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Considering Language Convergence in Ontario: An Examination of Variation in Hearst French

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Abstract

French speakers are rare in Ontario, Canada; only 2.6 percent of the population speaks French at home. However, several isolated French-speaking areas exist. While linguistic research in the province increases, little focus has been given to northern Ontario. This study will examine variation in the French of Hearst, Ontario, through the lens of previous Ontarian French studies in order to apply new evidence to some previous sociolinguistic theories of language convergence. Analysis of transcripts from a corpus of interviews with 34 local Francophones is expected to further the understanding of the relationship between French and English in Ontario.

1. Definitions

Contact Linguistics, in its present form, is a complex field in which experts from differing academic backgrounds each have their own frameworks, viewpoints, and, in turn, terminologies. The terms used to refer to different contact-induced phenomena are particularly troublesome, as different scholars employ the same term to mean different things. Take, for instance, the use of the term interference: While some scholars use this term to refer to any effect one language has on another, others use it to mean only the influences a speaker’s first language (L1) might have on his or her second language (L2). Transfer has also been used in the second sense by applied linguists in second language acquisition to describe instances in which learners of a second language impose characteristics from their L1 on their target language (TL) or L2. Winford (2005) also mentions the use of terms like interference via shift, borrowing, and substratum influence as confusing in a similar sense. Although scholars like van Coetsem (1988, 2000) and Winford (2005, 2007)
have attempted to unite the diverse field under one set of terms, the literature still presents a wide variety of classifications for different phenomena. Therefore, it is necessary as a prerequisite to follow the precedent and to make some note of the definitions that will be used in this paper.

The first main concept at the heart of this paper is contact-induced language change. Certainly, there is contention as to what kinds of changes can be considered contact-induced, but my definition is broader than most and takes into consideration some of these disputed results: Contact-induced change is the phenomenon by which the interaction of speakers of distinct language patterns causes a qualitative or quantitative deviation in a language from its structural or lexical norm. For the sake of this paper, this definition accepts the idea that language variation can be considered an indicator of ongoing or incomplete language change and that qualitative changes in frequency of linguistic variables qualify as a valid change in the language’s characteristics.

The distinction between qualitative and quantitative deviation comes from the classifications by Mougeon and Beniak (1991) and Rehner and Mougeon (1997) of overt and covert interference. As a rule, overt interference in a language presents itself as a qualitative (usually syntactic or semantic) deviation from that language’s norm, while covert interference appears as a quantitative deviation. This means that covert interference can be seen statistically in variation, and need not incorporate a new innovation into the language; all that is required is a lower frequency of an expression or form in the recipient language (RL) that has no similar counterpart in the source language (SL) (which is usually accompanied by the subsequent rise of an equivalent expression that does have this counterpart). Finally, unlike Beniak, Mougeon, and Valois (1984), I take convergence to mean any process by which two languages in contact become more similar to each other, and not necessarily a process which differs from the classic definitions of interference or borrowing.

This definition therefore encompasses all contact-induced changes, since any lexical or structural transmission from a SL to a RL would make the two more similar.

2. Contact-Induced Change: Its Place in Ontario and Problems Assessing It

The contact between French and English in the Canadian province of Quebec is well-known to the scholars of many different fields. It should also not be a surprise that some Francophones have moved into the neighboring province of Ontario, where, as Statistics Canada (2006) reports, 2.6 percent of the inhabitants claim to speak French at home. Ontario French (OF) differs from Quebec French (QF) due to its much more intensive contact with English. French speakers have always been a minority in the English-speaking majority province, but this population has been on the decline in the past decades.

The language contact situation in Ontario is interesting, in part, due to French’s minority status. French was historically the dominant language of social prestige, government activities, and trade in the colonies of France and enjoyed a long period of time as the lingua franca of Europe and other areas of the world. This language, although it has lost some influence in the last century, still remains one of the world’s most influential languages today, and it is difficult to find instances of language contact in recent history where French has not been the socially or politically dominant language. The situation in Ontario therefore provides the perfect opportunity to view French from the perspective of a minority language in contact with English and to assess the influences this contact has on the language itself. As will be seen in the rest of this section, this endeavor is far from simple.

