The Effect of Educational Input on the Development of Sociolinguistic Competence by French Immersion Students: The Case of Expressions of Consequence in Spoken French

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ABSTRACT: In this paper we discuss the results of a comparative study examining the words used by 41 Grade 9 and 12 Ontario French immersion students to express the notion of consequence intersententially (i.e., between two clauses). The immersion students' usage is compared to that found in: a) the spoken French of Quebeckers, b) the in-class speech of a sample of French immersion teachers, and c) a series of French language arts teaching materials used in French immersion programs.The comparison reveals that this notion of consequence is expressed by two variants, namely *alors* and *donc*, that are used with differential frequencies in all four corpora, another variant, namely *(ça) fait que*, that is used almost exclusively by the speakers of Quebec French and a final variant, namely *so*, that is used only by the immersion students. Explanations for these findings are tied to a number of factors (e.g., the differential sociostylistic values attached to these variants, and inter- and intra-systemic properties of the variants). For instance, the absence of the frequent variant *(ça) fait que* in the student and educational corpora reflects this variant's vernacular status in Quebec French and, hence, its avoidance in the students' educational input. Also, the students' use of *so* is attributed to their not having fully automatized the French conjunctions of consequence and their occasional switching to this English equivalent. Finally, we discuss the pedagogical implications of our findings.

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RÉSUMÉ: Nous présentons ici les résultats d'une étude comparative qui examine l'utilisation de la notion de conséquence entre deux phrases par 41 jeunes de 9e et 12e année en immersion française en Ontario. L'emploi de la notion de conséquence chez les étudiants en immersion est comparée à: a) au français parlé des Québécois, b) à la façon de parler de certains enseignants en salle de classe, c) et à une série de matériaux pédagogiques utilisés dans les programmes d'immersion française. Les résultats de la comparaison révèlent que la notion de conséquence est exprimée par deux variantes, *alors* et *donc*, qui apparaissent à différentes fréquences dans les quatre corpus mentionnés plus tôt. La variante *(ça) fait que* est utilisée presque exclusivement par les locuteurs québécois. Enfin, la variante *so* est employée uniquement par les élèves d'immersion. On peut expliquer ces résultats à l'aide de plusieurs facteurs (ex. la valeur socio-stylistique que l'on donne aux variantes et les propriétés inter- et intra-systématiques de ces variantes). Par exemple la variante *(ça) fait que* représente une variante vernaculaire en français québécois et elle est donc absente dans l'intrant éducationnel des élèves et dans leur français parlé. De même, les élèves qui emploient *so* n'ont qu'une maîtrise partielle des conjonctions de conséquence et donc ils ont parfois recours à un équivalent anglais de ces conjonctions. Nous terminons notre article par une discussion des implications pédagogiques des résultats de notre recherche.

Introduction

In this paper we discuss the results of a study examining the words French immersion students use to express the notion of consequence intersententially (i.e., between two clauses). We consider the various words or constructions that express this notion in spoken Quebec French (i.e., *(ça) fait que*, *alors*, and *donc*, all meaning *therefore*), as well as a variant which is found in the speech of the French immersion students, but not in that of Quebeckers (i.e., the English conjunction *so*). We also analyze a sample of teaching materials and French immersion teachers' in-class speech to obtain data on how the notion of consequence is expressed in these two important sources of input for French immersion students. Finally, we consider the pedagogical implications of our findings.

Data Collection

Our study is part of a larger project on the development of sociolinguistic competence by Ontario French immersion (FI) students.[1] The project is based on a corpus of speech collected in 1996 by Mougeon and Nadasdi

via taped semi-directed interviews with high school students enrolled in French immersion programs located in the Greater Toronto area. In this project, sociolinguistic competence is examined in relation to the students' knowledge of sociolinguistic variation (i.e., native speakers' alternations between two or more linguistic variants that express the same concept or that are different realizations of the same phoneme). More specifically, in our project we assess the extent to which FI students develop a full repertoire of sociolinguistic variants, acquire their discursive frequency, and observe the same linguistic and extra-linguistic constraints on variant choice adhered to by native speakers of French (e.g., level of [in]formality of communication, social class). We also assess the extent to which FI students' learning of sociolinguistic variation is affected by a number of crucial independent variables (e.g., the treatment of sociolinguistic variation in the educational input of FI students, the FI students' home languages).

