

Variation in the Use of Prepositions in Quebec French

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ABSTRACT

Using the combined approach of Variationist Sociolinguistics and Cognitive Linguistics, this thesis undertakes the classification and analysis of certain prepositions in spoken Quebec French. The study examines 21 interviews that make up part of the *Corpus de français parlé au Québec* (CFPQ).

The aim of this thesis is to examine the use of the variables expressing the concept of 'possession', and those equivalent to English before/in front of and after/behind. These three variables are represented as (POSS), (ANTE) and (POST). An initial quantification of the variants is carried out, which establishes the contexts of production, and helps determine the areas of linguistic analysis to be explored.

For the (POSS) variable, the data is examined in terms of linguistic factors such as the reference of the possessor, the avoidance of hiatus, and inalienable/alienable possession. Interpersonal variation is also considered, including age and gender in addition to level of education. From the Cognitive Linguistic perspective, we investigate 'reference point theory' and how it can shed light on the alternation between the variants.

The (ANTE) and (POST) variables are studied in terms of the type of reference (i.e. locative or temporal), the locating noun category, and the age, sex, and level of education of the speakers. The Cognitive Linguistic theory of 'subjectification' is also considered for these two variables.

For the (POSS) variable, the reference of the possessor and the level of education are seen to be important factors for the use of possessive *à*. In addition, the 'reference point theory' contributes to our understanding of the use of this variant.

With the (ANTE) and (POST) variables certain variants are seen to be employed both with and without an overt complement. The variant *devant* is predominantly found in contexts involving narrative discourse, and the variants *en avant* and *en avant de* are preferred for locative reference. Once again, the Cognitive Sociolinguistic approach

highlights the possibility that the difference in variant choice is linked to the speakers' cognitive construal of the situation.

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CHAPTER 1 Introduction

This thesis presents an investigation of grammatical variability of certain prepositions in a corpus of Quebec French, specifically the use of variables expressing the concept of ‘possession’, and those equivalent to English before/in front of and after/behind. These three variables are represented as (POSS), (ANTE) and (POST). The objectives are to discover if linguistic or other constraints affect their use, and includes a study of interpersonal variation between the speakers whose interviews are being examined. In addition, a consideration of cognitive linguistic influences is included, which has led this study to use Cognitive Sociolinguistics as its theoretical framework.

Prepositions have been the object of many studies to date, but in the domain of grammatical variability, analyses have been less common. This is predominantly explained by their polysemous nature, and the changes taking place in this word group.

The motivation for this study came from the experience of hearing and seeing variability in the use of prepositions in everyday French. This variation was commonly described as a ‘*faute*’ with no more explanation, therefore this study aims to discover what can explain this variability. It will also serve as a record of the state of preposition use in Quebec French in the 21st century, thereby facilitating future real-time language change analyses.

In chapter 2 we discuss the problems that arise when undertaking morpho-syntactic variation analysis, notably the issues surrounding the topic of meaning and equivalence. This chapter also describes the origin and word class of prepositions as well as their linguistic properties. Finally, we outline the theoretical frameworks that have been used to analyse the data.

Chapter 3 outlines the details of the corpus used for this study, which was designed by the University of Sherbrooke i.e. the *Corpus de Français Parlé au Québec* (CFPQ). Information regarding the number of interviews, the informants’ age, profession and gender is given here, as well as any interview characteristics relevant to our analyses. Our data-processing procedure is also described in detail in this chapter, including the ways we used computer software to code for different factors in order to quantify tokens. The transcription conventions used

to record the interviews in PDF documents by the University of Sherbrooke are also given, and lastly alternative methods for coding linguistic factors and local language features are discussed.

We start our analysis of prepositions in chapter 4, where we circumscribe the (POSS) variable and its variants. The history of the variants is examined via a review of relevant literature of both specialist and non-specialist works. Firstly, the mention of the variants of the (POSS) variable in metropolitan varieties of French is examined, which is then followed by a consideration of Quebec French references, and lastly discussions of the variants in regional varieties.

We follow our circumscription of the (POSS) variable, with the analysis of the data from the CFPQ interviews in chapter 5. Here we define the linguistic constraints and interpersonal variation we examined, which includes details of the factor groups coded for, such as the reference of possessor, and the age or gender of the informants.

In chapter 6 we proceed with the definition of two variables, (ANTE) and (POST) and their variants. We give details of the varying locative and temporal uses of the variants, and what this implies for this study as well as including a consideration of literature that can shed light on their use in metropolitan French, Quebec French and regional varieties of French.

Lastly in chapter 7 we examine the data for the (ANTE) and (POST) variables in detail, including both linguistic constraints such as locative or temporal reference, the reference noun category and variation between speakers such as professional or educational information.

For ease of reference, an Appendix is provided which lists the variants for each variable, together with an example of each of the non-standard variants in a typical context.

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we will examine various inherent characteristics of grammatical language variation. We start by taking into consideration different aspects of morpho-syntactic variation analysis that separate it from phonological variation. We then go on to discuss the issue of meaning in morpho-syntactic variation, which is followed by information regarding the origins, and characteristics of prepositions. To finish, we review specialist literature relevant to the analysis of the variables in this study.

2.1.1 Considerations for Morpho-Syntactic variation analysis

In spoken language morpho-syntactic variation involves the use of alternatives to standard language, which produce alternating forms or structures, or the option of a grammatical form, such as the negative particle *ne*. Variants of morpho-syntactic variables do not fundamentally change the meaning of what is said, but they are formally different. This is related to what Milroy and Gordon (2003: 170) call the non-finite or “leaky” nature of syntactic systems, and this nature is linked to the fact that sociolinguistic studies of grammatical variability have often focussed on language internal factors to explain variability.

Morpho-syntactic variation has been less studied than phonology by scholars within the discipline of Variationist Sociolinguistics and this can be explained by a number of relevant factors. Indeed, despite the success and fruitful yields borne from studies of phonological variation conducted on English and other languages, grammatical variation research has generated problems that did not occur in phonological studies. One of the main difficulties encountered by researchers when attempting to use Labovian-type analyses of grammar is of a methodological nature. It is more difficult to conduct research on morpho-syntactic variables due to the fact that, unlike phonological variables that produce large numbers of tokens for possible analysis and quantification, many morpho-syntactic variables are unlikely to occur abundantly in spoken language. A study of phonological variables will yield, in any given length of spoken discourse, a higher token count due to the fact that speakers make repeated use

of a limited repertoire of phonemes, which in turn narrows down the search for, and analysis of alternatives. The very makeup of phonological variation in spoken language is different to that of grammatical variation, and it is often described as a 'closed system' because of this limited repertoire. Early studies of phonological variation (e.g. by Labov and Trudgill) often looked at speaker groups and styles with little or no attention to other influences. Whereas the focus in many grammatical variation analyses conducted in the United States on African American Vernacular (AAV) was almost exclusively on constraint rankings as opposed to relative frequencies (Milroy and Gordon, 2003: 169). Although constraint rankings are useful for measuring the effect of internal language constraints on the production of grammatical variables, they are also considered to add methodological complications for quantitative analysis.

In our study of the (POSS) variable, we found very frequent occurrences of *à* and *de*, but comparatively few instances of these prepositions were employed as variants of the (POSS) variable (both words, of course have other primary functions). Interestingly on the other hand, when quantifying certain of the (ANTE) and (POST) non-standard variants, a larger proportion of the forms proved to be occurrences of the variables of interest to us.

An additional factor that could be considered to greatly hinder the endeavour of examining morpho-syntactic variation is what Armstrong (2001: 121) calls its 'recalcitrance' to Labovian-type analysis. This term is somewhat misleading however, as it implies that morpho-syntactic variables intrinsically resist or defy variationist methods of analysis, which of course is not the case. Nevertheless, they are indeed more problematic for researchers to study using the traditional variationist methods. This is mainly due to the differences in the methods needed to determine what constitutes a variable in this area of grammar. High-level syntactic variables (i.e. variables such as subject and object NP doubling, or variation between auxiliary verbs) are harder to quantify because a speaker can employ many different grammatical constructions to deliver his/her chosen meaning. The lower levels of frequency of grammatical variables also has the knock-on effect of making them less practical to exploit in a sociolinguistic study that links variables to particular social indexes, via quantification.

Along with this already stark difference between phonological and grammatical variation, Chambers (1995: 51-2; 241-2) also remarked on the probabilistic or 'quantitative' characteristics of phonological variation. These

characteristics imply that most speakers in a particular speech community will engage in the use of phonological variables, therefore providing enough data to enable an interpretable quantification. In spoken language, this means that the likelihood of finding variants of variables – even if there is no guarantee that all possible variants of a variable will occur – is greater than with grammatical variants. Conversely, grammatical variability appears to be sharp or ‘qualitative’ amongst some speaker groups, due to the fact that speakers appear to demonstrate ‘binary’ participation in grammatical variation. In other words, their speech acts either show use of grammatical variables, or nearly no use, or no use at all. Not only does this make quantification and interpretation more difficult, but it also demonstrates that, unlike phonological variables that can be shared by members of a speech community (to a greater or lesser degree), there is no guarantee that a group of speakers from the same speech community will employ common grammatical variables. There is, furthermore, no guarantee that speakers in a study will produce the variables known to be occurring in the speech of some inhabitants of a particular geographical area. In Trudgill’s (1974) survey and comparison of rates of non-standard subject-verb concord in Norwich the results show a pronounced, or as Chambers (1995) would call it, ‘near-qualitative’ pattern of distribution of the use of the non-standard verb concord ‘she go’. Despite these issues, there are clearly some cases of grammatical variables involving ‘fine stratification’, or more subtle quantitative differences between social classes (cf. Coveney, 2013: 78-79)

Further factors have led to grammatical variation being a realm of investigation less frequently explored. These factors, that are now considered to be inherent characteristics of grammatical variation – often posing problems for scholars – are the difficulties of establishing semantic, pragmatic, and discursal equivalence between grammatical variants. Nevertheless, numerous studies are now attaching growing importance to the pragmatic and semantic implications of a variation in word choice or syntactic structure employed by a speaker. This supports the review and inclusion of literature specifically discussing the origins of prepositions, as well as their semantic, syntactic, and morphological properties.

2.1.2 Meaning in the study of Morpho-syntactic variation

In addition to the above-mentioned considerations, and the debate started by Lavandera (1978: 175) – and continued by Romaine (1984: 411) – when the examination of sociolinguistic variables is extended beyond the domain of phonology we are faced with one important question to consider, the issue of meaning. Grammatical variables can be understood to bear meaning, yet, what constitutes a meaning-bearing unit in language is an on-going debate. Contrary to phonological variants, where variation does not demonstrate ‘a change in referent or syntactic function’ (Tagliamonte, 2012: 206), this is often the case for morpho-syntactic variables. For example, there is phonological variation in pronunciation of the word “bath” which can be pronounced as /bɑ:θ/, /bɑ:θ/ or /bɑθ/ depending on where the speaker originates from. Nevertheless, in all three pronunciations the word has the same meaning. With grammatical variables a change in referent or syntactic function will often provoke “some usages or contexts in which they [i.e. the variants of a variable] have different meanings or functions” (Tagliamonte, 2012: 206). This is a characteristic that automatically provokes a need to examine tokens of grammatical variation differently to tokens of phonological variation, in order to establish what type of meaning these units bear: referential meaning, discourse meaning or another sort of meaning.

In summary, morpho-syntactic variables are known to occur less in corpus data, causing problems for quantification. They are also often harder to quantify due to the existence of numerous grammatical forms or constructions to express the same meaning, and the added difficulty of determining their meaning. It is important to note that a study of prepositions using a variationist approach may generate these same difficulties. In the next section, we will proceed to define this word class in more detail in order to aid the circumscription of our variables and their variants.

2.2 What are Prepositions?

Prepositions are elements of language that introduce a relation between two entities or sets of entities. A preposition connects these entities (typically another constituent that is referred to as its complement or object) and selects a noun phrase (NP) or another preposition. They are classed as invariable morphologically (which means that they do not inflect to show number or gender),

although Baronian (2006: 30-31) demonstrates that certain *portmanteau* prepositions in Quebec French do carry definiteness, number, and gender features e.g. /dẽ(z)/ (plural of *dans*). Some prepositions can be omitted, but in these cases their existence is inferred from the context of the utterance e.g. *fin avril* instead of *fin d'avril*.

Contrary to the English language, which has approximately 50 prepositions, French has 26 simple prepositions according to Melis (2003: 105), which are categorised this way because they are the most typical, and appear unanalysable to the speaker. However, Melis goes on to say that the word class of prepositions is open to changes for two reasons: firstly, because new prepositions are formed, and secondly, because items come in or out of this word class when they change category. In addition to simple prepositions, some languages, including French also have other types of prepositions that are categorised depending on the number of constituents they contain. Simple prepositions are just one word (e.g. *à, de, sur*) whereas complex prepositions have the possibility to combine with nouns, which are often referred to as *locutions prépositionnelles/prépositives* in French (e.g. *à/sur le côté de*). These function in a sentence in the same way prepositions do, and are defined by Matthews as prepositions that do not take a complement as in the word 'away' in 'He walked away' (2007: 202). However, scholars still disagree on whether complex prepositions can be used intransitively in French (e.g. without the use of *de*), where the object or complement of the preposition is not expressed. In the analysis of spoken language, certain complex prepositions such as *en arrière de* could be considered to be adverbs in the absence of an overt complement. For the purpose of this study we are adopting the analysis of complex prepositions offered by Borillo (2001), which considers that complex prepositions can function with or without an overt complement (referred to by Borillo as *nom de localisation interne* (Nli)). This particularity of complex prepositions will be discussed in more detail in section 2.4.1.1, and also in the corresponding sections for each variable. However, in order to examine variation in prepositions, we must first consider the origins of the word class of prepositions in French.