2.1 Language Change

Certainly, the largest obstacle in the study of language change is time. The only way to absolutely prove an instance of language change is arguably to perform a diachronic study after the process of change has taken place, since suspected changes are often only temporary trends. Most linguists do not have the necessary time or resources to perform this kind of research and must work with what they have. This means that many studies remain synchronic (considering a language situation at one point in time), and must depend on data that point to, but do not prove without doubt, certain changes that are taking place in a language. In this respect, linguists have been creatively resourceful in finding methods that produce convincing results.

One important indicator of ongoing language change lies in the existence of variation. The increase of statistical methods in sociolinguistics has been vital to the field, and the ability to find correlation between certain factors and linguistic variables has been put to good use in making the case for possible instances of ongoing change. If a certain variable presents itself in a higher frequency than would be considered normal in one form of the language or that form’s genetic predecessor, it must be postulated that something has provoked this difference between the two language forms. Support of this hypothesis can usually be found through the aforementioned statistical analysis and any existing correlations between factors and variables. Mougeon and Beniak (1991), as well as others, have used this variationist approach extensively in the study of OF, including their analysis of the simplification and the subsequent leveling of 3rd-person singular and plural (3 sg./pl.) verb forms (pp. 91-109). Although this distinction between forms was found in children, they believe this example of leveling does not just originate in the younger speakers “for two reasons: (1) the speakers who level the 3sg./pl. distinctions have markedly dissimilar language acquisition histories (L1 vs. L2), and (2) both infant first-language learners and older second-language learners of French have been observed to level 3sg./pl. verb distinctions” (p. 109). This phenomenon, while not induced by the contact situa-
tion in Ontario, is certainly affected by it, since French language restriction was found to be correlated with this leveling. As the French-speaking population of the province decreases, restriction could be expected to increase and therefore the leveling of 3sg./pl. verb distinctions may also increase. Despite the time and resources many linguists lack in order to perform an ideal study of linguistic change, synchronic methods appear capable of producing clear results on which scholars can base their arguments.

2.2 Contact-Induced Change

Just as linguists have struggled with proving language change, it is equally (if not more) difficult to be sure that a given change is actually contact-induced. Scholars working in contact linguistics are finding difficulty in forming an efficient method to determine the cause of a given language innovation because many times, one method that works in one language situation may not be applicable for another. For example, Mougeon, Nadasdi, and Rehner (2005) have presented a methodological approach which lends itself well to the situation in Ontario, but which may or may not be as useful in other situations depending on a language’s history, social position, or genetic heritage. Their method to determine whether a new feature in a language is contact-induced is constituted of four steps: (1) Determine if the new language feature in the RL has an equivalent in the SL, (2) Consider whether or not said feature may be a result of internally-motivated processes, (3) Look at other varieties of the RL to see if the feature exists elsewhere, and (4) Examine the distribution of the feature in the speech community in question and see if there is correlation between some contact-related factors (i.e. degree of contact, level of bilingualism) and the new feature. It should be noted that while each step is necessary, no one step is sufficient to demonstrate external cause of an innovation. Furthermore, the results of each step will likely never fully support or reject one’s hypothesis—in the end, the final verdict will always involve some judgment on the part of the researcher after considering all of the results.

Probably the most difficult part of any method used to determine the externally motivated nature of language change is seen in Mougeon et al.’s (2005) second step. Rejecting the possibility that an innovation could be internally motivated must be done carefully:

Even if the innovation is found primarily or exclusively in the speech of speakers who exhibit the highest level of contact, as restricted speakers of [the RL], these speakers are also as we have pointed out likely to exhibit the strongest tendency to resort to processes such as overgeneralization or regularization. (p. 103)

For this reason, other scholars have emphasized the importance of recognizing and examining the possibility of internal factors. This is evident in Thomason’s (2001) own definition of contact-induced change: “Any linguistic change that would have been less likely to occur outside a particular contact situation is due at least in part to language contact” (p. 62). While this definition is broad, it accounts for the possibility of internal factors, changes that may only be an indirect result of language contact (i.e., a structural change that occurs following the borrowing of a lexical item or a change involved in the process of language attrition and death), and the extreme likelihood that changes are due to a combination of internal and external factors.

Even though I have only briefly touched on a few of the many issues and problems that arise in the study of contact-induced change, it should be apparent that the relationship between language contact and language change is complicated (to say the least). It is not likely that any groundbreaking method or framework will arise in the foreseeable future that can easily sort out the many social, cognitive, and linguistic factors involved in change, so for now contact linguists must rely on methods that are readily available. Before using these methods, we turn to the background of Ontario and the community of Hearst.