The goals of our project are not only descriptive and theoretical, but also practical, since the project provides data useful for FI educators interested in determining whether the sociolinguistic competence of FI students meets the expectations set forth by the Ministry of Education. Regarding these expectations, the Ontario Ministry of Education's (2000) guidelines for the teaching of French as a second language in the final two years of FI programs state, among other things, that students should have the following productive abilities: incorporate colloquialisms and idiomatic expressions into their speech; debate formally and informally issues arising from their reading of literary and other works; and express clearly and confidently their personal point of view in informal discussions (see Appendix for further details). It is interesting that the concern expressed in these guidelines is reflected in the perception of FI students in relation to various aspects of their sociolinguistic competence. For instance, in a study of the Grade 12 FI students from a Calgary school district, Hart, Lapkin, and Swain (1989) found that their respondents were concerned about matching the style of their speech to their interlocutor and especially that they would like to speak French the way same-age native speakers of French do. This finding is in line with that of Tarone and Swain (1995) who report that some immersion students lamented the fact that informal registers were not taught in immersion classrooms: "So I'd like to be able to sit in a classroom and have someone teach me how to say, 'Well, come on guys, let's go get some burgers' and stuff like that" (p. 172).

In the present study, which examines the ways in which the FI students express the notion of consequence intersententially, we seek to

answer the following questions related to the development of the FI students' sociolinguistic competence:

1) Do the FI students use the same variants to express consequence as do native speakers of Quebec French and do they use them with the same discursive frequency as do these native speakers?
2) Is the FI students' use of these variants influenced by the factor of social class (a variable that has been found to have an effect on variant choice in native spoken Quebec French and also by factors applying only to the FI students (e.g., exposure to French outside the school context, languages spoken at home, and, crucially, treatment of the variants by FI teachers and pedagogical materials)?[2]

To answer these questions, we take as a starting point the findings of the only sociolinguistic study of this case of variation in Quebec French, namely a study by Dessureault-Dober (1974) based on a sub-sample of Sankoff and Cedergren's 1971 corpus of Montreal spoken French. This study was chosen because it is based on a corpus that, like our FI corpus, was collected via semi-directed taped interviews. This allows us to compare the FI students with native speakers of French in the same communicative situation. Our comparison with speakers of Quebec French is also motivated by the fact that it is primarily with these native speakers that the FI students have had extra-curricular contacts.

We also compare the FI students' patterns of variation with those observed in the classroom speech of a sample of FI teachers, collected by Allen, Cummins, Harley, and Swain (1987), and in the language used in a sample of French language arts materials used in the Board of Education where the FI student corpus was gathered.

Databases

Student Sample

The FI student sample was drawn from Extended French programs, characterized in the Board of Education under study by 50% French medium instruction from Grades 5 to 8 and 20% in the high school years. One notable difference that sets Extended French apart from early total FI programs is that it provides students with a delayed start and does not involve 100% French medium instruction in the initial stage. Thus, the Extended French option does not provide students with as high a level of classroom exposure to French as does early total FI. Furthermore the Extended French programs where we gathered the sample of FI students are housed in regular English-language schools where the vast majority of the administrative, teaching, and maintenance staff, and also students, are not French speaking.[3] This

means that the classrooms where these students take their French-medium courses, and the resource rooms attached to the FI programs, are about the only settings in which these students have the chance to use or be exposed to French in the school setting.

The main characteristics of the FI student sample are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. *Chief Characteristics of the Student Sample*

	Grade 9 (21)	Grade 12 (20)	Total (41)
	Females (13) Males (8)	Females (17) Males (3)	Females (30) Males (11)
Social Class *			
- Middle	n = 10	n = 14	n = 24
- LoMid	n = 9	n = 6	n = 15
French Medium Schooling			
% - 0-25	n = 2	n = 6	n = 8
% - 26-37	n =14	n = 13	n = 27
% - 38-100	n = 5	n = 1	n = 6
French Exposure -TV or Radio			
- Never	n = 16	n = 9	n = 25
- Occasional	n = 5	n = 11	n = 16
Time in Franco Environment			
- No Time	n = 8	n = 4	n = 12
- 1-6 days	n = 6	n = 3	n = 9
- 1-3 weeks	n = 6	n = 9	n = 15
- > 3 weeks	n = 1	n = 4	n = 5
Length of Stay with Franco Family			
- No Time	n = 15	n = 12	n = 27
- 1-13 days	n = 5	n = 1	n = 6
- > 2 weeks	n = 1	n = 7	n = 8
Language Spoken at Home			
- English	n = 10	n = 10	n = 20
- Romance	n = 4	n = 4	n = 8
- Other	n = 7	n = 6	n = 13

* Two students did not provide sufficient information for their social class to be determined.

The 41 students come from homes where neither parent is a native speaker of French and where French is not spoken, and they are from Grades 9 and 12. Although these students are not from French-speaking homes, they are by no means all from unilingual English-speaking homes. In fact, 51% of the students come from homes where a language other than English is used to varying degrees. Of these students, 39% come from homes where a Romance language is spoken (primarily Italian), and the rest are from non-Romance language homes. Table 1 also shows that there are almost equal numbers of Grade 9 and 12 students, more females than males, and more students from middle class backgrounds than from the upper working class. This preponderance of females and middle class students is typical of FI programs in Ontario (e.g., Hart & Lapkin, 1998). Also, the majority of the students never use the spoken French media; however, there are proportionally more Grade 12 students than Grade 9's who do so on occasion. There are proportionally more Grade 12 than Grade 9 students who have spent time in a Francophone environment or with a Francophone family. Furthermore, the average length of stay in a Francophone environment or with a Francophone family, for those students who have had these types of experiences, is a relatively modest 16 days and the majority of these stays are in Canada, particularly in Quebec.

