change from linguistic patterning according to the age distribution of speakers sampled at one point in time (cf. Labov 1981). In Interpretation 2 below (Table 1), it is clear that this is one inference, known as "apparent time," that can be drawn from a regular increase or decrease with age.

Synchronic Pattern	Interpretation	Individual	Community
Flat	1. Stability	stable	stable
Monotonic slope with age	2. Age-grading	unstable	stable
Monotonic slope with age	3. Generational change	stable	unstable
Flat	4. Communal change	unstable	unstable

Table 1: Possible interpretations of synchronic distributions as related to age (adapted from Labov 1994:83).

If speakers are stable across their lifespans, a pattern of regular increase or decrease with age shows that each cohort of younger speakers is different from the preceding cohort, and generational change is thus the likely interpretation. However, Labov noted (1994:83) that the same data may instead be evidence of community stability (that is, no ongoing change) if individuals are changing across their lifespans, a pattern he referred to as "age-grading" (Interpretation 1, Table 1).

"Apparent time," then, is not an assumption, nor even a hypothesis. It is rather an **interpretation** of an array of data, and this interpretation depends on the status of other variables. The age-grading interpretation runs counter

to an assumption most linguists take for granted: that people do not modify their linguistic systems after childhood—an assumption consonant with the critical age concept (Lenneberg 1967), and for which there is indeed considerable evidence from, *inter alia*, second dialect and second language acquisition (Payne 1980; Johnson and Newport 1989; Kerswill 1996). Additionally, in the absence of panel studies that would follow individuals to find out whether and to what extent they actually do modify their language in later life, age-grading has been the less attractive interpretation.

In the remainder of the paper, we will investigate the alternation between periphrastic and inflected futures across the panel speakers from the Montréal corpora, to see what light we can shed on both general and specific questions involving change. The specific questions have to do with the current status of the long term change toward erosion of inflected futures; the general questions have to do with the kinds of inferences we can draw about change from different kinds of data.

3 The Data

As described in Sankoff and Sankoff (1973), the 1971 sociolinguistic survey of Montréal French used a random stratified sampling method to arrive at a sample of 120 speakers. Age, sex and social class were carefully controlled.

The 1971 study was followed up in 1984 (Thibault and Vincent 1990), when 60 of the original 120 speakers were re-located and re-interviewed, and 12 younger speakers were added to create a balanced age distribution. In 1995 (Vincent et al. 1995), 2 of these younger speakers were re-located, and 12 of the 60 were interviewed a third time. The studies yielded corpora that have made longitudinal studies possible.

For our ongoing investigation of the future tense, we have collected data from every speaker who was interviewed at least twice (=136 speech samples).[2] In the present discussion, however (section 5 below), we restrict ourselves to the 60 speakers who were interviewed in both 1971 and 1984 (=120 speech samples).We modeled our coding categories after Poplack and Turpin (1999), and as used subsequently by King and Nadasdi (2003). These studies, as well as Emirkanian and D. Sankoff (1985), were particularly helpful in sorting out the tokens that we needed to exclude.[3]

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[2] Transcripts of the 136 interviews were exhaustively mined for tokens using computer scripts. 10,000 lines were retained and manually coded in three passes.

[3] Like Poplack and Turpin (1999), we additionally examined the present tense, but found that it represented only a small percentage of all futurate tokens, and always co-occurred with future adverbials.

As in the earlier studies, the very numerous habituals (4071 cases) showed very little variation, with 92% use of periphrastics (Table 2). For this reason, we followed the precedent of excluding them from the quantitative analysis. In example (2), from an exchange about food preferences, the habitual is established in lines e and h, in the present. The periphrastic *on va se faire* in line f clearly continues within the habitual and was thus excluded from the study.

(2)

Q.:   *Comme quoi par exemple là?*
       Like what, for example?