3. Ontario, Hearst, and the Hearst French Corpus

3.1 History

What is now the Canadian province of Ontario has been home to French-speakers since the late seventeenth century, when voyagers from the first French settlements came to the Great Lakes region via the St. Lawrence River. Some of the first settlements established in the area were located in the Upper Great Lakes region, including Sault Ste Marie in 1669, located at what is now the border of Ontario and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, and St. Ignace and Michilimackinac, found on opposing shorelines near the juncture of Lake Michigan and Lake Huron, in 1671 and 1677 respectively. Fort Pontchartrain was founded in the Detroit area in 1701, but settlements were sparse during this time between the area surrounding the Great Lakes, and the first French settlements in Montreal and Quebec were due to the French interest in developing the fur trade and bringing Catholicism to the local Native American tribes.

After the British gained control of New France in 1763, many inhabitants of French colonies remained, but the American Revolution in 1776 forced many British loyalists to flee north, especially to Upper Canada (what is now Ontario—Quebec was known as Lower Canada). Although Francophones from older settlements moved farther east into Ontario after boundary changes due to the War of 1812, Anglophones continued to arrive there through the 1840s, bringing with them the English language and Protestantism. These linguistic and religious changes are what began to differentiate Ontario from Quebec, and

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3 This methodology is intended by the authors to be used specifically for new features in a minority language, but I believe it is a promising method to use regardless of the social status of the language in question.

when Canada became an independent nation in 1867, English became its official language, while French remained an unofficial language of Quebec. However, several waves of immigration continued to bring Francophones to Ontario from Quebec in the 1830s, in the 1880s, after World War II, and in the 1960s. What has resulted are four main areas of francophone communities in South (Windsor, Zurich, Welland, Niagara Falls, Toronto, Penetanguishene), East (Cornwall, Hawkesbury, Ottawa, Pembroke), Central (North Bay, Sturgeon Falls, Sudbury, Elliott Lake), and Northeast (Timmins, Cochrane, Kapuskasing, Hearst) Ontario, as seen in Map 1.

Map 1: Regions and localities with francophone concentration in Ontario.
3.1.1 Hearst

Of the northeastern communities mentioned earlier, Hearst is farthest north, about 220 miles from Sault Ste Marie. The town was established in 1910 as Grant, but gained its current name a year later. Like their northeastern neighbors, settlers arrived following the creation of the National Transcontinental Railroad which eventually ran from Moncton, New Brunswick, through Quebec and Ontario, to Winnipeg, Manitoba. While many of the original inhabitants were English speakers, international immigrants arrived over the next 20 years from places like Finland, the Ukraine, Slovakia, Germany, Sweden, Romania, Italy, and Poland, as well as French and English Canada (Golembeski, 1999). At this time, English remained the dominant vehicular language, allowing the diverse inhabitants to communicate with each other in mixed settings.

However, Francophones from Quebec began arriving in increasing numbers as early as the 1920s, and by 1941, more than half (56.2 percent) of Hearst’s population was of French ethnic origin (Golembeski, 1999). By 1971, this number had climbed to 77.9 percent after the Quiet Revolution5 and the greater institutional support for French in Quebec and other provinces that followed. Since then, this trend has continued as a result of three factors considered by Golembeski (1999): (1) continuing immigration from Quebec, (2) the emigration of non-Francophones, and (3) the traditionally larger family size of Francophones compared to other ethnic groups.

3.2 The Demographics of Hearst

As mentioned earlier, one interesting facet of OF is its minority language status and the gradual decrease of French speakers in Ontario. However, as French is struggling in the province as a whole, Hearst stands out as a strong example of French language maintenance in the last 30 years. As seen in Table 1, francophone numbers in Ontario have been decreasing until recently, and this drop is even more prevalent in the numbers for French spoken at home.6 The differences between these two categories in Ontario appear to be just one sign that French speakers in Ontario are shifting to other languages (presumably English). This trend does not appear in the numbers for Hearst (with the exception of 2001), clear support for the assertion that French is being maintained there.

5The Quiet Revolution was a period of vast political and social reform in Quebec championed by the Liberal provincial government of Jean Lesage.
6Some boundaries in Ontario were changed between 1996 and 2001, so these numbers should be compared with the appropriate discretion.
French Mother Tongue refers to the number of residents whose first language was French and who can still speak it, while French Spoken at Home is the number of residents who use French at home more often than any other language. These numbers do not include residents who claimed multiple languages for either category (i.e., French and English).