In summary, then, the FI students in the Extended French programs under study have been exposed to French almost exclusively within the confines of the classroom and, thus, it makes sense to examine the use of variants by FI teachers and in the teaching materials in attempting to assess the impact that this type of restricted exposure has had on the FI students' development of sociolinguistic competence.

The FI Teacher Corpus of Classroom Spoken French

In our research project on the sociolinguistic competence of the 41 FI students mentioned above, we use the corpus of FI teacher in-class speech, gathered by Allen et al. (1987). This corpus was produced by a sample of seven FI teachers from the greater Toronto and Ottawa areas who were taped while teaching Grade 3 and Grade 6 FI students. It should be pointed out that these teachers are not the actual instructors of our FI students and that unfortunately no sociolinguistic background data on the teachers were gathered. However, one should also bear in mind that our systematic use of this teacher corpus to shed light on the sociolinguistic French competence of FI students is a methodological innovation. While we intend to gather a corpus of teachers' speech and accompanying sociolinguistic background data in the school district where the FI student corpus was gathered, the Allen and colleagues

corpus of classroom speech provides a sense of the type of educational input that the FI students are likely to have had. In fact, in our project as a whole, we have found that there is often a striking degree of convergence between the patterns of sociolinguistic variation found in the speech of these teachers and the FI students under study here.

The Corpus of French Language Arts Materials

The corpus of French language arts materials consists of a series of two textbooks and three accompanying exercise books commonly used in FI programs in the greater Toronto area and, in particular, in the school board where we gathered our FI student speech corpus. This series of materials is written by McLaughlin and Niedre (1998) and Basque and McLaughlin (1996) and is called *Pont vers le futur*. The series' pedagogical approach to FL2 teaching is undoubtedly communicative. The students are provided with many opportunities to carry out authentic activities through the use of French (e.g., projects, games, skits). However, as with many textbooks that adhere to the communicative approach, this series provides very limited opportunities for students to engage in explicit form-focused or function-focused language learning activities. This potential shortcoming will be discussed in more detail in the discussion of our results. Given that these materials were published in the mid to late 1990s, they do not reflect the most recent revised curriculum guidelines set forth by the Ontario Ministry of Education.

Literature Review and Hypotheses

Previous Research on the Expression of Consequence in Quebec French

One study of intersentential markers of consequence, by Dessureault-Dober (1974), has been carried out for Quebec French. It used a subsample of 26 speakers drawn from the Sankoff and Cedergren 1971 corpus of Montreal spoken French. This study found that *(ça) fait que* was used 55% of the time, *alors* 43%, and *donc* only 2%. *Donc*'s low frequency of use was attributed to its status as a hyper-formal variant (it was used by only five speakers, all members of the upper social strata). The vernacular variant *(ça) fait que* was associated with working class speakers and was found to be spreading rapidly among the younger speakers. In contrast, the standard variants *alors* and *donc* were used almost exclusively by the professional class. The factor of speaker sex was found not to have any effect on variant choice. Finally, in her study Dessureault-Dober did not assess the effect of the level of topic informality on variant choice.

As for the effect of linguistic factors, Dessureault-Dober examined the effect of several such factors (e.g., verb tense, mood), but concluded that none of them had an obvious effect on this case of variation.

Examples 1, 2, and 3, taken from Sankoff and Cedergren's corpus, illustrate the use of the three variants mentioned above to express the notion of consequence between two clauses.

1) *elle l'aimait pas* ***(ça) fait qu****'elle me l'a donné*
   - she did not like it **therefore** she gave it to me
2) quand on faisait du théâtre amateur c'était dans l'est **donc** c'était pour les gens de l'est
   -when we were doing amateur theatre it was in the East **therefore** it was for the Eastenders
3) *il y en a qui ont un vocabulaire très limité* ***alors*** *ils sacrent*
   -there are people with a very limited vocabulary therefore they swear.

Previous Research on the Development of Sociolinguistic Competence by the FI Students Under Study and Working Hypotheses of the Present Study

In most of our previous studies devoted to the sociolinguistic competence of the FI students, we have found that these students make marginal to no use of the vernacular variants of Quebec French (see Mougeon, Nadasdi, & Rehner, 2002, for an overview of our research). Therefore, in the present study we expected to find *(ça) fait que* to be used, if at all, only marginally by the FI students. In these same studies, we also found that the FI students tend to overuse the formal, standard variants. Consequently, in the current study we expected the FI students to make preponderant use of both *alors* and *donc*. However, given that *donc* is considerably more formal than *alors*, we expected the FI students to use it much less frequently than *alors*. This hypothesis reflects a previous finding of our research (Mougeon & Rehner, 2001), where the FI students were found to make nil use of the restrictive construction *ne...que*, a variant that is even more hyper-formal than *donc* in spoken Quebec French.