R.:   a. *Du poivre, du sel, des épices, du steak.*
           Pepper, salt, spices, steak.

       b. *. . Je te le dis je suis bien ordinaire.*
           . . . I tell you I'm just ordinary.

       c. *Je mange . . . rien de—de sauté . . .*
           I don't eat anything sautéd . . .

       d. *' Temps-en-temps **on se prend** pour un autre,* [pres.]
           From time to time **we treat ourselves** as special

       e. ***on va se faire** un petit filet mignon*
           we'll make a little filet mignon

       f. *avec une tranche de bacon alentour.*
           with a piece of bacon around it.

       g. ***Ca nous fait plaisir** tu-sais.* [pres.]
           That we enjoy y'know.

                                            [2,84,3851]

Although habituals are more frequently expressed in the periphrastic form, we also found many examples of habituals expressed by the inflected future form. In example (3), line b contains a periphrastic habitual, followed by an inflected habitual in line c.

(3) a. *C'est comme si le parent aurait perdu sa place d'éducateur…*
       It's as if the parents had lost their role as educators…

    b. *l'enfant là **va se confier** avec—avec son ami là,*
       the child **will go** and confide in—in his friend,

    c. ***il se confiera pas** le premier à ses parents.*
       he won't go first to confide in his parents.

                                            [1,95,161]

Conjecturals (hypotheticals) was another category we excluded, as in (4):

(4) a. *Tu es patron ici mettons au Québec là*
         You're a boss let's say in Quebec

   b. *puis un de tes gros clients est en Ontario*
         and one of your big clients is in Ontario

   c. *puis il parle seulement anglais,*
         and he only speaks English,

   d. *quelle langue **tu vas parler**?*
         what language **are you going to speak**?

[52,71,1424]

We also excluded cases where the verb *aller* 'to go' in the putative periphrastic future expressed the motion or spatial sense of going. We excluded all *s'en aller* 'go off, go away' tokens even when the "going" might well involve the future, but again, many of these were also habituals as in (5):

(5)   a. *Lorsque tu te lèves le matin,*
           When you get up in the morning,

      b. ***tu t'en-vas travailler***
           you go off to work

      c. *puis tu es pas heureux*
           and you're not happy'

[88,84,261]

A further category we excluded involved possible priming by the interviewer, as in (6):

(6) Q: *Puis il les élèvera.*
            And he will raise them.

    R: *Oui **il les élèvera**.*
            Yes, **he will raise them**.

[4,84,808]

Lastly, phrases used as discourse markers like *m'as te dire* 'I'll tell you' and frozen expressions such as *l'avenir nous le dira* 'the future will tell us' were excluded.

    All of these exclusions are detailed in Table 2, which shows that our

original set of almost 11,000 tokens was approximately halved when we excluded cases not properly belonging to the futurate alternation between periphrastic and inflected forms.

Exclusions	N	% Periphrastic
Habitual	4087	91.9%
Conjectural	832	84.9%
Frozen	394	74.9%
Interviewer priming	10	60%
Spatial/motion	197	3.1%
Total Excluded	5520	
Retained	**N**	**% Periphrastic**
Futures/conditionals	5473	74%
Grand Total	10993	

Table 2: Number of tokens excluded and retained for quantitative analysis.

4 Semantic Considerations

A very striking finding of the earliest quantitative study of the future in Québécois French was that negative polarity is a virtually categorical environment for the use of inflected forms. Emirkanian and D. Sankoff (1985) analyzed 36 of the Montréal 1971 speakers, and found 100% use of inflected forms in negative contexts, as shown in Table 4.

	Negative	Affirmative	N
Inflected	100%	9%	291
Periphrastic	--	91%	1093
N	183	1201	1384

Table 3: Periphrastic and inflected futures in the speech of 36 speakers from the Montréal 1971 corpus (data from Emirkanian and D. Sankoff 1985:194–5).

All subsequent studies (e.g. Deshaies and LaForge 1981; King and Nadasdi 2003; Poplack and Dion 2004; Poplack and Turpin 1999) have found similar

results. Of the 60 speakers we examined across the two time periods in the present study, 51 used inflected futures categorically in negative environments, and the remaining 9 speakers were almost categorical. We therefore eliminated negative tokens, and all subsequent calculations involve only affirmative tokens.