2.2.1 The history and origins of French prepositions

2.2.1.1 From Gaulish to Latin

The existence of French prepositions, and the evolution of this word class are principally traced back to Latin. There is a complex history with many factors playing a role, however the introduction of Latin into Gaul by the Romans between the 1st and 2nd centuries BC – both Vulgar Latin (VL) and Classical Latin (CL) – is the most important historical foundation for prepositions in French. The Gauls adopted Latin because, despite speaking their own Celtic language, under the Roman Empire they were given the right to access high-ranking administrative positions. These positions necessitated knowing how to speak Latin, thus Latin slowly became embraced, and children's schooling in Latin even became sought after by Gaulish nobility (Walter and Fawcett, 2003: 17). However, Latin did not become the language of Gaul overnight; it took several centuries and many generations to become the vernacular of the indigenous inhabitants. Nevertheless, by 500 AD Latin was the language of Gaul and we can see the development – in both its forms (Classical and Vulgar) – that gives us the origins of the word class of prepositions we know in French today: all simple prepositions in contemporary French derive from Latin. According to Walter (2003: 26-28) the next influence that contributed to the development of French came from the Germanic invasions of the 4th century by the Visigoths, the Burgundians and Franks. However, one tribe in particular, the Franks, established lasting and far-reaching relationships in the country, settling predominantly in the north. Indeed, the Franks' history with Gaul also went as far back as the 2nd century when they enrolled and fought with the Romans, and were even given the right to take over abandoned properties in Gaul in the 3rd century. The success of the Franks in Gaul comes down to two important events, firstly the conversion of the Frankish King Clovis to Christianity in A.D 496, and secondly the alliance between the Gallo-Roman bishops and the King to overcome any rival leader disputes (Rickard, 2003: 7-10). Thus, for the language of Gaul, the situation was still complicated, however Latin was now the principal language, and interestingly during the time the Gallo-Romans and Franks lived side by side, the more classic characteristics of Latin were eroded.

2.2.1.2 From Latin to *Langues d'Oc* and *Langues d'Oïl*

During the cohabitation of the Gallo-Romans and the Franks subtle changes occurred, and the Latin of Gaul underwent even more linguistic changes. Indeed, from the 5th century to the early 9th century the Latin being used no longer closely resembled the early Vulgar Latin spoken by the Roman invaders, and even less, classical written Latin. According to Rickard (2003: 13) the changes were varied, including the loss of final unstressed syllables, the final reduction of proparoxytons¹, and extensive diphthongisation of stressed syllables.

Classical Latin and Vulgar Latin nouns, adjectives, pronouns and determiners varied morphologically in order to show their relationship to other words in a sentence, which is commonly referred to as *case*, and described by Haspelmath (Haspelmath, 2009: 1) as an inflectional-category system. The term *cases* also refers to the specific categories or values of the case system that are used in the process of “marking dependent nouns for the type of relationship they bear to their heads” (Blake, 1994: 1). The case system in CL and VL had six categories; nominative, vocative, accusative, genitive, dative, ablative (plus occasionally the locative). The importance of *case* to the study of prepositions arose when the case system became simplified over time, and several functions came to be expressed by prepositions (Brunot, 1899: 571). In fact, in both CL and VL the use of prepositions sometimes made the relationship indicated by the *case* clearer. Indeed, the historical changes found in the use of *case* in both CL and VL could be considered the most important in the formation of the contemporary French preposition system. For example if the preposition *in* was used in the phrase *eo Romam*, i.e. *eo in Romam*, it would indicate that one was going inside the town, and not just near it, or to the outskirts (Brunot, 1899: 571). According to Brunot, when the *case* system broke down, the path was paved for the word class of prepositions to expand, and take on some of the roles that the *case* system fulfilled. Brunot (1905: 93) also suggests this break-down in the use of *case* was brought about by certain processes working simultaneously. Firstly, there was confusion in the uses of certain cases, for example possession was expressed by both the genitive and the dative case. In addition to this, possession was also expressed by different prepositions in more than one case. For example,

¹ A proparoxyton in Latin was a word that was stressed on its antepenult (the last syllable but two) this was the case when the penult syllable was short.

ad and *de* were being used interchangeably for different case marking; *ad* was being used to express possession with the dative or accusative case, and *de* with the ablative or accusative. It is suspected that this caused, what Brunot calls, a psychological split in the minds of the speakers, which in turn instigated changes in how prepositions were used. The consensus amongst scholars is that by the 7th century there was little of the original case system employed in Latin, and in addition certain prepositions had started to exchange roles with new prepositions forming from adverbs.

2.2.1.3 From *Langues d’Oïl* to French

Scholars cannot be precise regarding when the language (Vulgar Latin) spoken by the inhabitants of Gaul became what we now refer to as Old French (OFr). As we mentioned earlier we do know that the language of Germanic invaders – especially the Franks – between the 2nd and 6th centuries AD had considerable linguistic influence on the Latin spoken in Gaul. Indeed, the Franks first spoke Latin as a foreign language, and then as their native tongue, and their Germanic phonetics influenced the pronunciation considerably. However, according to Einhorn (1974: 1) during approximately 250 years from the middle of the 9th century to the end of the 11th century early Old French also started to change more rapidly, and developed by the 12th century into several dialects which formed two main groups, *Langues d’Oc* and *Langues d’Oïl*. Thus, what is referred to as Old French was an assortment of dialects that were divided into two groups that shared similar characteristics. The dialects of the northern parts of France were referred to as *Langues d’Oïl*, and those spoken in the southern parts were known as *Langues d’Oc*. Many scholars deem that among these northern dialects, one in particular, *Francien* was the most important, and the precursor to contemporary French as it is thought to have been adopted as the national language. However, this hypothesis has been disputed more recently by some linguists, to the point where it is now questioned whether there was truly any one dialect selected as the national language of France (Lodge, 2004: 53-79). As Lodge (2004: 57) explains, one of the main pieces of evidence to suggest that this was not the case is that standard French is made up of many phonological and morphological components that were not indigenous to *Francien* (the *Ile de France* dialect).

Putting this historical debate aside, what is very clear is that important changes took place in Old French that are pertinent to a study of prepositions, in particular the fact that numerous prepositions from CL were no longer used (Brunot and Bruneau, 1905: 214-215), e.g. *circa*, *circiter*, *infra*, *citra*. Some survived however, such as *a* (ad, ab), *en* (en), *contre* (contra) and *de* (de). Also, as we mentioned previously, some adverbs started to be used as prepositions, and interestingly some VL fused prepositions survived e.g. *avant*, *dejuste*. According to Einhorn (1974: 105) OFr prepositions had many functions; they expressed relations of time, place, cause, means, manner and purpose which are all just as necessary as in the past. They also existed in different forms, simple, and complex/compound, and even adverbs, adjectives or nouns were sometimes employed as prepositions e.g. *soz*, *lez*, *envers*, *en aval de*. Of particular interest to this study is the fact that Einhorn (ibid.) states that many OFr words were etymologically both adverbs and prepositions, often keeping this double function, but also some adverbs and adverbial phrases actually began to be used as prepositions by the 12th century (ibid.). Although some prepositions in OFr had restricted use, there were also many that exhibited extended functions that do not exist in contemporary standard French, for example *à* was used to mark possession and was attested even in the 15th and 16th centuries at the time of Marot (Brunot, 1906: 475).

As we can see from the history of the formation of prepositions as far back as the breakdown of the case system of Latin, to the extended and overlapping uses of prepositions and adverbs in the 15th and 16th centuries, the question of the origins of prepositions is not simple. It would appear that the prepositions used in French today stem from three main origins, either simple or complex Latin prepositions that have been conserved, old Latin words that served as both prepositions and adverbs, or words formed from substantives that became fixed words i.e. they no longer changed to reflect number or gender e.g. *chez*, derived from Latin *cas(o)s*.

2.3 The linguistic properties of prepositions

Many studies involving grammatical variables now include a consideration of the form/function dichotomy. This has been discussed at length by Coveney (2002: 38-42) with regards to the different types of tokens encountered during a sociolinguistic analysis of interrogatives in Metropolitan French. In the case of the

non-standard preposition use being analysed in this study, this is a fundamental issue insofar as it is not possible to determine why a preposition is being used non-standardly without also understanding the historical changes in form that have enabled these usages to exist. In this section, we will examine the different forms the variables in this study can take, and also their different functions that are listed in the linguistic literature.

2.3.1 The syntax of prepositions

Prepositions do not exist in all languages; instead some languages have postpositions that fulfil the same role, and the number of adpositions² in a particular language can vary. The number of simple prepositions in any given language can range from approximately 40 to 120 (Saint-Dizier, 2006: 1-3), however, evidence from research conducted for this study would suggest that it is not possible to arrive at a precise number for this word class due to scholars' differences in analysis, and, as we mentioned above, the characteristic of this word class to augment or diminish in number over time. In particular, in the case of French, another reason why it is difficult to assess the number of prepositions is the differences in the circumscription of their formation, which we will look at in section 2.4 in more detail.

Nevertheless, there are a certain number of characteristics that can be listed that define the majority of prepositions (with certain exceptions examined below). Generally, prepositions are language elements that express relationships of space or time, or mark syntactic functions. In the domain of syntax, prepositions are considered to be a functional category and are mostly analysed as the head of their phrase (they are heads of prepositional phrases that dominate or 'head' a noun phrase) although this has been disputed by Melis and Leuven (2001). They are very often followed by a complement conventionally known as the object of the preposition, which is normally a noun phrase, although they can also be followed by a prepositional phrase (e.g. The plane emerged *from behind the clouds*), a clause, or an adjective (e.g. of late, in brief) (Polysyllabic, 2016). Prepositional phrases have many different functions, they can modify a noun, or a verb, and are useful in situations where for syntactic reasons a preposition is needed. For example according to Jones (1996: 15) nouns are not

² The word adposition is a generic term that includes both prepositions and adpositions, but also other items such as circumpositions and inpositions.

able to accept direct object noun phrases (NPs) as complements, therefore when the complement of the noun is the direct object, or the subject of the verb in a sentence, then the preposition *de* is used to introduce it (e.g. *la découverte de l'Amérique*). Often this particular function implies that, syntactically, prepositions are uniquely grammatical items of speech that connect two entities i.e. a preposition 'usually' introduces a noun phrase (NP). However, this is not always strictly the case for all prepositions; as Jones (1996: 381) points out, there are some prepositions that cannot be followed directly by a noun, and instead need an intervening 'grammatical' preposition (e.g. *près (de)*, *loin (de)*, *lors (de)*) etc. This grammatical status of prepositions has been accepted thus far because, in most cases, it is thought that prepositions such as *de* in the above example do not make an overt contribution to the meaning of a sentence. However, this *mot outil* or grammatical 'tool' status, which was once thought of as one of the defining characteristics of prepositions is also now being debated. Indeed, Abeillé *et al.* (2007: 6), and Marque-Pucheu (2008) both reason that certain instances of preposition use can show clear semantic identity, or at least make a semantic contribution, and we will look at this in more detail in section 2.3.3. So, although in many cases prepositions are thought to primarily, or solely, assign case to a following noun phrase, they are increasingly thought to make a very obvious contribution to the meaning of a sentence. They are also considered by some scholars to be semantic connectors that link up with the preceding word in the sentence. This creates what is commonly referred to as a 'dependent relationship' between the preposition and the other constituent of the sentence i.e. a verb or a noun, which is understood as a conceptual relationship: e.g. the noun *enfant* in the phrase *un enfant à moi*, or the verb in the sentence *Elle court après Paul*. The relationship of dependence that exists is, however, subject to certain restrictions which will be examined later on in the chapters discussing our variables. Suffice to say that the choice of the complement is not only partly decided by the preposition, but can also differ depending on the preposition: e.g. *dès* cannot take a null complement whereas *derrière* can; similarly, *pendant* cannot take an infinitival complement **pendant dormir*.

2.3.2 The morphological properties of prepositions

Prepositions are generally regarded to be invariable parts of speech, which means they cannot inflect to reflect number, gender or tense. Thus the

portmanteau forms *au*, *aux*, *du*, and *des* are considered to be contractions of *à* and *de* with the following definite article, rather than inflected forms (Jones, 1996: 377). However, interestingly this ‘contracting’ characteristic leads Rowlett to oppose the idea that the French prepositions *à* and *de* are prepositions at all, “even in their locative/directional uses” (2007: 57). Rowlett has particular reasons for asserting this, for along with their obligatory fusion with the definite article, he also underlines several other features to argue for not accepting *à* and *de* as prepositions. For example, when they are used as directional and locative nominals, as in *Je viens de Paris*, they alternate with the clitics *en* and *y* (*j’en viens etc.*), which is a characteristic not shared by any other French prepositions. They also do not allow null subject dependents like many other prepositions, e.g. *J’ai voté pour Ø*. Certainly, this feature is often seen with many other prepositions, and the acceptance that certain prepositions exhibit use with a null subject dependant is of relevance to this study because in some cases it might help differentiate between adverbial use, and prepositional use of a variant. We will look at this characteristic in more detail in section 2.4.1.1.

Contrary to some other parts of speech, prepositions are not easily categorised using morphological characteristics. Indeed, the sole difference between prepositions and other word categories is their lack of morphological features; as we mentioned above they are non-inflecting, and therefore do not have any paradigms of forms. This apparent simplicity of usage and absence of morphological attributes also means that a preposition’s form does not give any insight into linguistic constraints or combinations that may come into play when a speaker chooses to employ a preposition. Specifically, in French there are no common visible attributes that change in preposition use, and their written forms do not vary to indicate differing information for participants in the conversation. For example, information such as tense – which is shown by means of verb paradigms in French – or gender – which is shown by the use of agreements – are not marked on prepositions, and therefore they have been attributed the label in French of ‘*mot invariable*’ (invariable word). A drawback of this label is that it misleadingly implies that prepositions are straightforward elements of language, yet this is a deceptive implication of simplicity which is discovered by many second language learners when they attempt to learn the preposition verb combinations that are so intuitive to French native speakers. Indeed, even native French speakers occasionally have problems explaining the semantic subtleties

involved when a particular verb is found combined with different prepositions e.g. *commencer à*, *commencer de*. This is a familiar dilemma which has been examined particularly by Kemmer and Bat-Zeev Shyldkrot (1996) concerning Canadian French, in instances where a native speaker of French negotiates – albeit subconsciously – the semantic differences when choosing one preposition rather than another for an infinitive complement.