In our previous research we have also documented a trend whereby the female and/or middle class FI students show a preference for the formal, standard variants (Rehner & Mougeon, 1999; Mougeon & Rehner, 2001; Rehner, Mougeon, & Nadasdi, 2003). We use the term *trend* here because in several of our studies (Nadasdi, 2001; Nadasdi & McKinnie, in press) we have found these two independent variables have

no effect on the frequency of variant use. In the present study, we expected that if the FI students were to use *(ça) fait que* at all, it would be the male and the upper-working class students who would do so more often. We also expected that the female and the middle class students would show a greater preference than would their male and upper-working class counterparts for the hyper-formal variant *donc*.

We have also documented a trend in our previous research for those FI students with greater extra-curricular exposure to French to display more frequent rates of informal variant use than those students with less or no such exposure (e.g., Rehner & Mougeon, 1999; Mougeon & Rehner, 2001; Rehner, Mougeon, & Nadasdi, 2003). Therefore, we expected that if the students were to use *(ça) fait que*, it would be those students who had the highest levels of contacts with native speakers of French who would be using this variant most often.

As for the influence of the languages the FI students speak at home, one interesting finding arising from our previous research is that the presence of a form in either English or Italian that is similar to a French variant serves to promote the use of this French variant in the speech of those FI students who speak these languages at home (e.g., Rehner & Mougeon, 1999; Mougeon & Rehner, 2001; Rehner, Mougeon, & Nadasdi, 2003). In light of this finding, in the present study we expected to find that the FI students who speak Italian at home would distinguish themselves with a higher rate of use of *alors* compared with the remaining students. This hypothesis reflects the fact Italian expresses the notion of consequence most commonly with the conjunction *allora,* conjunction *dunque* being reserved for the elevated registers.

Finally, concerning the frequency of variant use in the educational input of the FI students, our previous work has found that, in the classroom speech of the FI teachers, vernacular variants are almost non-existent and that the formal, standard variants greatly outweigh the informal ones. As for the pedagogical materials, they display the same pattern, except that they favour the formal, standard variants to an even higher degree (see Mougeon, Nadasdi & Rehner, 2002, for a synthesis of the findings of the examination of the influence of the FI students' educational input). Consequently, in the present study we expected to find little or no use of the vernacular variant *(ça) fait que* in both the teachers' speech and the pedagogical materials. Further, we hypothesized that the materials would make greater use of the hyper-formal variant *donc* than would the teachers.

Findings

Use of the Variants in the Educational Input

As Table 2 shows, the FI teachers use predominantly two variants, namely *alors* and *donc*, with the former being significantly more frequent (78% versus 20%, respectively). We found only one token of *(ça) fait que*. These frequencies are clearly different from those found by Dessureault-Dober (1974) in the taped speech of Montreal Francophones, where the most frequent variant was *(ça) fait que* (55%) and where *donc*, the hyper-formal variant, accounted for only 2% of the tokens. This difference may reflect the fact that the FI teachers are aware of the vernacular status of *(ça) fait que* and, hence, consider its use in the formal context of the classroom as inappropriate. As for the more frequent use of *donc*, this can be ascribed to the fact that in such a context standard, formal variants tend to be valorized. Still, the teachers' speech is not completely out of line with that of the Quebec Francophones in that their use of formal variant *alors* greatly outweighs their use of hyper-formal variant *donc*.

Table 2. *Frequency Distribution of Variants Alors, Donc, and (Ça) fait que in the Speech of the Immersion Teachers*

Variants	Immersion Teachers	
	Number	Percent
Alors	54	78
Donc	14	20
(Ça) fait que	1	2
Total	69	100

As can be seen in Table 3, *(ça) fait que* is never used in the pedagogical materials and *donc* is clearly the preferred variant, outweighing *alors* by a margin of 4:1.

This pattern is the reverse of what we found in the FI teachers' classroom speech, where they favoured *alors* over *donc* by approximately the same margin. These findings more than confirm our hypothesis that neither the teachers nor the materials would make significant use of *(ça) fait que* and that the materials would show a stronger preference than the teachers for the more formal of the other two variants.