It was clear from Table 4 above that alternation between inflected and periphrastic forms occurs across a wide range of semantic contexts. The cases we analyze here include both futures and the apodosis clauses of conditionals, in which the alternation occurs in examples like (7) and (8).

(7) Si j'engraisse, peut-être **je vas être** moins nerveuse.
    PERIPHRASTIC
    If I put on weight, maybe **I'll be** less nervous.

(8) Si ça fait pas bien, **on essaiera** de te trouver quelque chose.
    INFLECTED
    If it doesn't work well, **we'll try** to find you something.

                                                    [15,84,399]

Preliminary analysis showed that inflected futures occurred at roughly twice the rate in conditional contexts (apodosis clauses only) than they did in futures. This and other semantic factors, along with a variety of further linguistic factors, will be analyzed in a subsequent paper. For the current analysis, we restrict ourselves to social factors in order to elucidate how lifespan change may or may not relate to historical developments in the language.

5 Analysis

Earlier studies indicate that the replacement of inflected by periphrastic futures is a long term trend in French. Poplack and Dion (2004) found that whereas inflected futures accounted for about 38% of the total in 19th century Québécois speech data, that figure had declined to only about 20% in their 20th century corpus.

Given this historical trend, we looked at our individual data from 1971 to see whether there was an age-related distribution that might reflect this change in apparent time. Figure 1 plots all individual 60 panel speakers in 1971, indicating a shallow but clear trend in this direction. Younger speakers are using a higher proportion of periphrastic futures, that is, they are apparently continuing in the direction of the long-standing "erosion" of the
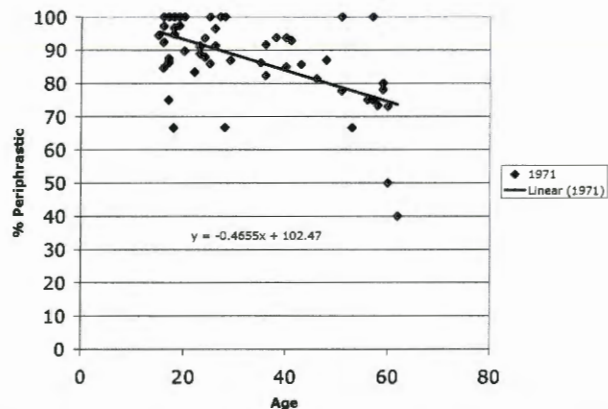
inflected forms.

Figure 1: Percentage of periphrastic futures for 59 Montréal panel speakers in 1971 by age (affirmative data only)[4].

Plotting the same individuals in 1984, we observe the same relationship to age: although everyone is of course 13 years older, the slope of the regression is very much the same, and younger individuals still maintain higher levels of use of periphrastic futures (Figure 2).
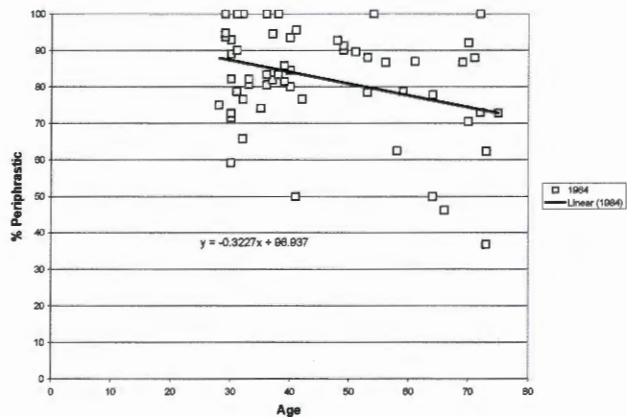

Figure 2: Percentage of periphrastic futures for 60 Montréal panel speakers in 1984 by age (affirmative data only).

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[4] There were no qualifying futurate tokens for speaker 104 in 1971.