The only resources available to me were the transcripts, and not the actual recordings of the interviews. However, the transcripts were written in eye-dialect, so some phonetic particularities are noticeable in the spelling conventions. For more information on the Hearst corpus and the eye-dialect used in the transcripts, see Golembeski (1999).

3.3 The Hearst Corpus

The data analyzed in this paper are from a corpus of spoken French from residents of Hearst, collected in informal interviews during a span of four months in 1995 by Daniel Golembeski for his doctoral dissertation. There are 34 participants in total, ranging in age from 11 to 81 years old and comprising 18 males and 16 females. Because a larger random sampling was outside of the scope of his study, Golembeski (1999) interviewed a relatively equal amount of participants between the sexes and age groups, splitting the latter into three groups: 11-25 years, 26-50 years, and 51 years and older. In the present study, age was not grouped in the same fashion. For a reason to be mentioned later, age was separated as seen in Table 2, which breaks down the informants by age and sex. Other information regarding social class or linguistic history was not available for this study. However, it is clear that French is the dominant language of each participant, and while some also speak English, French is still the predominant language in the day-to-day life of Hearst residents.

While the primary purpose of the interviews was to collect a corpus of HF, the secondary objective was to gain firsthand information on the community, language, and history of the region. Therefore, the topic was likely to vary between and within each interview, and most were performed in an informal setting (usually the interviewee’s home or workplace). Golembeski made other attempts as well to provoke spoken French as it would occur naturally. For instance, he did attempt to modify his speech to more closely resemble Canadian French, though he explains: “I was still perceived as speaking a relatively standard form of the language. Still, all informants appeared at ease during the interview, and misunderstandings were few” (Golembeski, 1999, p. 86).

4. Variation in Hearst French

There are two specific examples of variation in Hearst French (HF) that will be introduced in sections 4.1 and 4.2, both of which also exist in other forms of OF and are examined in Beniak et al. (1984) and Rehner and Mougeon (1997) respectively. These instances of variation can be seen as parallel in that they constitute a competition between forms generally considered standard in French and less popular forms which bear strong resemblance to English counterparts. Studying the rise of these less popular forms in HF will provide a more comprehensive look at their existence in OF, at the level of contact and its linguistic effects in HF, and at the position of French in Hearst and in Ontario as a whole.

4.1 The Prepositional Phrases chez + [personal pronoun] and à la maison

The first instance of variation examined here is the variable usage of two prepositional phrases that are used to convey motion to or location at one’s house/home: chez + [personal pronoun] and à la maison.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>French Mother Tongue</th>
<th>French Spoken at Home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hearst</td>
<td>Ontario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>482,045 (6.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>475,605 (5.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>485,310 (5.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>464,040 (4.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>5,075 (83.9%)</td>
<td>441,675 (4.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>5,080 (88.9%)</td>
<td>485,630 (4.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>4,905 (89.0%)</td>
<td>488,815 (4.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and à la maison. While both exist in Canadian and European French, chez + [personal pronoun] is traditionally used much more often in referential forms of the language. As such, à la maison can be considered the typically less popular variant. The linguistic distribution of the former is also more expansive, encompassing the idea of anyone’s home, while the latter is only grammatical when it is anaphoric with an intrasentential antecedent (usually the subject of the sentence) or with the speaker. This means that, due to the possessive ambiguity inherent with à la maison, the two can only be considered in variation when chez + [personal pronoun] qualifies under these rules, and examples where it does not may not be included in this variationist analysis. For instance, (1) shows possible sentences where the variants refer to an antecedent (the subject), (2) shows the variants anaphoric with the speaker, and (3b) is ungrammatical and not in variation with (3a) because it does not refer to either:

(1) a. Il est chez lui.
   ‘He is at home.’
   b. Il est à la maison.
   ‘He is at home.’

(2) a. Il est venu chez moi.
   ‘He came to my house.’
   b. Il est venu à la maison.
   ‘He came to my house.’

(3) a. Je suis allé chez elle.
   ‘I went to her house.’
   b. Je suis allé à la maison.
   ‘I went to her house.’