Thus, apart from the portmanteau forms of *à* and *de* that we discussed in the previous section, it can be said that there are no inflecting prepositions. However, this would suggest that morphological changes in preposition use do not ever occur, which is not strictly the case in French. If we take the use of complex prepositions, and the possibility that they can be employed with or without an overt complement, then in these cases they exhibit morphological variation.

2.3.3 The semantic properties of prepositions

Scholars have frequently referred to prepositions as a closed class of items which “[...] represent a more restricted range of meanings, and the meanings [...] tend to be less detailed and less referential than open-class words” (Murphy, 2010: 14). This view is problematic however, mainly because recent studies now recognise that the word class of prepositions has an ever increasing membership with the inclusion of different parts of speech such as particles e.g. *concerning* and *including* (Downing and Locke, 2002: 14). But in addition, when considering works on the semantics of prepositions, it is too dismissive to classify the range of meanings and their characteristics as restricted, less detailed, and less referential than open-class words. This opinion of the semantic properties of prepositions has undoubtedly been brought about from a recurring theme, over many years, that has regarded prepositions to be ‘empty’ or ‘colourless’ (Cadiot, 1997a, 1997b; Marque-Pucheu, 2008; Spang-Hanssen, 1963; Vendryes, 1921), especially the more common prepositions such as *à* and *de*. These labels refer to the fact that they are considered to be bound by a predicative head, for example *on* in *John relies on his father*, here the preposition *on* could not be replaced by another preposition. This issue was touched on by Coveney (2002: 38), in particular regarding the infinitival complementisers *à* and *de* that alternate after certain verbs. It was indicated that these prepositions serve a grammatical function and do not introduce or change meaning in the utterance. Nevertheless,

in these and other instances the idea that prepositions do not carry meaning has been argued against by Bat-Zeev Shyldkrot and Kemmer (Bat-Zeev Shyldkrot and Kemmer, 1995; Kemmer and Bat-Zeev Shyldkrot, 1996), and is now being challenged more widely as we will see in later chapters, due to the fact that it poses a problem for the study of the semantics of prepositions, and by extension the study of non-standard preposition use. Additionally, if we consider work within the cognitive linguistics (CL) domain, we do not find the same unanimity cf. Tyler and Evans (2003); Hollmann and Siewierska (2007). Indeed, debates and theories that consider meanings of prepositions to be complex, wide-ranging and detailed, especially in French, now occupy a large part of the literature on prepositions.

Notwithstanding the above-mentioned on-going debate, our opinion is that one main attribute of prepositions is, without a doubt, that they are highly polysemous, which in turn enables them to be part of a large number of metonymies and metaphors. In traditional definitions, polysemy involves a single lexeme that has distinct and different senses, as opposed to what is referred to as vagueness, where a lexeme has one single but non-specific meaning, or homonymy (lexical ambiguity) where two identical lexemes are involved but with different senses. Prepositions occupy a position in between vagueness and ambiguity, if we adhere to Deane's (1988: 327, 345) interpretation of these definitions. Thus, it appears that, for a study of non-standard preposition use, the sense conveyed by a preposition needs to be obtained not just from an individual analysis of the word itself, but also from observation of the usage and context that the preposition is attached to.

However, the consideration of the complexities of prepositional use, their different formats and functions, and the fact that scholars are still debating many aspects concerning this enigmatic word class, necessitate that this study has an in-depth examination of usage, context and meaning. Which brings forth the requirement to consider cognitive linguistic theories that can inform us more reliably about the underlying reasons for the occurrence of non-standard preposition use. This is also motivated by the fact that preposition studies in fields such as Cognitive Linguistics and Lexico-Semantics have been shown to shed considerable light on non-standard preposition use. Indeed, according to Cuyckens (2002: 257) cognitive linguists are more and more convinced that the meaning of prepositions can now be described using the general cognitive principles of metaphor,

metonymy, generalisation, specialisation and image-schema transformation. As such, research using these frameworks has now shown that preposition use is much less arbitrary or idiomatic than once thought.

2.4 Theoretical frameworks relevant to this study

As we discussed above, prepositions have been studied in some detail in the field of Cognitive Linguistics, and one main premise of cognitive linguistics research which is important to this study, is that a preposition's spatial realm constitutes a basic domain from which more abstract domains can be conceptualised (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987). Indeed, as mentioned above, prepositions are not only highly polysemous, but they are also the lexical items that speakers employ to express spatial relations. Which is why prepositions are used, according to Cuyckens (2002: 257), to lexicalise relations in more abstract domains. Thus, due to this polysemy, prepositions are excellent vectors for communicating these so-called abstract domains, which is achieved through semantic extension. It appears that this use of prepositions is another highly important characteristic, and one that interests cognitive linguists researching prepositions and grammaticalisation³, because it is now also thought that a word's spatial uses diachronically underlie its more abstract uses. This suggests that grammaticalised uses of prepositions can be linked to their original spatial meanings (Cuyckens, 2002, 1999). That said, we will not be considering the grammaticalisation of prepositions in detail in this study, but will ⁴limit our cognitive linguistic analysis to the relevant framework set out below in section 2.4.2, which we will discuss after presenting the main theoretical frameworks that have been employed for this study of non-standard preposition use.

As we discussed in section 2.1 the tradition of using Variationist Sociolinguistics (VS) to examine morpho-syntactic variation is now well established. It sets out to discover and document morpho-syntactic variables, and the internal linguistic and external constraints that have an influence on them. Studies using this framework typically take a sample of speakers and examine their realisation of particular variables, and our study has predominantly followed

³ Grammaticalization is "the dynamic, unidirectional historical process whereby lexical items in the course of time acquire a new status as grammatical, morphosyntactic forms, and in the process come to code relations that either were not coded before or were coded differently (Traugott E & König, E, 1991).

this paradigm. Certainly, for a study of non-standard preposition use in Quebec French, VS is entirely appropriate. Yet, due to certain characteristics of prepositions, notably the issues with meaning that we discussed in section 2.1.2, we are confronted with the need to incorporate additional theoretical considerations for our analyses. Indeed, as we already mentioned briefly, historically there has been much disagreement amongst scholars regarding the semantics of certain prepositions (especially *à* and *de*) i.e. whether they are semantically 'empty' or 'colourless': cf. Cadiot (1997a); Cadiot and Visetti (2002); Bartning (1993). Yet, importantly, according to Langacker (1995: 51) 'all grammatical elements are attributed some kind of conceptual import (though it may be abstract, redundant, or tenuous)'. In our opinion this conceptual import is an essential consideration worth investigating in the study of the (POSS), (ANTE) and (POST) variables. In fact, it appears almost remiss to ignore the importance of considerations of the conceptual and cognitive processes taking place when a speaker uses a non-standard variant. Therefore, in order to fully investigate the variables in this study, we will complement our VS framework with insights from Cognitive Linguistics (CL) and Cognitive Sociolinguistics (CS), as we deem them to be fundamental to the understanding of non-standard preposition use in spoken language, and will therefore enrich the Variationist Sociolinguistic analysis we have undertaken.

2.4.1 Variationist Sociolinguistics and Cognitive Linguistics

Until recently in the field of Cognitive Linguistics (CL), scholars such as Langacker (1968; 1987a; 1993, 1999), Lakoff (2008), and Croft (2001) had not investigated language variation and its relation to social stratification. Interestingly, however, on the other hand, Variationist Sociolinguistic theories have contributed to describing and understanding particular grammatical phenomena within the realm of certain Cognitive Linguistic studies (cf. Gries, 2003). Despite these slow and patchy beginnings, scholars are now seeing the advantages of examining linguistic variation from the combined perspectives of CL and VS which means we are witnessing the emergence of a new linguistic paradigm, Cognitive Sociolinguistics (CS), which unites the central tenets of Variationist Sociolinguistics with the bottom-up analytical structure developed in the domain of Cognitive Linguistics. It is a young and growing field, but there is already evidence of pioneering research subscribing to this method of

investigation, which can be seen from contributions to the domain by Kristiansen and Dirven (2008), Geeraerts *et al* (2010) and Hollmann (2013). However, before we undertake the analyses of non-standard prepositions in Quebec French, we need to have a clear understanding of what constitutes a preposition, and whether the items we are analysing can be classified as such. Below we will review work by certain scholars, including some that have spent time extensively on prepositions, in order to determine how to classify some of the variants included in this study, and also understand why they are being used in Quebec French.

2.4.1.1 Borillo (1993, 1997; 1999a; 2001)

Andrée Borillo has worked predominantly in the fields of semantics and syntax and one particular paper on prepositions (1997: 176) provides invaluable information and a solid framework for our study of non-standard preposition use. Borillo's work gives important insight into the more intricate aspects of non-standard preposition use, because she discusses prepositions both in terms of them being part of an open-word class, and in terms of what morpheme combinations can, and should be, regarded as complex prepositions. In Borillo's (1997) paper we can see that prepositions are identified and grouped by considering 9 possible arrangements with differing morphemes i.e. prepositions, adverbs, adjectives, determiners, nouns, and infinitives. When combined, these elements can be classed as complex prepositions in French, which will aid us in defining some of the variants being examined in this study. Of great interest is the fact that Borillo's research analyses certain items as complex prepositions that were once, and still are in certain reference grammars, classed as adverbs. This is explained in some detail, and we also learn that the identification of complex prepositions can also include instances where the complement of a preposition is not always overt. In these cases, it is either inferred or can, or must, be detected from the context of the utterance. This is also developed further in Borillo's 1999 paper where the complement of a preposition is labelled and categorised as an internal localisation noun i.e. *Nom de localisation interne* (Nli) and has the possibility of being deduced from the context of the utterance.

Figure 1 sets out the possible combinations for categorising complex prepositions, and shows the importance of these to our study. As we will discuss in more detail in chapter 6 (cf. § 6.4.1), some of the (ANTE) and (POST) variants

can be labelled using this list, and thus should be regarded as complex prepositions.

Figure 1: Morpheme combinations giving rise to complex prepositions
(Adapted from Borillo, 1997: 176)

1. [P P] *jusqu'à, de dans, de sous*
2. [P Adv] *par delà, par en sous*
3. [Adv (à + de)] *auprès de, loin de, hors de*
4. [P Inf de] *à compter de, à partir de*
5. [au plus Adj de] *au plus fort de, au plus profond de*
6. [N (à + de)] *face à, dos à*
7. [Det N de] *le long de*
8. [P N de] *à fleur de, à portée de, à proximité de*
9. [P Det N de] *au bout de, au cours de, au ras de*

(P=Preposition, Adv=Adverb, Inf=Infinitive, Adj=Adjective, Det=Determiner, N=Noun)

If we take the example of one (ANTE) variant, *en avant de*, and examine the morpheme combinations laid out by Borillo, it can be classified as a complex preposition that adheres to the rules of type 8 in Figure 1. This is also supported by its existence in the table drawn up by Borillo (2001) (reproduced in Figure 2), which also illustrates the existence of certain complex prepositions that function without the use of an overt complement or *nom de localisation interne*.

Figure 2: Simple and complex prepositions in French

(Adapted from Borillo, 2001: 142)

col. 1 Prep. simple régime	col. 2 Prep. orpheline	col. 3 NLI (Local. Intern)	col. 4 Prep comp régime à Det N de (N) à/en/ par N de (N)		col. 5 Prep comp orpheline	col. 6 Adverbe
dans N	dedans ¹¹	le dedans	en dedans de N au-dedans de N	en dedans	au-dedans	
sur N	dessus	le dessus	en dessus de N au-dessus de N	par-dessus N	? en dessus au-dessus	
sous N	dessous	le dessous	en dessous de au-dessous de n	par-dessous N	? en dessous au-dessous	
devant N	devant	le devant, l'avant	au-devant de N	en avant de N	en avant	devant, par devant en avant
derrière N	derrière	le derrière, l'arrière	à l'arrière de N	en arrière de N	?au-dernière en arrière	derrière, par der. en arrière
contre N	(tout) contre					
entre N	entre					
chez N						
parmi N						
			au dehors de, hors de	en dehors de	au dehors, en dehors	au dehors
			près de		(tout) près	
		? le tour	autour de N		(tout) autour	
		? le long, longueur	au/le long de N		tout le long	

This table shows variants are employed as: either governed complex prepositions (*Préposition complexe régime*), with *de* present, and introducing a governing noun; or as non-governed complex prepositions (*Préposition complexe orpheline*), without *de* present, therefore not introducing a noun. When the latter is used, it is often posited that the preposition is functioning in a deictic or anaphoric fashion. In these instances, the governing noun is not used, but it is implied or easily found in the context, therefore the preposition is considered 'orphaned', i.e. it has a constituent missing. The speakers in the CFPQ use both forms of complex preposition, governed and non-governed i.e. with and without a complement.

Armed with more insight into the nature and classification of the non-standard variants we are examining, we will continue this section with a review of relevant Cognitive Linguistic theories pertaining to prepositions.

2.4.1.2 Langacker (1987a; 1987b; 1991a; 1993; 1995; 1999)

According to Clausner and Croft (1999: 1-31) within the field of Cognitive Linguistics there are certain concepts that appear to have universal consensus, and one of these is the concept of 'image schemas'. A schema describes an organisational pattern of thought or behaviour that classifies categories of information, and the relationships between them. It can also be described as a mental structure of preconceived ideas, or a framework representing some aspect of the world, or a system of organising or perceiving new information. Image schemas are "abstract structures that recur in our construals of the world, and appear to play a fundamental role in various cognitive semantic processes" (Clausner and Croft 1999: 4). Many scholars in the field of Cognitive Linguistics discuss image schemas cf. Lakoff (1987), Lakoff and Turner (1989), and Johnson (1987) and according to Clausner and Croft (1999: 14) there is a recurring theme throughout, which is that these schemas have psychological reality, that is to say they are representations of specific embodied experiences. However, although the connection between embodied experiences and image schemas appears straightforward, it is not simple to apply to linguistic variation. This is because image schemas also involve life experiences that are not physically embodied but are mapped in our consciousness, from bodily movements through space, our manipulations of objects, and our perceptual interactions (Johnson, 1987: 29). One notable scholar that has investigated image schemas and their relationship to prepositions is Ronald Langacker. He offers insight into the cognitive processes at work when a speaker employs a preposition, and his discussions of image-schemas and figure-ground asymmetry are particularly relevant to our study of spatial prepositions and their non-standard use. Figure-ground asymmetry was first elaborated in the domain of cognitive linguistics by Talmy (1978: 627) and was subsequently adapted by Langacker (1987a; 1987b); it is a type of comparison important to linguistics as the figure/ground alignment theory can strongly help determine the objective properties of a scene (Croft and Wood, 2000: 61-62). The asymmetry between actors (not necessarily human) in a scene is demonstrated in a simple example below (cf. figure 3 Talmy, 1983:

230), followed by a non-exhaustive list of figure/ground properties that can be applied to spatial relations.