We are now in a position to return to our earlier question: do younger speakers use less inflected and more periphrastic future because they represent a new generation participating in a change in progress? Or is there an age-grading dimension to this nearly completed change? To better understand whether speaker age might be interacting with other factors, we carried out a multivariate analysis of the 60-person panel using DataDesk, looking at four major nonlinguistic factors: Speaker Age, Speaker Sex, Year of Recording, and Speaker Social Class (a 6-point occupational scale, Thibault and Vincent 1990).

Of these factors, Speaker Sex was consistently rejected as significant in all the analyses we ran, as was Year of Recording. The two factors that consistently showed a high level of significance were Speaker Age, and socioeconomic class, as indicated in Table 4.

Variable	Coefficient	Probability
Constant	.901	**$p \leq .0001$
Age	-.004	** $p \leq .0001$
Occupational Scale (SES measure)	.03	**$p \leq .0001$
Sex	-7.1	n.s.
Year of Recording	.017	n.s.

Table 4: Multivariate analysis (DataDesk) of 1971 and 1984 panel data.

The plots according to age in both 1971 and 1984 suggested a community change in apparent time with younger speakers seeming to follow the long-term trend identified by Poplack and Dion (2004). But as is evident from Table 4, Year of Recording does not significantly favor periphrastic use. We thus concluded that change is not occurring, at least not rapidly enough to register across the 24 year span documented in this research.

Speaker Age, however, registered as significant in our regression analysis, confirming the fact that younger speakers used fewer inflected futures, as already suggested by the univariate plots of Figures 1 and 2. To resolve this apparent paradox, we decided to look at the individual trajectories of speakers as they aged. The other factor that emerged as significant from the regression was social class, with higher class speakers showing lower rates of periphrastic futures. For this reason, we first examined speakers who were highest on the job scale. Figure 3 shows

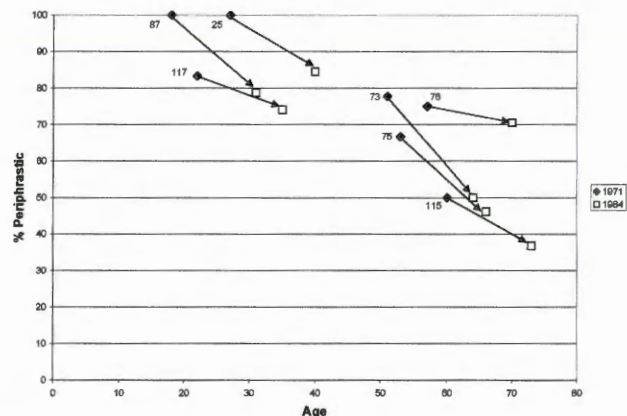individual trajectories for the speakers rated "1" on the occupational scale.

Figure 3: Individual percentages of periphrastic futures for all SEC=1 speakers (N=7), trajectories traced between 1971 and 1984.

There were seven such speakers in our corpus and all of them decreased their use of the periphrastic future between 1971 and 1984, clearly a result of age-grading. Even younger speakers who were categorical users of the periphrastic in 1971 had nonetheless adopted the inflected future to a significant degree by 1984. This is even more surprising because the direction of change across speakers' lifespans runs opposite to the long term community trend in favor of the periphrastic, as we saw demonstrated by the historical data from the 19th century.

By contrast, speakers in the lowest social class showed no such consistent age-graded behavior, as is apparent for the ten speakers who represented the lowest group on our occupational scale in 1984 (a few of them had had higher job scale ratings in 1971). As shown in Figure 4, the trajectories of SEC=6 speakers as a group are essentially flat. With this variable, lower class speakers are stable across their lifespans, but upper class speakers all change in the same direction: against the tide of historical change.
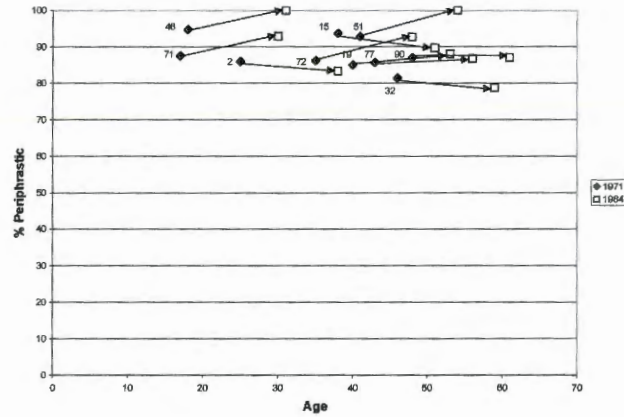
Figure 4: Individual percentages of periphrastic futures for all SEC=6 speakers (N=10), trajectories traced between 1971 and 1984.