Note the strong resemblance à la maison exhibits to the English equivalents ‘at home’ and ‘at X’s house.’ This example of variation provides one focal point to assess the level of convergence toward English that is occurring in any form of French. Beniak et al. (1984) considered this variation in OF, specifically in the more eastern communities of North Bay, Pembroke, Cornwall and Hawkesbury. The communities were of varying degrees of contact—that is, their francophone populations ranged from a small percentage of the overall population to a much larger majority of the inhabitants. The authors used statistical methods to examine the frequency of chez + [personal pronoun] and à la maison across several factor groups in order to examine the effect each factor group had on a speaker’s choice between the variants. The most important and intriguing results came from the factor group of locality of residence: The speakers who lived in communities with smaller proportions of Francophones (and where English was more likely to be used in day-to-day communication) were found more likely to use the expression à la maison over chez + [personal pronoun]. As this proportion was increasingly larger with the other communities, their speakers were gradually less likely to do the same. In other words, this means:

The more French is in intensive contact with English at the local level, and therefore the more bilingual speakers there are, the greater the likelihood that à la maison, the variant resembling English usage, will be used in the local variety of French. (Beniak et al., 1984, p. 83)

Had it not been for a technicality in their analysis, the authors also expected that the frequency of the speakers’ use of French would be similarly correlated. This would appear in a higher factor effect on use of à la maison for restricted speakers of French (those who speak it less frequently), and a lower factor effect for those who use French more frequently.

4.2 The Restrictive Expressions rien que, seulement, and juste

Similar to the previous instance of variation, the second focus of this paper is on the variable usage of the restrictive expressions rien que, seulement, and juste. It was mentioned earlier that this

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9 It should be noted that the variable à la maison appears in the corpus itself in several morphophonetic forms: à a maison and à maison. This is through a process of l-deletion, well-documented in Canadian French, and a subsequent merging of the ‘a’ sounds that would be processed linearly as à la maison > à a maison > à maison. These differences are ignored in this paper as they fall out of its scope and do not differ semantically.

10 To be more specific, the communities’ percentages of francophone population were as follows: Pembroke, 8%; North Bay, 17%; Cornwall, 35%; Hawkesbury, 85%.
instance seems parallel to the previous one, and this is evident in both the traditional popularity of the phrases and the existence of a traditionally less popular variant which is very similar to an English equivalent. As Rehner and Mougeon (1997) point out, while *rien que* and *seulement* have long been attested to in the dictionaries of European French, the existence of *juste* used as a restrictive expression has appeared relatively recently, though it has been documented as on the rise in Montreal (and probably other areas of Quebec).

Another reason this case parallels the first one is that *juste*, like *à la maison*, is remarkably similar to one of its restrictive equivalents in English, *just*. It is, however, important to understand that the syntactic rules in French and English regarding these two expressions (and all restrictive expressions for that matter) differ. Most notably, English allows preverbal placement of restrictive expressions, while both standard and non-standard forms of French do not.13 The following hypothetical examples demonstrate this quite well:

(4) a. J'aime *juste* le football.
   ‘I like *just* soccer.’
   b. *Je juste aime le football.
   ‘I just like soccer.’

(5) a. Il parle *rien qu'en* français.
   ‘He speaks *only* in French.
   b. *Il rien que parle en français.
   ‘He only speaks in French.’

(6) a. Nous mangeons *seulement* des produits biologiques.
   ‘We eat *only* organic products.’
   b. *Nous seulement* mangeons des produits biologiques.
   ‘We *only* eat organic products.’

Among their many findings regarding these restrictive expressions in OF, Rehner and Mougeon (1997) indicate a correlation between locality of residence and locution of choice similar to Beniak et al.’s (1984) regarding *à la maison*. Although the correlation was not as prevalent as in the older study, *juste* was more likely to be used by the speakers who resided in the communities with lower percentages of Franco-phones, while informants who lived in the communities with larger percentages of French-speaking residents were less likely to do the same. Interestingly, the authors did find a significant correlation between French language restriction and location of choice that further supports the notion that convergence is proceeding in OF. Other evidence to support this theory is that women were also found more likely to use *juste*. As women—especially working class women—are typically attributed the tendency to be on the forefront of linguistic change, Rehner and Mougeon (1997, p. 102) cite these results as further evidence that the process of change is underway.14