Figure 3: The asymmetry of actors of a scene, exemplifying figure/ground asymmetry.

- a. The bike is near the house.
- b. * The house is near the bike.

According to the *Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics* (Cuyckens and Geeraerts, 2007: 899) every relational expression (verb, adjective or preposition) has an asymmetric construal, i.e. one part of the relationship will be more prominent, and the other less so. How we perceive an item is determined by its prominence and properties, which is explained more clearly in Talmy's properties list in figure 4. This list also gives more details on the relationship between figure and ground.

In the case of the example in figure 3, the bike is less prominent structurally, more mobile and smaller, therefore it would be classified as the FIGURE in the sentence (and in our personal image schema of the scene). On the other hand, the house is larger, more stationary, and structurally more complex, therefore it would be considered to take the role of GROUND in figure/ground asymmetry alignment theory.

Figure 4: Properties that influence figure/ground choice

(Reproduced from Talmy, 1983: 230-31)

Figure	Ground
location less known	location more known
smaller	larger
more mobile	more stationary
structurally simpler	structurally more complex
more salient	more backgrounded
more recently in awareness	earlier on scene/in memory

Image schemas, and consequently figure-ground asymmetry, both break down the mental construct of a scene of linguistic interaction into subparts of

participants (not necessarily human), creating an image schema. This schema, that our minds follow, is then mapped cognitively in order to process the information available, and it is used to explain the construal of experience, i.e. the active mental operation that our minds undertake in order to process the information available and/or select appropriate language to fulfil the language function required. A central assumption is that a speaker will have a set of pre-determined language items available for particular categories of construal, and the necessary function required. However, the image schema can also explain why certain linguistic forms are employed instead of others, or in the case of non-standard variants, why these are chosen or employed despite their non-standard status or level of stigmatisation.

As we have discussed, Langacker's large body of work considers how our use of language is influenced by the mental construals of our everyday experiences. Within that vast field of research, we find many references to the use of prepositions for expressing both possession, and location. The two theories that Langacker posits that incorporate the ideas of image schema and figure/ground asymmetry that help clarify how we use prepositions are the reference-point model (1995: 95) and subjectification (1990). We will go into more detail regarding these theories, and their connection to the use of the (POSS), (ANTE) and (POST) variables in their respective chapters. Here we will confine our discussion of them to a brief outline and illustration of their relevance to our study.

Langacker describes his reference-point model as 'simply the idea that we commonly invoke the conception of one entity for purposes of establishing mental contact with another' (1995: 58). This notion is fundamental to the use of possessives, and consequently prepositions, as Langacker explains that all possessive morphemes have in common one thing, their 'landmark (the "possessor") is construed as some kind of reference point with respect to which another entity is identified' (Langacker 1991: 42). We will see how this model can shed light on the use of non-standard variants in chapter 4 and 5.

With reference to the expression of location using prepositions, Langacker's theory of subjectification is of great interest as it relates to the 'construal relation between a conceptualizer and the conception he entertains', i.e. between the subject and the object of conception (Langacker, 1985; Langacker, 1991b: 215). Thus, when we consider the (ANTE) and (POST)

variables, we will be in a position to reflect on the possible cognitive processes involved with the expression of location.

2.4.1.3 Vandeloise (1986a, 1986b, 1987, 1991; 1993, 1999; 2004)

Vandeloise's work on prepositions is indispensable for a study of non-standard preposition use, as it highlights complex conditions that occur in everyday speech situations. Vandeloise's research brings attention to environmental conditions that have an impact on a speaker's choice of preposition, and this knowledge is necessary to analyse usage-based language, whether standard or non-standard. His work predominantly investigates preposition use in French, providing interesting theories regarding the cognitive processes at work in our mental construal of a scene. Vandeloise's work is distinct from much semantic and cognitive linguistic research on prepositions because he is concerned with how we perceive physical situations that we talk about, and how spatial interactions involving objects and people are communicated to our interlocutors. His most relevant theoretical framework for the study of prepositions describes how to understand the importance of a speaker's general orientation and perception of a scene, and how these elements of the environment can inform us about the speaker's choice of language item, particularly their choice of preposition. In his 1986 paper, he endeavoured to establish the rules that govern why a speaker chooses one variant in preference to another. This paper and other work by Vandeloise posit the consideration of certain concepts not traditionally used in the examination of prepositional use. These concepts are linked to a speaker's knowledge and perception of the world, and include the order of the potential meeting, the relative movement of the entities involved, the speaker's general orientation, and the access to perception (particularly the line of sight). These concepts will be discussed later in relation to our non-standard variants, as a consideration of the speaker's general positioning and their interpretation of a scene can give fundamental information on how prepositions are chosen by the speaker.

2.4.2 Cognitive Sociolinguistics and non-standard preposition use

In previous sections, we have discussed theoretical frameworks in the domains of Cognitive Linguistics (Borillo, Langacker) and cognitive approaches

to Lexical Semantics (Vandeloise) that both offer important material to aid the analysis of non-standard preposition use. In conjunction with these theories we have also reviewed the framework of Variationist Sociolinguistics that was the initial basis for the study of the (POSS), (ANTE) and (POST) variables. However, in the course of our research, we have concluded that we need to explore the use of non-standard preposition use in Quebec French in a manner that fully encompasses a consideration of what Geeraerts *et al* (2010: 8) call the ternary relationship between form, meaning and context. In order to achieve this, we are adopting the theoretical framework of Cognitive Sociolinguistics (CS) which will show how the two founding traditions of Variationist Sociolinguistics and Cognitive Linguistics when combined, can shed light on the use of non-standard prepositional constructions.

The field of Cognitive Sociolinguistics has been narrowly defined as the study of language variation from the combined perspective of social and cognitive constraints (Hollmann, 2013), and can be said to adhere to the central ideal of examining language variation and its connection to social stratification. Pütz *et al.* (2014) even go so far as to say that the emergence of Cognitive Sociolinguistics should not be regarded as a fleeting interdisciplinary notion, but a framework that is here to stay, gaining ground and more adepts year on year, with it even being classed as part of a larger 'social turn' in the cognitive sciences (Harder, 2010).

According to Kristiansen and Dirven (2008: 4-7), despite the fact that 'the relationship between society and language has been widely examined in the fields of Sociolinguistics and the Social Psychology of Language, there has been a distinct lack of use made of the Cognitive Linguistic explanatory framework. And likewise, scholars (cf. Langacker, 1999: 376) have voiced the need to extend the realm of Cognitive Linguistics to include discourse and social interaction. These assertions, along with the many contributions to this nascent field found in works by Pütz *et al.* (2014), Hollmann (2013), Geeraerts *et al.* (2010), and Kristiansen and Dirven (2008) support the application of this theoretical framework. The decision to use Cognitive Sociolinguistics as the basis for our study is also motivated by many other key issues, but the most important is the difficulty that linguists have encountered when attempting to examine the meaning, use and functions of prepositions (cf. Borillo (2001); Pottier (1961); Spang-Hanssen (1963); Vandeloise (1986b); Gaatone (2001)). An additional

reason for using the CS framework is that it lends itself well to explaining the cognitive processes that are at work in usage-based non-standard examples of preposition choice. Its central premises are characterised as research that 'explores language-internal or cross-linguistic variation of a social origin in its own right or incorporates it into an investigation with other aims, draws on the theoretical framework developed in Cognitive Linguistics, and arrives at its findings by implementing solid empirical methods' (Kristiansen and Dirven, 2008: 5-6)

Therefore, we proceed with this study using a framework that will consider the cognitive processes of individuals in connection with their use of language and the social contexts where the occurrences we are examining are found.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will describe the corpus chosen for the study of variation in the use of prepositions in spoken Quebec French. The *Corpus de français parlé au Québec* (CFPQ) was selected for various reasons. Firstly, unlike many other French corpora, full transcripts of the sociolinguistic interviews are available via the corpus' website, and secondly the large size of this corpus enables the researcher to approach a comprehensive analysis of any aspect of Quebec French. Perhaps more importantly, however, the ease of use and ease of access to the interview data were characteristics that made it more possible to conduct a large-scale study of grammatical variables.

Before we begin to analyse the instances of spoken data that are relevant to this study, it is essential to use this chapter to give a comprehensive description of the corpus. This description will then be followed by a detailed explanation of the methodology employed to circumscribe the variables that we are examining, i.e. the (POSS), (ANTE) and (POST) variables.

The details contained in this chapter regarding the corpus, its participants, its collection and transcription process, and its aims, are based on information from the CFPQ website.

3.2 Description of the corpus

The CFPQ was developed by Gaëtane Dostie at the University of Sherbrooke in Canada. It is currently⁵ comprised of 30 interviews (or *sous-corpus*), and constitutes approximately 45 hours of transcribed conversation, with more being recorded, transcribed and made available periodically. In total the corpus presently contains 688,542 words of transcribed data from recordings of informal sociolinguistic interviews of French speakers living in the Quebec province of Canada (up to four speakers per interview, with a minimum of three). The corpus' goal is to give a multi-modal representation of vernacular French spoken in this part of Quebec in the 21st century.

⁵ The number of *sous-corpus* available changes periodically when new material is added.

The CFPQ project uses audio and video equipment to record interviews of approximately 1 hour 30 minutes between 3 or 4 informants. For all recordings, an interviewer is present who occasionally guides the conversations with suggestions of topics to discuss, gives verbal indications of the time elapsed/left for the interviews, or ensures that the camera equipment can capture all participants correctly. The decision to include the combined use of video and audio equipment enables the researcher to undertake a three-pronged approach to the linguistic analysis, if so desired (verbal, para-verbal and gestural). However, for the purpose of the present study the transcriptions of the different *sous-corpus* were the only resource exploited. The extra para-verbal and gestural information is included, however, in the transcriptions since it is of great benefit to the researcher, especially if, as in our case, the video recordings were not easily consultable due to distance. Thus, the para-verbal and gestural components of this corpus will not be utilised in our linguistic analysis, except where their consultation in the transcriptions is necessary to verify an item of language.

At the start of this study, the CFPQ had 21 interviews publicly available via the online platform, thus this study examines the transcriptions pertaining to *sous-corpus* 1 to 21, even if other *sous-corpus* were subsequently made available. The material for this study consists of approximately 31.5 hours of recorded sociolinguistic interviews, which amounts to 4725 pages of transcribed data. This is a larger amount of data than in several other studies of variation in French, for example Coveney (2002) was based on about 18.5 hours of recorded speech.

The main objective of using this corpus was to get access to contemporary examples of spoken Quebec French from a large variety of speakers. The diversity needed for this research was provided by the CFPQ as the corpus was devised using a large range of age groups, and interlocutors with a variety of professional and educational backgrounds. Additional reasons for using this corpus are related to its quality and accessibility, notably the fact that it has been developed and transcribed by an academic institution, and that it has been made available electronically to researchers via the Internet at the following web address, <https://recherche.flsh.usherbrooke.ca/cfpq/>.

3.3 Quebec French

In order to conduct a comparative study of elements of morpho-syntactic variation across two or more varieties of French, it is of great importance to understand the origins of each variety. In this chapter, we will examine the origins and status of this variety of French spoken by the informants in the CFPQ.

This variety has the status of a *langue minoritaire* in Canada due to only 21 % of Canadian inhabitants being recorded as speaking French most of the time at home, a statistic that was documented in the 2011 census⁶. However, this figure does not give a clear or precise picture of the language situation in Canada, because there are areas where one or other of the two official languages⁷ are spoken more predominantly. One of these areas is Sherbrooke where the CFPQ interviews were conducted, and where French is the principal language spoken. Sherbrooke is both the name of a town in Southern Quebec, and also the name of an 'Equivalent Territory' formerly known as 'territory equivalent to a regional county municipality/*territoire équivalents à une MRC*' or *TÉ* in French for short. These territorial units are used by *Statistics Canada*, and the *Institut de la statistique du Québec* for conducting censuses, and they are just one designation of 12 different types that are used for this purpose. Sherbrooke's status of *TÉ*, or census district has the advantage of providing us with an accurate population figure for the area where the CFPQ informants live and work. Thus, when we consult the 2011 census for the number of Quebec French (QF) speakers in this region, it is listed that in the *TÉ* of Sherbrooke there are 152 445 inhabitants, of whom 138 535 predominantly speak French at home i.e. 90.88%. This figure is extremely important, as it gives us information on the linguistic environment of the speakers in the CFPQ interviews. Yet, however much this information is vital, it needs to be supplemented by more background on both the contemporary characteristics of Quebec French, and its origins.

3.3.1 The Origins of Quebec French

Considerable research has been undertaken regarding the languages that settlers coming from France to Canada in the 17th century were using before emigrating. It is widely assumed that depending on the settlers' area of origin – mostly *Langues*

⁶ cf. <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/hltfst/lang/?Lang=F>

⁷ French and English have equal official language status in Canada.

d'Oïl regions – they spoke one of several different *Langues d'Oïl* dialects as their first language. Specialists in Canadian French consider the Gallo-Roman dialects spoken in these regions to have had varying degrees of impact on the French spoken in Canada today. However, researchers' opinions are still divided on this subject, and evidence supporting the various theories is occasionally contradictory. We will discuss this subject in more detail below, however, what we are able to ascertain initially is an indication of the *Langues-d'Oïl* spoken at the time the settlers were leaving for Canada (cf. figure 5).