Table 3. *Frequency Distribution (N) of Variants Alors, Donc, and (Ça) fait que in the Pedagogical Materials*

Position	Written Texts			Dialogue		
	Alors	Donc	(Ça) fait que	Alors	Donc	(Ça) fait que
Intersentential	6	2	0	1	5	0
Intrasentential	1	25	0	0	4	0

Furthermore, Table 3 reveals an interesting qualitative difference between the teachers' use of variants and that of the pedagogical materials, which is in line with the difference in frequency to which we have just pointed. In our analysis of the materials, we discovered that variant *donc* is used at a ratio of 4:1 after the verb of the second clause that expresses the consequence. For example:

> Son désir de réussir était plus fort que tout. Elle a **donc** décidé d'ignorer les moqueries.
>
> -Her desire to succeed was stronger than anything. She *decided* **therefore** to ignore the taunts.

as opposed to before this verb:

> *La compétition dans ce type de métier est très grande, **donc** il est difficile de se faire accepter.*
>
> -Competition in this kind of occupation is very fierce, **therefore** it is difficult to be accepted.

These two possible positions are designated, respectively, as intra-sentential and inter-sentential in Table 3.[4] It should be pointed out that this intra-sentential use of *donc* is not only syntactically more complex than its inter-sentential use, but it is also a feature of literary style. Thus, not only do the teaching materials greatly favour the hyper-formal variant *donc* over the other variants, but they also favour it in its most highly formal use.

Finally, the data in Table 3 also display the results of an analysis of the frequency of variant use that has distinguished two types of texts within the pedagogical materials examined:

1) those meant to represent oral French (e.g., dialogues, conversations); and,
2) those meant to be read as written texts (e.g., instructions to the students, background information for their projects, legends, and tales).

This distinction allows us to see if the authors of the materials have reflected these register differences with differential rates of frequency of variant use (e.g., a greater use of informal and vernacular variants in the texts representing oral French and a more frequent use of formal variants in the written texts).

As can be seen in Table 3, the intra-sentential use of *donc* is considerably less frequent in the texts representing oral French than in the other texts, which is what one would expect given the literary status of this use. Unfortunately, this difference is not accompanied by the expected markedly higher frequency of *alors* in the texts representing oral French compared to the remaining texts, since in both types of texts the proportion of *alors* is roughly the same.

Use of the Variants by the FI Students

Overall frequency. Let us now turn to the results presented in Table 4. As can be seen, the FI students use three variants: *alors* (78%) and *donc* (15%), variants also used by the FI teachers and the pedagogical materials; and *so*, whose frequency in their speech is low (7%) but not negligible (see examples 4, 5, and 6 below taken from the Mougeon and Nadasdi corpus of FI students' speech).

Examples:

4. *il avait une opération* ***alors*** *il ne peut pas aller*
   -he had an operation so he could not go
5. *je vais aller* ***donc*** *je veux ah avoir toutes les cours*
   -I am going to go so I want um to have all the courses
6. *c'est une obligation* ***so*** *j'ai pas de choix*
   -it's an obligation so I don't have a choice

The use of variant *so* may be looked upon as an indication of the FI students' less-than-perfect mastery of the words that express the notion of consequence in French. This result is reminiscent of Rehner's (2002) finding that these same students substitute English pause filler *like* for *comme* more than one third of the time (e.g., *alors il il* ***like*** *conduit pour deux heures* – so he he *like* drives for two hours), a frequency that suggests that such English words have become ingrained in the speech of some of the FI students.

Leaving aside variant *so*, it is interesting that the FI students' frequency of variant use closely resembles that of the FI teachers, in that they evidence almost the same ratio of *alors* versus *donc* use and little or no use of the vernacular variant *(ça) fait que*. Conversely, the students' frequency of use is unlike that of both the Montreal Francophones and the pedagogical materials. More precisely, unlike the

pedagogical materials, they make modest use of hyper-formal *donc* (and always inter-sententially) and unlike the Montreal Francophones, they make no use of the variant that the native speakers use most often, namely *(ça) fait que*.

Table 4. *Frequency Distribution of Variants Alors, Donc, So and (Ça) fait que in the Speech of the Immersion Students*

Variants	Number	Percent
Alors	484	78
Donc	96	15
So	44	7
(Ça) fait que	0	0
Total	624	100

Several explanations can be proposed for these results. First, to account for the lack of *(ça) fait que* in the FI students' speech, we can point to the fact that in these students' most frequent source of exposure to French, namely the FI teachers' classroom speech and the pedagogical materials, this variant is never used. Thus, the FI students would need to be exposed to this variant via interactions with native speakers outside the school setting. However, even though in the speech of Quebeckers *(ça) fait que* is the most frequent of the three variants under study, the FI students, as we have seen, have had only limited extra-curricular contacts with Quebec Francophones. This lack of exposure to native spoken French outside the classroom may also be compounded by the fact that in comparison to other notions, the notion of consequence does not have a very frequent probability of occurrence in discourse (see further down). Finally, in casual spoken French *ça fait que* is often reduced to *fait que* and pronounced "fak" and thus the FI students may not be able to easily process such a morphophonetically contracted form. Consequently, the effect of these compounding factors may have prevented the FI students from internalizing this variant.