4.3 Methodology

Goldvarb X (Sankoff, Tagliamonte, & Smith, 2005) was used to perform a step-by-step regression analysis on the data for this study. This computer application uses statistic processes to determine the correlation between certain factors affecting language use (i.e. sex, age, social class, etc.) and the variable choices made by the speakers involved. Given tokens coded for each of these factors, the program assigns each factor a number (when the factor group is found to be significant) from 0 to 1, which indicates the extent to which the factor favors the choice of a variant or not. Typically, factor effect numbers above .500 are considered to be an indication of a favorable effect on the variant in question, while those under .500 are said to have the opposite effect.15 In more simple terms, this means that the program determines which sections of the given population (the participants in the corpus) are more likely to use a given linguistic variable. Goldvarb X can only perform step-by-step analyses on instances of binary variation (those with only two variables). Though there are three restrictive expressions being considered in this study, the main occupation of this paper is with the position of *juste* as compared to the other variants, so *rien que* and *seulement* have been combined into one dependent variable to perform the analysis of these expressions. Each token from both analyses was coded for the available information regarding the participants: age and sex. The factor group of sex includes the obvious choices of male and female, and age is divided as follows: under 35 years, 35 to 55 years, and over 55 years.

In addition, the restrictive expressions have also been coded for another factor. This follows the convention of Rehner and Mougeon (1997) and attempts to account for the wide syntactic distribution of the variants. In order to control for the many syntactic positions possible and gain insight into their possible effect on variable choice, five factors were chosen (seen here with examples drawn from the Hearst corpus):

i) verbal restriction ‘left of verb’:
   (7a) Moi c'est *jenque* commencer à travailler
   (7b) […] *jusse* faut que t'es voies

ii) verbal restriction ‘right of verb’:
   (8a) […] faut *jusse* pas le prende pour acquis
   (8b) je r'placais *seulement* pis là […]

iii) adjectival restriction:
   (9a) le collège northern va et *seulement* que anglais […]
   (9b) c'est *jusse* restreint dans certains métiers

iv) nominal restriction:

---

11 Factor effects and regression analysis will be explained in more detail in section 4.3.
12 Again, the variants exist in many morphophonetic forms in the corpus. Among them, *rien que* often appears as *ien que* (an instance of r-deletion), and *juste* varies considerably with the forms *jusse, ju, juche*, and *djusse*. *Seulement* also sometimes appears as *seulement que*.
13 Preverbal placements of restrictive expressions have been documented in OF by Rehner and Mougeon (1997), but they were few. This kind of deviation from the standard syntactic rules of French serves as a perfect example of overt interference since it is a new innovation and a qualitative change. It does not, though, fall in the scope of this paper since the current occupation is with the quantitative deviations associated with covert interference.
14 The authors cite Labov (1990) as evidence of this connection between women and linguistic change.
15 Some scholars favor an interpretation of the factor effect number that is relative to the other factors of the given factor group and do not see .500 as the end-all number. My interpretation tends to fall somewhere between the two.
(10a) c’est juste ceux qui parlent en anglais, ceux qui parlent pas français
(10b) c’est encore des boutiques là
(11a) j’écoute ça juste pour rire là, tsé, c’est drôle
(11b) ça va juste en anglais
(11c) les francophones on vivait seulement sur deux petites rues

4.4 Hypotheses
In light of the results of the previous studies concerning these two cases of variation mentioned in OF, the position of French in Hearst, and well-known universal sociolinguistic trends, my hypotheses are as follows:

• Women will be more likely to use the less popular forms à la maison and juste due to their tendency to be involved relatively early in the process of change.

• In a similar fashion, while older informants will be more likely to use the older, more standard expressions of chez + [personal pronoun], rien que, and seulement, younger participants will favor the newer, less orthodox variants à la maison and juste.16

• Most relevant to the topic of this paper, the overall frequency of forms which are similar to English equivalents will be lower in Hearst than in most of the previously studied communities due to the lesser degree of contact associated with French dominance in Hearst. Though these predictions are the main areas of focus, it is understood that the results will probably also provide other unexpected details that are of interest to the topic of this paper.