Figure 5: Dialectal areas in France from XIVth c.

(Accessible at <http://www.college-jean-monnet-broons.ac-rennes.fr/?Qu-est-ce-que-le-gallo>)



We can see from this map that many *Langues-d'Oïl* were spoken in the 14th century, and this linguistic situation is said to have been the case until the 19th century. The *Ordonnance de Villers Cotterêts* was signed in 1539, and the transition away from the use of these regional varieties and towards the widespread use of French was

steady but slow. From then on, therefore, it is reasonable to assume many of the immigrants to Canada were still speaking these regional varieties at the time of the first successful settlement led by Samuel de Champlain in 1608.

An additional factor that is also of great relevance to this study is the percentage of settlers that originated from each linguistic region. There are several studies that have attempted to establish precise figures to determine exactly how much each region contributed to the cohort of immigrants leaving France to start a new life in Canada. However, this task has proven to be very difficult due to the inconsistencies in record-keeping at the time. Charbonneau and Guillemette (1994) have endeavoured to bring some clarity by undertaking a comparison of the statistics put forward. Thus, figure 6 shows three estimations of the total number of settlers (in percentages) and their areas of origin.

Figure 6: Comparison of statistics regarding immigrants from France going to Canada

(Reproduced from Charbonneau and Guillemette, 1994: 169)

Province	Lortie	<i>Atlas historique</i>	PRDH (1991)
Bretagne	2,6	2,9	2,8
Normandie	20,8	19,0	19,6
Perche	6,6	6,3	5,3
Île-de-France	15,9	16,9	17,8
Brie, Beauce	1,7	2,1	2,3
Orléanais, Touraine	3,2	3,2	3,6
Anjou, Saumurois	3,8	3,2	3,4
Maine	3,9	2,5	2,8
Picardie, Artois, Flandre	3,3	2,6	2,4
Champagne, Lorraine, Franche-Comté	3,7	2,5	2,9
Bourgogne, Lyonnais	1,5	1,3	1,3
Poitou	8,7	11,1	10,5
Aunis	11,8	13,1	11,9
Saintonge	4,6	5,1	5,1
Angoumois	1,6	2,0	2,4
Berry, Nivernais, Bourbonnais	0,8	1,1	1,1
Marche, Limousin, Auvergne	1,0	1,1	1,1
Guyenne, Périgord	2,0	2,1	1,9
Provinces du Midi	2,5	1,9	1,8
Ensemble	100	100	100
(Nombres absolus)	(2 770)	(3 525)	(3 384)

* Immigrants français des deux sexes, mariés avant 1680 ; les cas indéterminés sont répartis au prorata.
Sources : Lortie, 1903-1904 ; Charbonneau et Robert, 1987 ; Programme de recherche en démographie historique (Université de Montréal).

This table shows that the three major works of quantification i.e. (Charbonneau and Robert, 1987); Légaré *et al.* (1966- PRDH); (Lortie, 1903-1904) have all arrived at slightly different estimations of the numbers of immigrants originating from each region. One important point we glean from these statistics is that the *Ile de France* was not the highest contributing area to the migration. Indeed, Charbonneau and Guillemette (1994: 170) show that the *Poitou-Charentes* region contributed between 9.1% and 9.8% more migrants than the Parisian region depending on the interpretation of the statistics consulted (cf. Figure 7).

Figure 7: The relative importance of regions of France contributing to emigrants to Canada

(Reproduced from Charbonneau and Guillemette, 1994: 170)

Lortie		PRDH	
Région	%	Région	%
1. Normandie-Perche	27,4	1. Poitou-Charentes	29,9
2. Poitou-Charentes	26,7	2. Normandie-Perche	24,9
3. Région parisienne	17,6	3. Région parisienne	20,1
4. Pays de la Loire	10,9	4. Pays de la Loire	9,8
Ensemble	82,6		84,7

Sources: Lortie, 1903-1904; Programme de recherche en démographie historique (Université de Montréal).

In addition, more interestingly still, a comparison of the information contained in the two tables above (figures 6 and 7) indicates, first and foremost, that the *Poitou-Charentes* region contributed to between 26.7% and 29.9% of the cohort of Canadian settlers. Consequently, it would seem that, despite popular opinion, French spoken in these areas of Canada may not have been influenced as much by the language of the *Ile de France* (17.6% or 20.1%) as commonly thought.

Notwithstanding these statistics being relatively easy to process, their importance is less simple to assess. Consequently, the sociolinguistic significance of these data has given rise to a large amount of academic discussion. Indeed, several conflicting theories on the importance of the influence of the principal varieties spoken by the settlers have been put forward. For example, key arguments regarding the dissemination and dominance of the French language – as opposed to any regional languages – among the settlers are numerous. One view of the relevance of the French language is found in research (Charbonneau and Guillemette, 1994: 175) that suggests nearly half of the men, and 6 out of 10 women were urbanites before emigrating to Canada. Amongst them was a high percentage of literate people who were exercising professions, and living in areas that would have favoured and even encouraged the acquisition of French. Yet, this is a conflicting view to that of Trudel (1973) who believed that 67% of the settlers made their living from the land, and Barbaud's assertion that there was a strong chance that French immigrants settling in *Nouvelle-France* in 1663 were from a rural background (1984: 76). Charbonneau and Guillemette also state that certain

provinces such as the Poitou, Saintonge and the Angoumois contributed the highest proportion of countryfolk to the group of settlers, indeed as much as 7 out of 10 men, and 50% of the women.

Taking into account the aforementioned statistics, if the majority of the settlers were from rural areas of France, this would imply that they were not likely to be French speakers at all. Indeed, for Barbaud (1984) the dialects of the relevant regions, and the French spoken at the time of the first settlers' establishment in Canada were distinct idioms. So distinct, that French speakers could not converse with dialect speakers, and different dialect speakers could not converse with each other. Poirier (1994b) is in agreement with this view, but also surmises that because of these problems of intelligibility, the need for a common language was very high. The view that a common language was a necessity is also shared by other scholars, and this need is considered to have helped with its dissemination. Morin (2002) and Hull (1979), although their ideas differ slightly, both believe that the French of Paris was propagated into the regional areas of France more easily and quickly than previously thought. Hull (1979) even goes so far as to say that the 'patois' and the French language at this time were as close as '*deux pôles d'une même langue*' (two branches of the same language). In addition to this, Asselin and McLaughlin (1981) appear to confirm this view, affirming that *patois* and the French language were actually mutually intelligible, and that the numerous regional languages that have been well documented were in fact regional variations of a same language the '*Français du peuple*' (1981: 51).

As we can see from the synopsis made above, the complexity of determining the linguistic environment that prevailed in *Nouvelle-France* at this time, and ultimately its influence on Quebec French, are matters that have no definite answer. One thing that emerges from this review of theories is that, as Morin (1994: 245) stresses, 'sociolinguistic studies must be accompanied by careful reconstruction of the varieties of French spoken by both 17th century France and successive generations of Quebeckers from the earliest times'.

It is not possible to deny that Quebec French has been influenced by its origins, and many studies have been conducted on the phonetic similarities and differences between Hexagonal French and Quebec French. Yet, it is not clear whether the languages the settlers were speaking can be responsible for the regional differences found in Quebec French. Indeed, despite numerous scholars adhering to these linguistic assumptions, as well as many lay people, the evidence in support of this

theory is not unequivocal, for example Morin (1996, 1994a, 2002) considers the phonetic differences to be a product of internal language changes.

In the domain of morpho-syntactic variation it appears that investigations concerning links with regional languages of France have been less widespread, or less popular amongst linguists (Morin, 1994: 255; Wolf, 1991). Despite this, a few studies make links between the origins of the settlers and the morphosyntactic evolution of Quebec French (Jagueneau, 1991). However, one point raised frequently is that the lack of studies makes it difficult to determine if the differences and convergences between the varieties are the result of independent developments, or due to similarities in usage in the 17th century.

3.3.2 Contemporary Quebec French

Firstly, as we have seen above, the question of the origins of Quebec French is not straightforward, however, as we will see in the following section the question of what constitutes contemporary Quebec French is also problematic. Therefore, in order to discuss this, it is first necessary to briefly outline the notion of a speech community, and how it is relevant to a study of linguistic variation. In short, according to Morgan (2014: 1), a speech community is a group that shares values and attitudes about language use, varieties and practices. Thus this definition, as Bigot (2008: 53) discusses, would imply close interaction, even geographical proximity, in order for common practices and norms to be learnt and perpetuated. These interactions within speech communities are what can be considered as defining the groups themselves, and Labov (1976: 187) explains that the notion of a linguistic community is defined 'less by an overt agreement to use certain language items, but more by joint participation in group norms'. These definitions appear straightforward when considering the example of the standard language of a country such as French from France, as one would assume that the group norms could be perceived to be societal norms, and thus common to inhabitants of the same country or region. This implies that speech communities that employ a variety that is distinct from the standard language will also have their own societal norms, which underlines the fact that despite one common language being spoken, the differences found between varieties can be considerable. In our opinion, in the case of Quebec French, we consider that Standard French, as evidenced in works such as *Le bon Usage*, *Le Larousse*, *Le Grand Robert* or *Le Bescherelle*, serves only by way of typological comparison for the purpose of this study. This is not only due to the possible

influences exerted on Quebec French from its early origins, but also because this regional variety has taken a distinct evolutionary path from Standard French. Indeed, as we have discussed in chapter 2, some claim that there is a Quebec French standard separate from the Metropolitan French standard, and thus we are of the opinion that the two are dissimilar and therefore necessitate separate consideration.

For many reasons that we have touched it is not straight forward to consider Standard French the norm of reference for this study of non-standard Quebec French. Additionally it is now evident that French-speaking communities in France are distinct on a macrosocial basis from the French speaking communities in Quebec. Therefore, the question of what constitutes contemporary Quebec French can only be answered by referring to either original sources (i.e. corpora, sociolinguistic interviews), or discussions of examples (i.e. journal articles, monographs). However, as we delve deeper into the characteristics of the Quebec French speech community we see, as with many speech communities, it is not a community that is simple to define (Bigot, 2008: 31). Indeed, many sub-communities of linguistic practices exist, such as young speakers, working-class speakers, and speakers from different geographic locations, e.g. Quebec and Montreal. Nevertheless, according to Oakes and Warren (2007: 119), in 1977 the Quebec Association of French Teachers brought Quebec French one step closer to having a concrete definition. This was achieved by proposing that the variety used in schools should be 'Standard Quebec French', which has since also become the consensus of many scholars and others. This 'standard', which has two forms, oral and written, has particular traits that differentiate it from Standard French. For example, in its oral form it has no stigmatised characteristics, such as the diphthongisation of long vowels, i.e. use of [ts] and [tz], but it still has many features such as 'assibilation' that are now considered socially neutral (Oakes and Warren 2007: 119). On the other hand, the written form of standard Quebec French appears to have been much more difficult to define, to the point where some attempts have been much reproached. Criticism comes in the form of either their approach or format, e.g. as bilingual dictionaries (Quebec French/French), or due to their focus on language deviations, e.g. the unique use of the word *radio* with masculine gender (Oakes and Warren 2007: 125). However, despite some controversy about whether it is possible to develop a Quebec French dictionary, the University of Sherbrooke (under the editorial direction of H  l  ne Cajolet-Lagani  re and Pierre Martel) has

been leading a project called FRANQUS to design a dictionary (named USITO⁸) that has an electronic version consultable online. One of its main selling points is that it includes Quebec French words, words from Standard French, and French words from other countries.

Despite the great undertaking of this dictionary, there are still complex issues that surround the idea of defining Standard Quebec French. Bigot (2007: 37) elaborates on two phenomena that are separate from what we can refer to as prescriptive and descriptive norms discussed above, i.e. subjective attitudes. Subjective attitudes come under two sub-headings, *evaluative*⁹ and *fantasised*¹⁰, which have both been expounded in more detail by Moreau (1997a: 222). In short, these subjective attitudes also make it difficult to establish a 'Standard' Quebec French norm. In addition to the already complex situations we have mentioned above, it is difficult to say with certainty what 'Standard' if any should be used for the purpose of this study.

3.4 The interviews

The CFPQ was constructed around the principle of stratified sampling; therefore, specific sampling criteria have been adhered to, notably age, gender and socioeconomic group. Due to the range of age groups covered, the fact that there are male and female informants, and the mix in socio-economic groups included in the selection of informants, the corpus covers a varied cross-section of the inhabitants of this region of Canada. An important point to reiterate here is that the details and analyses discussed henceforth only refer to the specific interviews that were used in this study, and do not take into consideration any other corpus details that could have changed since the addition of more interviews on the CFPQ website.

3.4.1 The transcription conventions

The CFPQ is termed a 'multi-modal' corpus because of the way the interviews were recorded. Indeed, as the conversations were videotaped there is both an aural and visual trace of the discussions between the interlocutors. Due to this, much more information is available to the transcribers, which in turn means that scholars have the possibility to include and interpret this extra information in their research. For the

⁸ <https://www.usito.com/>

⁹ Language forms that are judged as aesthetic, elegant, beautiful.

¹⁰ Perceived conceptions of language forms that are not always borne out in authentic language.

supplementary details to be accessible, the interviews are transcribed using traditional conventions, but provision has been made to include notations of para-verbal and gestural material. This is in addition to the standard verbal transcription, and has the advantage of offering further data that could be of use to researchers. The categories verbal, para-verbal, and gestural briefly correspond to the language used, the prosody of the language (intonation, pauses, speed etc.) and the gestures that accompany that language (applause, imitations, frowns etc.). More details will be given below in the corresponding sections.

Each interview has been transcribed using the software 'Transana' which enabled an accurate alignment of the image, sound, and text. Due to the number of participants in the interviews, and the difficult nature of transcription, they were subsequently verified and revised by two additional people. The first two checks are completed with the aid of the videotape recordings, and the third is realised without them. This work aims to make the transcriptions as true to the interviews as possible, and also as legible as possible, so that they can be consulted and understood easily without the need to consult the videotapes.