As for the finding that the FI students' frequencies of use of *alors* and *donc* resemble those of the FI teachers and not those of the pedagogical materials, the explanation may lie in the fact that the pedagogical materials make infrequent use of inter-sentential words of consequence and, instead, opt for the use of *donc* intra-sententially. This syntactically complex construction may be beyond the FI students' ability to process and intake and, thus, the materials may be a considerably less significant source of comprehensible input in relation

to the variants that express the notion of consequence than are the FI teachers, who use these words almost always inter-sententially.

Effect of Independent Variables on Frequency of Variant Use

Let us now look at the results of a factor analysis of the case of variation under study, which we have performed using the statistical program GoldVarb (Rand & Sankoff, 1990). The purpose of this analysis is to determine the significance of the influence of the various independent variables that we have hypothesized to impact on frequency of variant use by the FI students. Our analysis focuses first on a two-way comparison between formal variant *alors* and its hyper-formal counterpart *donc*, the results of which are displayed in Table 5. First, there is an inconsistent pattern of sex and social class factor effects, where *donc* is favored by the students of middle class background (factor effect of 0.64), but disfavored by the female students (factor effect of 0.37).[5] These results are unlike those found in our previous studies where either social class and/or sex were found to have the expected effect (i.e, middle class and female students favouring formal standard variants), or found to have no effect.

One explanation for the contradictory pattern of sex and social class found in the present study may lie in the fact that the FI students cannot infer properly the sociostylistic value of *donc* and *alors* due to the paucity of their exposure to these forms both in the teachers' classroom speech and in the pedagogical materials (see Tables 2 and 3). For instance, in a study devoted to the alternation among the inflected future versus the periphrastic future versus the futurate present, we found a combined total of over 1000 tokens of these variants in the FI teachers' classroom speech and in the pedagogical materials, compared to the combined total of 113 tokens of the variants in the present study. Further, the paucity of exposure to *donc* and *alors* may be compounded by the fact that the authors of the pedagogical materials have, as we have stated, greatly overused syntactically complex intra-sentential *donc*. We observed a similar situation in a previous study of the variants expressing the notion of restriction, where the pedagogical materials overwhelmingly favoured the syntactically complex construction *ne...que* and, yet, this variant was not part of the FI students' sociolinguistic competence.

Another explanation for the FI students' contradictory patterns of sex and social class may lie in the fact that the frequency of variant use found in the teachers' classroom speech and in the pedagogical materials contradict each other, namely the teachers favour *alors* and the

materials favour *donc*. This may confuse the students as to which of the two variants is the more correct. Finally, although the teaching materials strongly favour the use of *donc*, they provide no explicit information whatsoever to the students on the differential sociostylistic status of these two variants.

Table 5. *Effects of Independent Variables on Alors versus Donc*

Independent Variables	*Alors* (n)	*Donc* (n)	*Alors* (%)	*Donc* (%)	Total (n)	Factor Effect (*Donc*)
French Media						
Never	334	25	93	7	359	n.s.
Occasional	150	71	68	32	221	
Home Languages						
English	227	93	71	29	320	
Romance	110	0	100	0	110	knock
Other	147	3	98	2	150	out
Francophone Environment						
0 hours	133	2	99	1	135	0.05
1- 6 days	85	13	87	13	98	0.51
1 - 3 weeks	174	52	77	23	226	0.71
over 3 weeks	92	29	76	24	121	0.81
Francophone Family						
0 hours - 3 days	259	60	81	19	319	0.69
over 3 days	225	36	86	14	261	0.28
Social Class						
Lo-mid	218	29	88	12	247	0.32
Middle	237	67	78	22	304	0.64
Sex						
Female	466	38	92	8	504	0.37
Male	18	58	24	76	76	0.96
TOTAL	484	96	83	17	580	
Log likelihood = -142.89 Significance = 0.001 Input probability = 0.056						

Concerning the effect of extra-curricular contacts with native speakers, we are unable to test our hypothesis that this factor would be favourable to the use of *(ça) fait que*, since the FI students do not use this variant at all. However, the factor analysis revealed an effect of this parameter on the frequency of *donc* and *alors* that we had not anticipated. As can be seen from Table 5, both the factors of 'stays in a Francophone

environment' and 'stays with a Francophone family' have an effect on the frequency of use of these variants. Starting with this second factor, we see that for the students who have had over three days of stays with a Francophone family its effect is unfavourable to *donc* (factor effect of 0.28). One explanation for this is that, through their interactions with native speakers of French in a Francophone family, these particular FI students have become aware of the fact that *donc* is a marginal variant and, as a result, have adjusted their frequency of *donc* usage downward. As for the effect of 'stays in a Francophone environment,' we can see that it is the reverse of what has been found for the effect of 'stays with a Francophone family.' This unexpected pattern is not totally inconsistent with previous findings of our research related to this factor. Indeed, we have found that this factor is at times not selected by GoldVarb as having an impact on variant choice, or displays non-linear correlations, when 'stays with a Francophone family' is selected as a significant factor by GoldVarb. Overall, then, length of stay with a Francophone family has turned out to be a better predictor of variant choice than length of stay in a Francophone environment. The explanation for this likely lies in the fact that 'stays in a Francophone environment' are less likely to involve true interactions with native speakers on the part of the FI students, since a non-negligible proportion of the students who stayed in such environments did so with their classmates or with their families. Thus, the fact that in the present study the effect of 'stays in a Francophone environment' is the opposite of 'stays with a Francophone family' and displays a linear correlation should not be given too much weight.