5. Results
Table 3 shows the results of the step-by-step regression analysis of the variation between chez + [personal pronoun] and à la maison as performed by Goldvarb X. Included are the N of à la maison (total number of tokens found in the corpus in which à la maison was chosen), the total number of tokens found (including both variants), and the percentage of tokens in which à la maison was chosen. Each of these numbers is divided among the factors of each factor group and the far right column shows the factor effect number for each factor. The factors from each group are thus listed in order of highest to lowest factor effect. As mentioned earlier, these numbers represent the effect that any factor has on the choice between the two variants. Therefore, a higher factor effect is an indication of higher probability that à la maison will be chosen, and a lower number indicates an unfavorable effect on that variant’s probability. In total, à la maison was the chosen location 40 percent of the time, while females were more likely to use this variant over males. The youngest participants were similarly more likely to use it, followed by the age group between 35 and 55 years and, as the factor effect for the oldest participants shows, participants over the age of 55 years were extremely unlikely to use à la maison.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor Groups</th>
<th>N of à la maison</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% of à la maison</th>
<th>Factor Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>.667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>.314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 35 Years</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>.649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-55 Years</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>.591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 55 Years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>.085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Input = .361</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Frequency and Effect of Factors on Use of à la maison.

16 It does remain possible, however, that French-language schooling has had an effect on the speech of the younger participants, thereby reducing the probability that these forms are attested in the language of the young.
Considering Language Convergence in Ontario: An Examination of Variation in Hearst French

**Factor Groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N of juste</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% of juste</th>
<th>Factor Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 35 Years</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-55 Years</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 55 Years</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Syntactic Context</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right of Verb</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjective</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complement</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noun</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left of Verb</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>207</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Frequency and Effect of Factors on Use of ‘juste’.

Organized in the same fashion as Table 3, Table 4 shows the results of the analysis of ‘juste’ versus seulement and rien que. Note that this table also includes the factor group of syntactic context, which was explained in section 4.3. Similar to the previous analysis, ‘juste’ was favored more by female participants. Regarding age, however, the middle age group was found most likely to use ‘juste,’ while the youngest participants slightly favor it and while the oldest are very unlikely to choose this variable. Syntactic context was found to be a significant predictor of variable choice. ‘Juste’ was most likely to be used to the right of the verb and least likely to be used to the left of the verb. By far, tokens were found mostly with a circumstantial complement or a noun phrase and both had only slightly favorable and unfavorable effects respectively. The overall frequency of ‘juste,’ almost 70 percent, is much higher than that of ‘à la maison.’

5.1 Discussion

5.1.1 Age.

While my first hypothesis regarding women was verified by the results, my hypothesis regarding age was only partially correct. The choice of ‘à la maison’ was negatively correlated with age as suspected, but the results concerning ‘juste’ did not follow this pattern. Notably, informants between the ages of 35 and 55 years were most likely to choose ‘juste,’ while the younger participants were only very slightly correlated with its usage. It is for this reason that the age groups were selected according to these ages, so as to account for the possible standardizing effect of French language schooling in Hearst. It is imagined that schools in Hearst may put a greater emphasis on more standard varieties of French, whether it be the reading of texts from Quebec or France, following rules of grammar and language use that are

5.1.2 Convergence in OF and HF.

The results seem to tell separate stories regarding the two instances of variation examined here and the position of the traditionally less popular variants in HF. The strong overall frequencies of ‘à la maison’ and ‘juste’ suggest that their presence in HF is not trivial but, to an extent, ingrained in the speech of Hearst residents. Considering the history of the two expressions, the results do, however, seem to show that ‘à la maison’ is not as strongly incorporated into HF. The existence of this expression in other standard varieties of French—namely, European French and Quebec French—may be a reason for the slower change, since it has already existed in the language for some time. Furthermore, its frequency in HF is much lower than that of ‘juste,’ perhaps meaning that ‘à la maison’ is a much more qualitatively stable expression and therefore more resistant to changes in its frequency. Regarding the results of Beniak et al. (1984), however, it must be acknowledged that despite the low level of French language restriction in Hearst, ‘à la maison’ appears in HF as frequently as in Pembroke (a community of only 8 percent Francophones, compared to Hearst’s 89 percent) and much more frequently than in Cornwall or Hawkesbury, which is very similar to Hearst demographically. These findings seem counter-intuitive when one considers the authors’
results connecting locality of residence with the use of the expression. The correlation between the factor of being female and saying à la maison may also suggest that this change is still in its early stages, since women are often found to be at the forefront of linguistic change.

The overall frequency of juste in HF further disproves my hypothesis that the unrestricted nature of HF speakers would resist the rise of non-standard forms, since this number is almost equal to the frequency of that expression in Rehner and Mougeon (1997). As mentioned earlier, this study found a similar correlation between the locality of residence and the use of juste, whose frequency does not follow this pattern in HF. Unlike à la maison, though, juste is now the dominant variable expression of restriction. This dominance appears to be induced by language contact with English through covert interference due to the fact that it does not exist with the restrictive function in European French (yet persists in OF, where the situation of French is very different). Similarly, the existence of juste in the position of left of the verb stands as an instance of a qualitative change and therefore of overt interference. Language contact must certainly be at least one factor in this variant’s linguistic dominance in HF.