The length of the interviews, and the availability of their full transcriptions are both characteristics that have made this study a very valuable contribution to research in this field. Indeed, many French corpora are either rather short with no transcriptions, or do not have full-length interview transcriptions, such as the *Projet de phonologie contemporain* (PFC) (Durand *et al.*, 2009) where only the first 10 min of each interview are transcribed and available for scholars to study.

The transcription conventions for the verbal, para-verbal and gestural information are listed on the CFPQ website in tables; we have translated and reproduced this information below. The recordings can also be viewed with special written permission from the University of Sherbrooke, but as the multi-modal characteristics of the interviews have been communicated via the transcriptions, this is not necessary for our study.

3.4.1.1 Verbal material

The CFPQ website describes the source language of the interviews as that which corresponds to spontaneous Quebec French spoken in informal and free speaking situations (Dostie, 2000-present). The following transcription conventions have been used for the verbal material.

Figure 8: Verbal material transcription conventions

(Reproduced and translated from the CFPQ website, recherche.flsh.usherbrooke.ac/cfpq)

Word fragments	Hyphen after the unit (e.g.: <i>des ca- des cases vides</i>)
Overlapping sequence	Open square brackets for passages where the speakers react at the same time. Note: The open square brackets are linked by a vertical dotted line. This facilitates visual tracking of the sequence overlaps that go together when there is more than one that appears on the same page.
Impossible to spell	Written in IPA between brackets.
Inaudible	(inaud.).
Parallel conversations	They appear in boxes.
Direct speech	Placed between two full stops. The first, that indicates the start of the direct speech, is black (•) and the second, that indicates the end is white (°) (e.g. : <i>j'ai raccroché (.) <f<•vite partez>> elle s'en vient elle s'en vient°</i>).

3.4.1.2 Para-verbal material

The para-verbal dimension of the interviews is described on the CFPQ website as the prosodic elements of communication that the speakers make use of during the interviews, and these have been recorded and noted on the transcriptions. They include such things as pauses, speed, stress, and intonation, as well as vocal elements such as laughter and yawning. Figure 9 below specifies the conventions that have been used to indicate these in the transcriptions.

Figure 9: Prosodic material transcription conventions

(Reproduced and translated from the CFPQ website, recherche.flsh.usherbrooke.ac/cfpq)

Stress	Capital letters (e.g. éPOUvantable)
Lengthening	One or two colons depending on the duration of the lengthening (e.g.c'est sù::r)
Intonation	Slight rise: / Strong rise: ↑ Slight fall: \ Strong fall: ↓
Pauses	Micropauses (less than 1 second) are signaled by a full stop in brackets (e.g. (.)). Longer pauses of 2 seconds or more are timed and then signified by the number in brackets (e.g. (3"))
Speech volume	Forte (loud) <f<vous pensez>> Fortissimo (very loud) <ff<vous pensez>> Piano (soft)<p<vous pensez>> Pianissimo (very soft) <pp<vous pensez>> Crescendo (louder and louder) <ces<vous pensez vraiment>> Diminuendo (softer and softer)<dim<vous pensez vraiment>>
Speech speed	Allegro (fast)<all<vous pensez>> Lento (slow)<len<vous pensez>> Accelerando (faster and faster) <acc<vous pensez vraiment>> Rallentando (slower and slower) <rall<vous pensez vraiment>>

Vocal information is given in brackets using small capital letters e.g. (RIRE, SOUPIR). Other vocal productions are inserted into the text and noted using their most familiar spellings e.g. *hum*, *pff*.

3.4.1.3 Gestural material

The description of gestural information gleaned from the interview videos is given next to the text transcribed, in brackets using italics: e.g. (mais là ça me tentait pas de: (*en haussant les épaules comme en signe de découragement*)).

3.4.1.4 Extra information, multi-transcription and spelling conventions

In addition, any other information that the transcriber deemed useful for a reader's understanding is given in brackets next to, and after the utterance (e.g. *dit en prenant une petite voix; dit en s'adressant à Clodine* [For example in a discussion between 4 people]).

In the event that there are different possibilities for transcribing a speaker's sentence e.g. *hier soir, je suis allé (aux feux; au feu)* both options will be put in curly brackets separated by a semi-colon. In this case the word *feux* could indicate 'fireworks', and the word *feu* could mean 'bonfire'.

The website also has a page tab to include an alphabetical list of the spellings of common oral lexical items (e.g. *aïe, eh (eh bien, eh oui)*), of which some have multiple spelling conventions (e.g. *ostie, astie, estie*).

3.4.2 Characteristics of the interviews

One of the main aims of the CFPQ was to ensure that the interviews all take place, where possible, in a place that is familiar to the speakers, for example in the kitchen or living room of one of the participants. This is an important factor as the location of the discussions, i.e. somewhere that the speakers feel comfortable, is more favourable to the production of spontaneous language.

The subjects covered in the interviews are described as occurring, or emerging in the heart of the discussions, and vary depending on the interests of the interlocutors. This became very apparent to us throughout our data combing search of the transcriptions, as we found recurring themes for different age groups, for example older generation speakers often discussed travelling, children and grandchildren, whereas younger generations frequently spoke about work, relationships and sporting activities.

3.4.3 Characteristics of the speakers

According to the CFPQ website, most of the speakers taking part in the interviews know each other very well, and the speakers all know the student that was responsible for recording the interviews.

There are 81 speakers in the 21 interviews we examined, which are arranged into sub-categories of age. The interviews are divided into tranches of 5-year age groups for each interview, however, they are not divided up into gender groups. The CFPQ organisers have made provision for representing all age groups, although at present

there are gaps that are indicated by a long straight line in certain boxes in figure 10. This is the case for example with the four-person interview of the 75-80 year old age group, where recordings had not been conducted at the time of this study. In some cases, the interview has been recorded but not yet transcribed and/or checked; in these instances, the situation is stated in the corresponding box of figure 10.

As mentioned above, the speakers all know each other, and are interviewed on video camera chatting informally to their friends about different subjects. Some informants are married, sometimes they are school friends, or work colleagues. This information is not readily available, but can be gleaned from the interviews themselves. However, information is given regarding the level of education reached by the participants, as well as their current or past profession. Indeed, we are given the level of education attained by each speaker. Depending on when the speaker started their scolarity the different levels reached are *Primaire*, *Secondaire*, *Cégep*, *Université 1er cycle* and *Université 2ème cycle*. Many of the older speakers in the sample have only completed Primaire education due to the fact that secondary education was not compulsory at that time. We have made use of this data for our analysis as the informants' social background might be found to influence the use of certain linguistic variables.

Details regarding the origins of the speakers are not explicit on the website or under the information for each *sous-corpus*; however, the conversations indicate that the speakers are all resident or retired in the Sherbrooke area of the Quebec region.

Figure 10 shows the age groups and interview compositions for the 21 *sous-corpus* used for this study.

Figure 10: Sous-Corpus interview information

(age, number of informants and sous-corpus number)

Âge	4 locutrices / locuteurs et 1 étudiante / étudiant, qui supervise les rencontres	3 locutrices / locuteurs et 1 étudiante / étudiant, qui supervise les rencontres
15-20 ans	<u>sous-corpus 3</u> (4 filles) <i>En ligne</i> <u>sous-corpus 9</u> (4 garçons) <i>En ligne</i>	<u>sous-corpus 17</u> (3 filles) <i>En ligne</i>
20-25 ans	<u>sous-corpus 10</u> (2 hommes et 2 femmes) <i>En ligne</i> <u>sous-corpus 19</u> (4 femmes) <i>En ligne</i> sous-corpus 25 (2 hommes et 2 femmes) <i>Enregistrement effectué</i>	sous-corpus 22 (3 femmes) <i>En cours de transcription</i>
25-30 ans	<u>sous-corpus 2</u> (2 hommes et 2 femmes) <i>En ligne</i>	<u>sous-corpus 14</u> (2 hommes et 1 femme) <i>En ligne</i> <u>sous-corpus 21</u> (3 hommes) <i>En ligne</i>
30-35 ans	sous-corpus 26 (4 femmes) <i>Enregistrement effectué</i>	<u>sous-corpus 16</u> (3 femmes) <i>En ligne</i> sous-corpus 28 (2 hommes et 1 femme) <i>Enregistrement effectué</i>
35-40 ans	<u>sous-corpus 7</u> (2 hommes et 2 femmes) <i>En ligne</i> sous-corpus 30 (2 hommes et 2 femmes) <i>Enregistrement effectué</i>	_____
40-45 ans	<u>sous-corpus 6</u> (2 hommes et 2 femmes) <i>En ligne</i>	sous-corpus 27 (3 hommes) <i>Enregistrement effectué</i>
45-50 ans	sous-corpus 23 (2 hommes et 2 femmes) <i>Enregistrement effectué</i>	<u>sous-corpus 13</u> (2 hommes et 1 femme) <i>En ligne</i>
50-55 ans	<u>sous-corpus 1</u> (2 hommes et 2 femmes) <i>En ligne</i> <u>sous-corpus 15</u> (2 hommes et 2 femmes) <i>En ligne</i>	sous-corpus 24 (2 hommes et 1 femme) <i>Enregistrement effectué</i>
55-60 ans	<u>sous-corpus 5</u> (2 hommes et 2 femmes) <i>En ligne</i>	<u>sous-corpus 18</u> (3 femmes) <i>En ligne</i>
60-65 ans	<u>sous-corpus 12</u> (2 hommes et 2 femmes) <i>En ligne</i>	<u>sous-corpus 20</u> (1 homme et 2 femmes) <i>En ligne</i>
65-70 ans	sous-corpus 29 (2 hommes et 2 femmes) <i>Enregistrement effectué</i>	_____
70-75 ans	<u>sous-corpus 8</u> (2 hommes et 2 femmes) <i>En ligne</i>	_____
75-80 ans	_____	_____
80-85 ans	<u>sous-corpus 4</u> (2 hommes et 2 femmes) <i>En ligne</i>	_____
85 ans et +	<u>sous-corpus 11</u> (2 hommes et 2 femmes) <i>En ligne</i>	_____

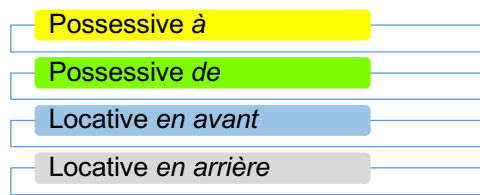
3.5 The data processing procedure

As we discussed above, the *sous-corpus* (SC) have been transcribed using traditional transcription conventions. These transcriptions are available in the form of PDF™ document files for public access via the university's *Centre d'analyse et de traitement informatique du français québécois*' website¹¹. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this study it was necessary to convert all the (SC) PDF files to Word 2011™ format in order to perform particular data-combing techniques that are not available in the PDF viewer program. Researchers commonly make use of concordance programs to search large amounts of transcribed data and this facility is provided on the CFPQ website. Unfortunately, due to the nature of some of the variants being investigated here – notably *à* and *de* – the concordance program available on the CFPQ website did not function properly. This is not only owing to the very high frequency of these prepositions in the French language, but more importantly due to technical difficulties that came to light in the search for these items.

Therefore, in order to successfully examine the 21 interviews included in this study, our approach to the data was divided into three distinctive phases. First and foremost, each separate interview transcription file (*sous-corpus*) was opened using the relevant program on a computer and then saved under an appropriate name depending on the number allocated to the *sous-corpus* (SC). Secondly, once this was completed for each SC, the Word 2011 file was then used for a comprehensive search for each variable, and its relevant variants in turn. For reasons of time economy and clarity, a colour-coded highlighting system was devised to flag each variant in this study. Thus, every SC Word file that had been consulted then contained an exact trace of each variant being employed, where each variant occurred, and who produced it. Figure 11 below indicates the colour coding technique that was used in each word file. This process enabled the variants to be located quickly and easily for quantification purposes. It also facilitated the examination, at a later date, when knowledge of the linguistic context of a variant was needed.

¹¹ <http://recherche.flsh.usherbrooke.ca/cfpq/index.php/site/index>

Figure 11: Colour coding index for Word document searching in the study of non-standard preposition use in the CFPQ



An example of two pages from a *sous-corpus* Word document is also provided below, although this extract is not full size, we have included it here to show the colour coding effect that we achieved. It demonstrates how this visual representation was useful to the next procedure in our process (for the (ANTE) and (POST) variables only one variant is visible here).

Figure 12: Example of a colour-coded Word document after data-combing work.