In relation to the effect of home language, Table 5 shows that FI students from a Romance language background, speakers of Italian for the most part, are categorical users of *alors*. This prevented GoldVarb from calculating factor effect values. The net result, however, is that the use of a Romance language has an unmistakable effect in favour of the use of *alors*. This finding, as we had hypothesized, may reflect the fact that Italian has a conjunction that is both semantically and morphologically similar to *alors*, namely *allora*. It is interesting that these same students have also been found in previous studies of ours to favor other French variants that have counterparts in Italian (e.g., *seulement* 'only' on the model of *solamente*, Mougeon & Rehner, 2001; and *nous* 'we' on the model of Italian *noi*, Rehner, Mougeon, & Nadasdi, 2003).

If we turn now to an analysis that allows us to focus on variant *so*, (Table 6), we see, first, that it is the male and upper-working class FI

students who show a marked preference for *so*, although the association with social class is not statistically significant.

Table 6. *Effects of Extra-Linguistic Factors on So versus Alors and Donc*

Factor Groups	*Alors & Donc* (n)	*So* (n)	*Alors & Donc* (%)	*So* (%)	Total (n)	Factor Effect (*So*)
French Media						
Never	359	38	90	10	397	0.65
Occasional	221	6	97	3	227	0.25
Home Languages						
English	320	28	92	8	348	
Romance	110	0	100	0	110	knock
Other	150	16	90	10	166	out
Francophone Environment						
0 hours	135	26	84	16	161	0.66
1 - 6 days	98	3	97	3	101	0.30
1 week and over	347	15	96	4	362	0.47
Francophone Family						
0 hours - 3 days	415	38	92	8	453	n.s.
over 3 days	165	6	96	4	171	
Social Class						
Lo-mid	247	26	90	10	273	n.s.
Middle	304	18	94	6	322	
Sex						
Female	504	26	95	5	530	0.42
Male	76	18	81	19	94	0.84
TOTAL	580	44	3	7	100	
Log likelihood = -132.53 Significance = 0.002 Input probability = 0.042						

These findings may reflect the fact that variant *so* is perceived by the FI students as non-standard, not only on account of its English origins, but also by virtue of its absence in the educational input (see Tables 2 and 3). The association between *so* and male students is reflective of a

finding by Rehner (2002) that *so* in its discursive functions is also favored by these same male FI students.

For example – Turn yielding signal:

Student: *C'est une chose différente que j'avais ici* ***so***.
Interviewer: *Oui.*
Student: *It's a different thing that I had here* ***so***.
Interviewer: *Yes.*

This association is also consistent with a finding by Duchesne (1995) that male French immersion students use English lexical items more often than do their female counterparts.

Second, Table 6 shows that it is those FI students with no exposure to French outside the FI program who use variant *so* most often. Thus, the FI students who have never used the spoken French media display a factor effect for *so* use of 0.65, those FI students how have never stayed in a Francophone environment display a factor effect of 0.66, and those FI students who have had none or only very short stays with a Francophone family use *so* twice as often as the other FI students, although this frequency difference was not deemed to be statistically significant by GoldVarb. These correlations reinforce the idea that, as we have suggested, the FI students are using *so* primarily to fill momentary gaps in their lexicon.[6]

Finally, it is interesting to note that the FI students from Romance language homes (i.e., students who have *allora* in their first language) do not make use of the English variant *so*. This could be taken as an indication that the knowledge of *allora* has allowed for an early acquisition of *alors* and, hence, an avoidance or the disappearance of the tendency to use *so*. On the other hand, it should be remembered that this familiarity with *allora* leads them to use only one variant.

Conclusion

The primary finding that has emerged from our study is that the FI students' use of variants that express the notion of consequence is much more closely aligned with that of the FI teachers than with that of the teaching materials or the native speakers of Quebec French. In this concluding section we will investigate the pedagogical implications of this finding.

Perhaps the most important pedagogical finding of our study is that the FI students' educational input, from both the FI teachers and the teaching materials, fails to provide the students with opportunities to become familiar with the most frequent variant in the speech of native speakers of Quebec French, namely *(ça) fait que*. This renders a

disservice to the FI students who, thus, may have difficulty identifying, internalizing, and eventually producing this variant in the appropriate registers of spoken French. Thus, the absence of *(ça) fait que* in the FI students' speech clearly underscores the Ontario Ministry of Education's (2000) emphasis on the need for FI students to develop a mastery of features of the informal registers of French and, hence, suggests that there is a need to rethink the objectives and content of French language arts material and pedagogy in FI settings.