5.1.3 Factors in language convergence.

It seems that the correlation between locality and covert interference found by Beniak et al. (1984) and Rehner & Mougeon (1997) does not apply as well to Hearst as it does to the communities they studied. I therefore propose that other factors should be taken into consideration when evaluating contact-induced interference in Ontario (and potentially other places). The location of the community, its level of isolation and, more importantly, its proximity to other French-speaking communities should be considered. The support for the original theory of convergence in Ontario was that the percentage of the francophone population for each community could be related to the amount of French that was used in the everyday communication of the community. This would mean that in a community like Hawkesbury, which has a large francophone population, one would hear much more French on the street, in shops, during business meetings, etc., and conversely, less French would be heard in a community with fewer French speakers, such as Pembroke. This does not, however, take into account the very close proximity of these communities with Quebec and the effect this has on everyday communication. One must take into account the mere inevitability that some inhabitants must travel outside their home community, and that this could lead speakers to Quebec, where they will need to speak French. In addition, should these Francophones feel the urge to perform some task (such as buy a car) in French, this would be possible for the inhabitants of East Ontario. Hearst, however, with the exception of a few small French communities, is surrounded by a vast ocean of Anglophones and this makes certain kinds of intercommunicative encounters impossible in French. Because Hearst is a largely French-speaking community in relative isolation from other Francophone strongholds, it is apparent that the more frequent use of some English expressions due to convergence cannot be explained only through restriction as previous studies have argued for other francophone areas.

6. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to introduce the reader to the main concepts in the field of contact linguistics as well as to the language situation in Hearst and all of Ontario. This situation is a unique one, and though for the moment language maintenance of French is continuing in Hearst, one cannot be sure how long this will last. Social and political factors will play a key role in this language situation in the upcoming decades, and by that time, perhaps language convergence will have progressed even further. Though one can not be sure of the speed or continued progress of the changes considered in this study, it seems that their existence is not random. The surprisingly large frequencies in which the expressions à la maison and juste are spoken suggest that they are here to stay for the time being.

Furthermore, considering the level of language contact in Northeast Ontario and the previously discovered correlation between these expressions of English resemblance and levels of bilingualism and language restriction, it is evident that the rise of popularity of these forms is at least partially due to language contact with English. However, this popularity was not expected to such an extent after considering the geographic correlation with covert interference that was found in Beniak et al. (1984) and Rehner & Mougeon (1997).

It is first suggested that research on French in Hearst and Ontario be continued and expanded. The data from the aforementioned studies date back to the 1970s, and as time progresses, the Hearst corpus will be similarly unrepresentative of the current times. This is not to say that these corpora are obsolete, only that a new corpus of OF would shed vital new light on the linguistic situation in Ontario by providing a second study on which to base diachronic studies of language change there. With data from several points in time, one could assess the progress of language convergence in the province, specifically as regards the expressions examined in this paper.

Secondly, further research concerning the geographic factors of linguistic change in speech communities may help researchers understand the variety of phenomena happening in Ontario and other places. Specifically, isolation and distance from other main locations of the language under question should be examined to see to what extent these factors actually influence the introduction and spread of contact-induced changes. This kind of study would definitely provide a clearer understanding of OF, as the French-speaking communities of Ontario have differing backgrounds and rela-

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17 It cannot go unnoted that the Hearst corpus and the corpus used by Beniak et al. (1984) are composed of significantly different populations: While their corpus is the spoken language of adolescents, the Hearst corpus has a much greater range of age. Comparing the results of the two studies is, then, to be taken cautiously. However, it does not seem to be too much of a stretch in this case, as Table 3 shows the younger participants to use à la maison even more often than the other age groups.
tionships with Quebec and the English language.

Lastly (and more broadly), it would be helpful to further refine the frameworks, methodologies, and terminologies used in studies of language contact, variation, and change. Of this large subsection of linguistic research, the assertion of contact-induced changes is in need of support in the form of frameworks such as the one presented in Mougeon et al. (2005). If contact linguistics is to have any significant breakthroughs, scholars must continue to focus on the creation of overarching theories as well as the analysis of empirical data.
References