JS : [ah non
ça changera rien <P45,L11>
S : les gens qui vont [voulouir la garder là ils vont payer ils vont payer plus cher (.) ils vont payer plus cher <156131> <P45,L12>
A : [je lui ai dit *je la veux pas moi* je lui ai dit *je conduis pas de moto de ma sainte vie* voyons donc je conduis même pas un bicycle (.) encore ben moins un vélo (dit en riant) <158752> <P45,L13>
M : [(RIRE) (inaud.) comment t'as essayé d'apprendre à conduire / (en touchant le bras d'Aline) <P45,L14>
L : [im'as te dire une affaire (.) là Bombardier Bombardier ils viennent de sortir ben ils l'ont pas sorti là ils sont tous vendus avant qu'ils les sortent ils commencent à les fabriquer (.) ils ont euh sorti un bicycle [euh: <P45,L15>
S : [à::: à trois roues là / (en plaçant sur la table ses mains parallèles l'une à l'autre, séparées d'environ 50 centimètres, comme pour montrer l'espace entre les deux roues d'en avant) <171617> <P46,L1>
L : trois roues mais les deux roues [sont EN AVANT (en se penchant vers l'avant) pis [l'autre est en arrière (en se reculant sur sa chaise) (.) pis là ils en ont deux pis ils se promènent dans le bout là vingt-quatre heures par jour (.) ils le testent (.) ils sont deux là il y en a un jaune pis l'autre couleur je pense qu'elle est grise (.) dans le bout de Valcourt, pis il y a un truck qui les suit en arrière au cas où [ils auraient des problèmes (.) pis ils se promènent Roxton Pond ils vont euh Acton Vale [pis ils font tous les chemins les chemins de gravelle chemins (inaud.) (en levant la main gauche dans les airs et en la promenant de droite à gauche, comme pour désigner ces villages et ces chemins) <P46,L2>
S : [S- S- ouin <P46,L3>
S : [Sp- Sp- Spider <P46,L4>
S : [ah oui oui <P46,L5>
A : [ben c'est pareil comme un petit bicycle à trois roues non c'est [le contraire **est là** <P46,L6>
S : [mais euh tu de- [tu devrais voir (.) Léo (.) euh leur leur euh leur euh à l'usine là ils ont ils ont la partie recherche là (.) les tests qu'ils font sur les bicycles quatre roues j'étais à un moment [donné j'étais j'ai travaillé l'automne passé euh (.) il y avait un bicycle là il y avait un mur de béton là (.) ils reculaient là pis ils <en<EON<aient dedans>> (1.1") le bicycle montait dans les airs c'était pas assez recule encore plus loin pis (.) BANG (en levant son coude comme s'il allait

frapper dans quelque chose) dedans <217457> <P46,L7>
M : [non <P46,L8>
L : [[ouï:ouï] <P46,L9>
M : as-tu pensé comment c'est dur **sur le corps de ce gars-là là** / [qui est qui est <P46,L10>
S : [ah ben ils ont des jeunes pis ils font JUSTE ça c'est des [jeunes hein / qui font juste ça eux-autres aiment ça (.) pis là à un moment donné je l'ai vu (.) là ils ont ils ont ils reentraient ils ont arrivé un ils étaient après un un: un nouveau moteur (.) bon (.) là ils ont fait il était pas capable de partir là ils prenaient une une: une autre moto (.) pis là ils le **travaicot** (.) pis là ils revenaient pis ils reentraient dans le garage (.) il dit **ça**, eux-autres appellent ça <p<comment ce qu'ils ont dit ça / >>
P1 P1 prototype P pour prototype P1 P2 ça peut aller jusqu'à trois ça peut prendre DEUX ans avant d'emmener un moteur (.) à point (.) des essais (.) [pis ensuite il dit *les tests qu'ils font sais-tu aussi les pourquoi **pourquoi** les tests aussi* (.) des pièces (.) eux-autres ils veulent supposons garantir un EUX si ils voulaient là / on pourrait te (.) fournir un un: bicycle là / qui serait **INDestructible** (.) mais c'est **c'est pas** le principe (.) ils vont le fabriquer ils vont faire des tests avec les pièces pis là ils vont dire après TANT de (.) la pièce va finir par céder si elle cède pas ils en- ils enlèvent du métal (.) ils enlèvent du métal (.) jusqu'à temps que ça respecte dans leurs limites <276326> <P47,L1>
L : [oui <P47,L2>
L : [mais les moteurs c'est pas eux-autres qui les font <P47,L3>
A : ah ouin **le le gars le beau-frère à Kevin** [il l'a dit (.) il dit *je]- une limite là pour euh* <P47,L4>
S : [parec qu'ils en ont fabriqué les premiers qu'ils ont fabriqués Bombardier (.) les gens veulent PAS les échanger parce qu'ils sont indestructibles <P47,L5>
L : ben le gars m'a dit [l'autre jour (.) <P47,L6>
S : [c'est ça qui est le principe <P47,L7>
L : **les quatre roues de Bombardier** / (.) il dit:: il fait *les les vieux quatre roues* (.) il dit *c'était fait pour travailler* <292362> <P47,L8>
S : c'est ça (en pointant Léo, comme pour marquer son accord) <293011> <P47,L9>
L : pis il dit *les nouveaux / (.) qu'ils ont sortis là / (.) ça il dit *c'est pas fait pour travailler c'est fait pour faire de la trail* <298316> <P47,L10>
S : c'est ça (en hochant la tête affirmativement) <P47,L11>

With this data combing work the aim was that for each SC, one Word document served, via this highlighting system, as a record of each occurrence of every variant we examined in this study. As a rule, a 1 hour 30 interview was transcribed onto approximately 100 to 150 pages of Word document data. A typical search for the preposition *à* would give a result that resembles (1) below; however, it needed to be decided if the preposition *à* was a simple occurrence contained in a word such as *là* or a relevant occurrence of the (POSS) variable.

(1)

A : il fait peut-être une réaction [1euh

M : [1une réaction peut-être à L'AUTRE bébé ou: il est allé en garderie en garderie t'sais ta parce que lui là il t'sais quand tu viens pour prendre un jouet là •<f<NO mine>>° pis là il est choqué ben noir pis là t'sais c'est à lui pis Ingrid il la pousse pis Ingrid imagine une petite fille qui est habituée toute seule c'est DOUX cette enfant-là

[SC 5, P11, L11]

Once all the Word documents had been inspected, with all the variants highlighted appropriately, the next task was to examine each occurrence to determine if it was a relevant token of a variant for quantification. Indeed, comparing examples (1) and (2), we can see that the many occurrences of the preposition *à* in the word *là* are of no relevance to our study. However, the use of the preposition *à* in the sentence below indicates that it is a relevant token as it is a non-standard example of possessive *à*.

(2)

S : fait que <all<il reste à savoir>> mais c'est parce que t'as les il y aura toujours le phénomène dans ce parti-là du des purs et des (.) des purs et durs là (.) mais là ils sont obligés de changer leurs façons parce qu'ils l'ont vu au dernier dernier qu'est-ce que tu penses que ça a fait /

M : la gang à [1Parizeau

S : [1ça ça a viré contre eux

L : ça a reviré contre eux [1pis:::

[SC 5, P2, L1- 4]

Once the decision to keep or discard instances of the use of the preposition *à* had been carried out, each occurrence was highlighted – using the relevant colour code – permanently in each Word document. The next step in the data combing process was the quantification of the results.

3.5.1 Quantification tables

For reasons of accuracy, we decided to employ computer-automated mathematical formulae to carry out the variant quantifications for this study. This decision was taken to avoid any possible human error with the calculations at this stage, especially as some of the figures we wanted to examine involve quantifying many different socio-demographic variables combined. Therefore, in order to calculate the results gleaned from our data-combing search in the respective Word documents, we needed to use Excel file formats to count our results. Thus, for each variable, we designed an Excel file where we copied each variant occurrence (e.g. *à* or *de*), and part of its immediate surrounding context. In addition to this information, for each occurrence we also created columns detailing the sex, age, education level and the first letter of the informant's first name.

Figure 13 below shows the additional information regarding where the variant occurred i.e. the *sous-corpus* number, and who produced the example i.e. the speaker identification (first name letter), their age, and their sex.

Figure 13: Extract from the Excel document used to quantify variants for the study of non-standard preposition use in the CFPQ.

SC5	↓	61	M	Secondaire	à	je regardais hier soir [2]le chien à Yvan là / (.)
SC5	L	61	M	Secondaire	à	[le chien à Yvan là il a joué avec les enfants
SC5	M	58	F	Secondaire	à	pis elle s'est accotée la tête sur le bras à Léo
SC5	S	59	M	Université 1er cycle	à	euh je suis allé faire sa voiture à: à Lise

With the information contained in the Excel file in table format as represented above, it was then possible to quantify the total number of tokens for each variant using a formula at the end of the relevant column. For example, the formula in 3) below was used at the bottom of column 6 (where the variable *à* or *de* figure) to count the number of occurrences of the preposition *à*.

(3) =COUNTIF (F2:F260,"=à")

This formula was used to search the spreadsheet for the token requested, and then quantify the results if the token was present. Basic formulae of this sort are a reliable aide to quantifying raw data results, and eliminate the possibility of miscalculation due to human error while counting tokens. The same data search was carried out using a similar formula, this time for the preposition *de*, which is shown in 4) below.

(4) =COUNTIF (F2:F260,"=de")

Formulae in Excel also have the possibility to be expanded to include more complex calculations. Therefore, after obtaining the overall token counts for the (POSS) variable we then went ahead with this next step and added more requirements to the formula.

3.5.2 Coding for factor groups

Although we did need to extend our formulae, the original basic data results that we described above were the starting point we used to commence coding for other factors that might have an influence on the production of the variants. Therefore, we built on the criteria in each formula above, thus obtaining more embedded formulae at the end of each column, which enabled coding for factors identified in previous studies as having a possible influence on these variants. Once we had identified what factor groups we wanted to code for, we created different columns in the Excel spreadsheet to cater for the data results generated by the new formulae. The factor groups we decided to code for were the result of research involving one existing article regarding the use of possessive *à* to express possession, and a combination of factors that we determined were relevant after examining the variant occurrences in context. Indeed, following Mougeon and Beniak's (1982) work on the prepositions *à* and *de*, we coded for 4 semantico-pragmatic factors: the type of possessive relationship (inalienable possession, ownership); the reference of the possessor (human, thing); whether the speaker knew the possessor personally, and if the variant was followed by a vowel or a consonant.

When coding for the different factor groups, we manually examined each occurrence and entered the result in the corresponding column. Additional social factor groups were also coded for, which we will discuss later, however, initially

each utterance was analysed using these 4 factor groups and the response listed in the relevant Excel cell. No cell was left blank as this can cause a problem with the formula calculations and an error message then notifies the user that the 'formula refers to empty cells'.

Figure 14: Example of the Excel file used to quantify the factor group results with column headings.

	Reference of possessor FG 1	Known personally FG 2	Possessive relationship FG 3	Vowel or Consonant FG4
hu	Yes	Inal	C	
Th	No	Ow	V	
th	No	Inal	C	
hu	No	Inal	C	
hu	Yes	Ow	C	
hu	Yes	Ow	C	
hu	No	Inal	C	

Therefore, a set of formulae were embedded into the Excel file at the bottom of the corresponding factor group column in order to quantify the results of this exercise. We started with basic equations with the goal of obtaining results from simple questions. The following formulae in (5) and (6) show the calculation for the number of utterances produced that included a possessor either known, or not known personally to the speaker:

(5) =COUNTIF (J2:J260,"No")

(6) =COUNTIF (J2:J260,"Yes")

In these cases, after examining each token, we determined the answer to the question and subsequently listed it – either yes or no – in column J at the end of the line that corresponded to each utterance. Thus, when we use the formulae in (5) and (6) to determine the overall number of utterances that are referring to a possessor known, (or not known) personally to the speaker, the formula can pick up the responses and calculate the result.

Once the results of these basic formulae were obtained, a new cell was selected in the Excel sheet, and the existing formulae were expanded to be used

in further calculations, i.e. the combination of more than one factor group applying to an utterance. For example, to determine the number of examples produced using the possessive à variant that also referred to people known personally to the speaker, we would use the expanded formula in (7).

(7) =COUNTIFS (J2:J260,"Yes", F2:F260,"à").

Each time we use a modified version of a formula we keep the original result cell intact, so the result will update automatically if any of the cell values contained in the calculation range change. However, as we explained above, we also use these formulae to build new ones in order to obtain results for factor group combinations. Indeed, we can expand the formulae to include several factor groups. For example, the following formula (8) helps to determine the result for the number of males in the 15 to 29 age group using the possessive à variant, speaking about possessors they know personally.

(8) =COUNTIFS (C2:C260,">=15", C2:C260,"<=29", F2:F260,"à", D2:D260, "M", J2: J260,"yes").

We continued this process for all factor groups relevant to this study, and for all combinations of factor groups. The possibilities of determining token statistics using this method are infinite, however, some combinations of factor groups were not tested due to the absence of linguistic or sociolinguistic motivation. For example, calculating the number of occurrences of factor group 4 (a vowel or consonant) combined with factor group 1 (the reference of the possessor) would not have given us much insight into why certain variants are used over others.

3.6 Prepositions in a large-scale corpus

3.6.1 Frequency of the variants

In section 3.5 above we discussed example (1), which we found exemplifies one of the main problems encountered when searching for prepositions in a large transcribed corpus, i.e. the abundant number of prepositions that are of no relevance. For this study, it was most specifically a problem in the search for the variants à and *de*, indeed, these technical or methodological problems were hardly encountered in the search for the other prepositions in this study such as

en arrière (de) and *en avant (de)*. This can be put down to their less frequent occurrence in everyday speech in comparison to the preposition *à* or *de*. Indeed, *à* and *de* were so frequent in the interview data that it slowed down our data-combing work considerably (mainly due to not all occurrences being relevant non-standard utterances).

3.6.2 Part-of-Speech tagging, concordancers and search facilities

In addition to the high frequency of use of prepositions in everyday vernacular French, another main reason for these items being difficult to search for using traditional information technology tools is the fact that it is impossible to instruct a concordance program to eliminate examples of these prepositions in advance. We have found that it is rare, if not unheard of, to find a concordance program that will accept very specific search criteria, especially the type needed for searching such frequent grammatical items. Yet these difficulties can be circumvented if a Part-of-speech tagger (POS tagger) is used. A POS tagger is a piece of software that reads text in a particular language and assigns a part of speech tag to relevant words or morphemes, i.e. a label depending on the search criteria set by the researcher (cf. Stanford, 2014). In the case of a noun, verb, adjective, preposition etc., the program assigns the corresponding value label in the text, and this flags or tags the items being searched for. A sample input text in English, and its POS tagging output is detailed in example (9).

(9)

A passenger plane has crashed shortly after take-off from Kyrgyzstan's capital, Bishkek, killing a large number of those on board. The head of Kyrgyzstan's civil aviation authority said that out of about 90 passengers and crew, only about 20 people have survived. The Itek Air Boeing 737 took off bound for Mashhad, in north-eastern Iran, but turned round some 10 minutes later.