In a related and similar vein, the teaching materials are also doing a disservice to the FI students by over-emphasizing the use of variant *donc*, a variant that is quite marginal even in the taped speech of native speakers of Quebec French. This disservice is compounded by the fact that the materials display an overwhelming bias in favour of the intra-sentential use of *donc*, which, as we have pointed out, is a hyper-formal literary construction that is also syntactically complex. Luckily, the FI students seem to have been impervious to this particular use of *donc* and that may be because, as we have seen, the FI teachers rarely use this particular syntactic construction.

A final pedagogical implication of the present study is that both the FI teachers and the teaching materials need to do a better job of providing students with sociolinguistically-meaningful opportunities to become familiar with the differential levels of formality associated with *donc*, *alors*, and *(ça) fait que*. This could be done explicitly via lessons, activities, or teacher feedback focussing on sociostylistic variation (see Lyster, 1994a; 1994b). This type of explicit focus was entirely lacking in the pedagogical materials we examined. In addition, this could be done implicitly by clearly marking the difference between written and oral French with appropriate differences in frequencies of the variants. As we have seen earlier, this distinction was not made in the case of variation currently under study, although this type of implicit focus has been realized in the pedagogical materials in relation to some of the other cases of variation we have examined (e.g., hyper-formal personal subject pronoun *nous* versus *on*, both meaning *we*; formal inflected future versus periphrastic future, *il* ***partira*** *ce soir* versus *il* ***va partir*** *ce soir* – he **will leave** tonight versus he **is going to leave** tonight).

To conclude, the present study adds compelling evidence to that already produced by many of our previous studies on the sociolinguistic competence of FI students. This evidence underscores the need to rethink the pedagogy of French language arts in FI programs in order to incorporate native speaker norms. This need is not limited to such programs, however, as pointed out in a study by O'Connor Di Vito

(1991). This author examined materials used to teach French as a second language at the university level in the United States and found that they featured a variety of French that included overly formal usages that were quite removed from the patterns of variant choice in the speech of university-educated native speakers of French!

APPENDIX

Synthesis of the objectives set forth by the Ontario Ministry of Education concerning the development of sociolinguistic competence by secondary school French immersion students (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000):

> Students should have the following productive abilities: incorporate colloquialisms and idiomatic expressions into their speech; debate formally and informally issues arising from their reading of literary and other works; express clearly and confidently their personal point of view in informal discussions; and write letters in an appropriate style for a variety of purposes. Students should also have the following receptive abilities: demonstrate the ability to detect nuances of language in various forms of oral communication; identify and demonstrate an understanding of a range of accents as well as some dialects from the Francophone world (ex. accents and expressions from different regions of France and Canada); recognize the vocabulary variations typical of different geographical areas where French is spoken; and use regional dictionaries (ex. a dictionary of Canadian French) to become familiar with language diversities from region to region.

NOTES

1. This SSHRC-funded project is entitled *Research on Variation in the Spoken French of Immersion Students*. It was initially funded in 1996 and was renewed for a three-year period in 2000.

2. Our decision not to investigate the acquisition of the linguistic constraints of this particular case of variation reflects the fact that, in her study of Montreal French, Dessureault-Dober (1974) found that none of the various linguistic factors that she had examined had an effect on the frequency of variant choice. In a similar vein, in the present study, we have not investigated the effect of the level of (in)formality of the topics discussed in the interview because the effect of this parameter on variant choice was not examined by Dessureault-Dober (1974). We intend to examine this question in a future study where we will use our own corpora of native Ontario spoken French as a benchmark.

3. This situation is not unusual in Ontario where most school boards offering FI education do so via FI programs rather than via designated FI

schools, also known as single-track FI programs, where a French ambiance is created by the presence of French-speaking teachers, support staff, administrators, and other sources of exposure to spoken and written French.

4. We found three instances of intra-sentential uses of *donc* in the teachers' classroom speech. Two were clearly instances in which the teacher was reading aloud sentences from a book. As for the third instance, it was more difficult to determine whether it reflected spontaneous speech or reading aloud.

5. In a GoldVarb factor analysis, a factor effect value higher than 0.50 means that the factor in question is favourable to the use of a given variant, while a factor effect value lower than 0.50 means the contrary.

6. As we pointed out, the FI students have been primarily exposed to French in Quebec where Francophones do not use variant *so*. If the students had interactions with Franco-Ontarian adolescents the findings on the effect of Francophone environment might have been dramatically different since these speakers of French use *so* 32% of the time (Mougeon & Beniak, 1991). Note, however, that the Franco-Ontarian students who are at the forefront of this trend are those who are the most balanced bilinguals (i.e., speakers who feel equally at ease in both French and English), a finding which suggests that *so* is not filling a gap in their speech.

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