7 Discussion

We propose that this combination of age-grading and social class effects are a sign that the erosion of the inflected future has slowed to a crawl, or perhaps come to a complete halt. It is just at this point, when formerly operative meaning differences have all but vanished, that we would expect variants to take on social significance. It has long been understood that in successive stages of change in progress, phonological variables make a transition from **indicators**, where social differentiation is not accompanied by stylistic differentiations; to **markers**, with both social and stylistic differentiation; to **stereotypes**, when the community overtly recognizes the vanishing form as a shibboleth (Labov 1972). We believe that in the case of this morphosyntactic variable, Montréal speakers of the late 20th century are perhaps at the "marker" stage in their use of inflected futures. Though we have not yet carried out an analysis of stylistic variation, we have observed that inflected futures are associated with aphorisms, conjecturals and pseudo-imperatives that carry a flavor of formality. In this regard, inflected futures may eventually resemble the use of *ne* in negation in Montréal, a very low frequency feature that has acquired highly formal associations (Sankoff and Vincent 1977). In continuing work, we plan to study the co-occurrence of inflected futures with other indicators of formal style, as well as to examine their interaction with semantic effects.

The identification of age-grading along with social class as the significant social factors in the future alternation presents a departure from our previous understanding of the possible relationships between community change and age-grading. Cedergren's restudy of Panama showed age-grading and community change going on together, in the same direction (Cedergren 1987). Other studies have identified similar results. In work on the change from apical to posterior (r), we found that approximately one third of adult speakers who were majority [r]-users in 1971 became majority [R]-users in 1984 (Sankoff and Blondeau, in preparation). These adults (panel speakers) trailed along behind the younger speakers in the community, going in the same direction but at a slower rate. We concluded from this that "apparent time" was a correct interpretation of the 1971 data, but that it **underestimated** the rate of change.

The logic of this inference is that if speakers had stayed stable across their lifespans and the community changed only by increments as new speakers came in, the rate could be calculated according to the classic S-curve that the 1971 (r) data closely resembles. However, insofar as people have changed across their lifespan, then their "starting point" on the curve was **lower** than their present state, which would yield a steeper slope and a faster rate.

8 Conclusions

Stepping back, we see that community change and lifespan change function together, but they may operate at different rates or even be going in different directions as is the case with the periphrastic/inflected future alternation.

We propose that the relationship we see in the case of (r) is typical of a new and vigorous change, in which older speakers follow along after the younger speakers at a slower pace. Adult speakers may be acquiring patterns from their juniors in a manner typical of second language or second dialect acquisition—that is, in a piecemeal fashion.

However, in a late stage change—as with the futures—when the innovative form has ceased to carry overtones of informality and has simply become the unmarked variant, the **older** form may become marked: old fashioned, formal, literary, perhaps a little precious in speech. Gumperz (1968) long ago directed our attention to what he called "superposed" variants, typically acquired with increased exposure to formal (including written) language as people age. It is not surprising that older speakers may increase their use of such features as being appropriate to their age grade and, as we saw in this case, high social status. Aging upper class speakers spearheading a retrograde movement may never be sufficient to turn the tide

of the community as a whole, but they can certainly cause apparent time interpretations to go awry.

We have demonstrated that community change and lifespan change, though always both in play, may operate together or in opposing directions. Given the number of possible relationships, a synchronic snapshot alone will not give us definitive answers. We can use the present in understanding the past, but in questions of change and variation, understanding the past is also fundamental to teasing apart the interaction of contemporary dimensions like age, style and social class. There is, after all, no substitute for diachrony in sociolinguistics.

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