A_DT passenger_NN plane_NN has_VBZ crashed_VBN shortly_RB after_IN take-off_NN from_IN Kyrgyzstan_NNP 's_POS capital_NN ,_, Bishkek_NNP ,_, killing_VBG a_DT large_JJ number_NN of_IN those_DT on_IN board_NN ._.The_DT head_NN of_IN Kyrgyzstan_NNP 's_POS civil_JJ aviation_NN authority_NN said_VBD that_IN out_IN of_IN about_IN 90_CD passengers_NNS and_CC crew_NN ,_, only_RB about_IN 20_CD people_NNS have_VBP survived_VBN ._.The_DT Itek_NNP Air_NNP Boeing_NNP 737_CD took_VBD off_RP bound_VBN for_IN Mashhad_NNP ,_, in_IN north-eastern_JJ Iran_NNP ,_, but_CC turned_VBD round_NN some_DT 10_CD minutes_NNS later_RB ._.

We can see from this example that this is a valuable tool for linguists researching grammatical variables, and appears to perform detailed and intricate analyses automatically. The tagging is set up in a properties file, which serves to instruct the computer what to look for, and what label to use to tag the item. Despite the existence of such a useful piece of software, its use in this study would have been time-consuming at best, and possibly counterproductive at worst. As we can see from example (9) above, the file output is difficult to read, but more importantly, it is necessary to apply equations with the output to conduct ‘maximum likelihood estimates’ of word use and ‘best combination’ fits. In the case of this study, it was decided that although manually searching the data was time-consuming, it was the most efficient way to proceed, and would produce results that could be checked visually with ease.

As a consequence of the POS tagging software being unsuitable for searching the *sous corpus* we also wanted to test the concordance program on the CFPQ website which worked perfectly most of the time when searching for lexical items or for constructions such as those mentioned earlier (*en arrière* or *en avant*). It did not, however, perform particularly well with searches for lone prepositions, for example if the preposition *à* was entered into the concordance program for a particular *sous corpus* the results generated often contained what looks like a type of computer bug. That is, the search results sometimes yielded unexpected additions that made them unreadable, and thus the exercise became unreliable and open to error. The extract below, in example (10), shows what results can sometimes look like e.g. problems with font, formatting and extra additions.

(10)

5 - S : ah il y a des des des oui oui à à Mon |,Je="font
weight:bold;color:#2F6F5D;"> ‘^ | tréal maintenant là au lieu d'avoir des des
noms QUÉbécois là des des TREMblay qui qui qui c'est encore eux qui ont le le
le dessus là <175365> [SC 5, P3, L16]

As can be seen in example (10), the concordance program has produced a body of text that has split the sentence containing the preposition *à* into two parts, the start and end of the split have been indicated above using red vertical lines.

Although this split does not make the sentence incomprehensible, it is an error factor that influences the successful use of this tool.

In addition to this type of problem, there are also occurrences of errors being generated nearer to the end of particular extracts (indicated by the underlined text above) that appear to be provoked randomly. We ascertained by our extensive use of the *sous-corpus* files that, as in the case of example (10) taken from *sous corpus* 5, there is often a trigger, such as a word near the end of the extract (*là*), which causes an unintelligible line of text to follow. In sum, these problems led us to conclude that using the CFPQ concordancer was not a viable way to search the *sous-corpus* for one word prepositions, and therefore we chose to use the data-combing methods we detailed in section 3.5 above.

3.6.3 Local language features

Further difficulties have been encountered when searching for preposition usage in these corpora. Specifically, we found that in order to understand particular utterances, we needed to have a certain amount of background knowledge, or knowledge of cultural aspects pertaining to the variety of language that we are researching. The knowledge of a language includes the knowledge of national or local personalities, folklore, geographic areas or linguistic expressions. In the case of the CFPQ, these particularities are present in some of the possessive constructions found. A prime example of this ‘need-to-know’ information regarding the local or national systems in place in Quebec is shown in extract (11). This possessive construction was relatively easy to interpret, although we shall see that other examples are not so straightforward.

(11)

la gang à Parizeau

[SC 5, P3, L2]

A simple search on www.google.ca for the noun *Parizeau* was sufficient to confirm that this was the name of a person who was a political figure active in Canada at the time that the conversations were conducted. However, before performing this search it was necessary to understand that the utterance was constructed as a possessive, and that the noun in question was a person’s name, or another type of proper noun such as a place name. Yet, the relative simplicity of the clarification process in this case was not reproducible for each problematic

example. One utterance in *sous corpus* 1 was very difficult to interpret for two reasons. Firstly, although appearing to be a quantifiable construction of the *à* variant, the normal research avenues used for other examples i.e. a search on www.google.ca or an examination of the surrounding context did not prove fruitful in either eliminating the token, or confirming its inclusion. Example (12) below shows what appears to be a locative construction, that initially could be interpreted using the words ‘*[les cantines [...]]*’ which would lead us to believe that Gérard Dion is in fact the name of a company that deals with catering, i.e. *les cantines Gérard Dion*. The information that comes after the square bracket appears to modify the name *Gérard Dion*; therefore, initially one would assume that this use of *à* is purely locative in nature and being used to indicate the place of work of the person being referred to. This type of construction is quite frequent when a company name is set up using the patronymic name of the founder and well-known examples such as *Jacques Vabre*™ (coffee products) or *Dr. Oetker*™ (various agro-business products) can be seen in both France and Canada. Yet it is somewhat more unusual to have both a first name and a surname used for the brand name. Additionally, the use of the word *gars* leads us to believe in this instance that the informant is talking about an employee of the company, and not the son of the owner or founder of the company.

(12)

le gars **à** Gérard Dion [1les cantines euh::: [SC5, P5, L11]

However, the token was found in a conversation regarding the boyfriend of one of the informant’s acquaintances. When we consider the first part of the conversation where the boyfriend is referred to as ‘un petit Dion’, ‘Jocelyn Dion de Robertson’ (highlighted in example (13) in yellow) then it becomes clear that he is a member of the Dion family. Further clarification comes later in the extract when the informants discuss contact they have had with the boyfriend’s father and some of his physical characteristics. So from initially discounting the example as being a locative use of the preposition *à*, the use can now be considered to be a possessive use of *à* if we understand that the person in question is the son of Gérard Dion who runs a local business.

(13)

S : HEILLE [1ça doit avoir changé (.) c'est terrible

C : [1ça va f- ça va faire quatre ans qu'elle sort avec son chum (.) là .

S : c'est lequel_ je l'ai-tu connu moi

C : un petit Dion / (.) Jocelyn Dion de Robertson /

S : non (.) ça me dit rien_

L : c'est un •il_° ou un •elle_°

G : c'est un c'est un •il° (.) [1(RIRE) ah astheure eh seigneur (en levant les bras, en voulant dire qu'on peut s'attendre à tout, aujourd'hui)

L : [1(RIRE)

L : c'est une question qu'on pose hein_

G : ouais

C : le gars à Gérard Dion [1les cantines euh:: .

G : [1t'sais_ les cantines Gérard là_ (.) [2il a euh il a un (.) un pick-up rouge avec le le chrome là / en arrière là / Gérard là / c'est ça (.) ouin \ .

[...]

G : Gérard c'est lui qui est [1assez: (en faisant un cercle devant lui avec ses bras pour illustrer un gros ventre) .

S : [1il est gras

G : ok

[SC5, P5, L1-19]

3.6.4 Concluding remarks

In this chapter, we have given details of the corpus that has provided the material for this study of non-standard preposition use. We also provided information regarding the informants, the transcription conventions and our data-combing procedures. Now we are ready to proceed with the analysis of the variables in turn, starting with the (POSS) variable.

It is important to mention at this stage that the analysis of the variables in this study will not include the use of statistical tests. This is due for the most part to the number of tokens being generally very modest, consequently we will interpret differences between relative frequencies with due caution.

CHAPTER 4 The (POSS) variable: The variants and their treatment in the linguistic literature

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will undertake a commentary of the varying treatments of the (POSS) variable, its variants, and their variable contexts in Metropolitan French, Quebec French (QF) and regional dialects. Specialist sociolinguistic studies of this variable will not be included here, but rather reserved for chapter 5 where we conduct the linguistic analysis of this variable.

As we discussed previously in chapter 2, it is widely believed that regional dialects spoken in France at the time of the immigration of French citizens to Canada influenced the variety of French spoken in Quebec today. Therefore, it is necessary to establish how this variable has evolved in these varieties in order to be able to understand its use in Quebec French.

4.2 Defining the variables and their variants

As we discussed in chapter 2, according to many scholars (cf. Mougeon and Beniak (1982), Brunot (1905; 1906), and Einhorn (1974)) the break down in the case system was compensated for by the expansion of the prepositional system. Two prepositions that experienced substantial expansion were *ad* and *de*, and Mougeon and Beniak (1982: 15) explain that an aspect of their development was that they started to compete with each other to introduce nominal complements expressing the notion of possession. We have seen that the cross-over in use of these two prepositions for expressing possession started in Vulgar Latin (Väänänen, 1956) only to be frowned upon by French grammarians in the 17th century. However, as we are aware of its continued existence in popular and informal styles of Metropolitan French, we aim to discover its predominance in spoken Quebec French using the CFPQ interviews. In section 4.3 the (POSS) variable and its alternating variants are set out in a table. This is accompanied by an example of each variant found in the CFPQ *sous-corpus*.

4.3 The (POSS) variable and its variants

Table 1: The (POSS) variable and its variants

Variable	Variants
(POSS)	à
	de

(14) **à**

S : [...] c'est fini mais comme tu (en pointant Marie) disais que les gens qui sont là-les [3les copains **à** Yvan là/ (.)

'[...] it's finished but like you (pointing at Marie) were saying that the people who are Yvan's friends there [...]

[SC5, P5, L5]

(15) **de**

M : [...] pis elle a été obligée de rappeler (.) la mère **de** la petite elle lui [3dit elle dit •viens la chercher je suis plus capable° (dit en riant) (RIRE)

[...] so she had to call the mother of the little girl back, she told her come and get her I'm not able to look after her anymore'

[SC 5, P8, L7]

4.4 Official attitudes towards variation in France and Quebec

In France, directives established by the ministry of Education in the *Bulletin Officiel* (B.O) are published several times a year. These contain changes and instructions regarding the teaching of various subjects. They are designed for, and made available to, the teaching staff in French schools. French is one of the subjects treated by these directives, and the way it is taught and assessed often features in the B.O. This, and other tools such as grammar reference books, provide the framework to teachers for planning their lessons. If we take the example of the official document regarding teaching French in *Cours Préparatoire* (CP) and *Cours Élémentaire* (CE 1 & 2) published in the 5th January 2012 B.O¹² it is a document devised using the *programmes scolaires* for each age group or *cycle* and gives clear instructions to teachers how to teach French. It

¹² Accessible at: http://cache.media.eduscol.education.fr/file/Progressions_pedagogiques/78/6/Progression-pedagogique_Cycle2_Francais_203786.pdf

demonstrates that teachers are expected to correct children's grammar – either spoken or written – from a very young age (*CP* = age 6, *CE1* = age 7, *CE2* = age 8). Children are required to demonstrate accuracy in the pronunciation of words and sounds and it is my personal experience of this type of correction, especially of the (POSS) variable, that was the original motivation for this study.

The situation regarding the written and spoken norms of Quebec French in Canada is very different to that of France, not only because of the contrasting evolution of French in Quebec, but also because the definition of what forms the standard for the French language spoken in Quebec is still evolving. For example, much like the *BO* in France, publications written by committees of experts are often circulated in order to offer guidance to the teaching staff in Quebec on the complexities of teaching French. One such publication, entitled *Mieux soutenir le développement de la compétence à écrire*¹³ (2008), shows how the Quebec education authority tackles one aspect of this in schools.

Despite French being one of two official languages in Canada, the question of what constitutes the standard language is still controversial. We looked at this in more depth in chapter 2, suffice to say that although according to Bigot (2008: 1-2) the question of lexical and pronunciation norms has been widely examined by scholars, there is still no official norm of spoken or written language. In addition, deliberation on grammatical norms appears to have been neglected. One scholar who has addressed the question of the spoken grammatical norms is Barbaud (1984, 1987, 1994, 1998). His analyses have led him to believe that attempting to establish a distinct Quebec French norm would be problematic. Indeed, if a syntactic alignment is advised with either Standard Quebec French (SQF), Standard international French (SF), or the variety spoken by the power elite in Quebec, then it would lead us to a communicational impasse. This is because the variety spoken by the power elite in Quebec is divergent to such an extent, that any standardisation would either betray the reality of Quebec French, or on the other hand ignore it (Barbaud, 1998: 107,126). Thus, what constitutes grammatical variation in Quebec French is difficult to determine. This implies that there may not be a consensus in Quebec about whether a given grammatical variant (e.g. possessive *à*) is non-standard or standard.

¹³ Accessible at : <http://www1.mels.gouv.qc.ca/ameliorationFrancais/doc/SoutenirDeveloppementCompetenceEcrire.pdf>

4.5 Metropolitan French grammars & other reference works

4.5.1 *Le Bon usage* (5th to 15th editions, 1953-2011)

Let us now turn to the treatment of the (POSS) variable in a range of grammars and other reference works. The most comprehensive work consulted for this study, the *Bon usage*, was first published in 1936, with its 15th edition appearing in 2011. For the purpose of this thesis, six print editions and one online edition were consulted i.e. one edition from each decade since the 1950s. The examination of this range of work offers not only a diachronic perspective of language use but also an insight into the authors' attitudes towards the use of the prepositions focused on in this thesis.

All volumes of the *Bon usage* reviewed here contain a chapter devoted to the uses of prepositions in general. Within the 5th and 8th editions the use of possessive *à* is mentioned briefly in chapter 7, section 6, paragraph 913 (p.761 and p.884 respectively). These sections give a general description that specifies when the preposition *à* can be used e.g. to express place, goal, time, manner and/or characteristic. In addition to this it is explained that *à* can be used either after certain verbs such as *être* or *appartenir* (examples 16 & 17), or when it is governed by a pronoun for emphatic reasons to reinforce or be more precise about a possessive (example 18)

(16) *Sire l'avenir est à Dieu* (HUGO, Crép., V, 2)

(17) *Ce livre appartient à mon père*

(18) *Il a un style, une manière à lui* (Ac.).

The sections conclude by informing the reader that in addition to the uses indicated, possessive *à* is still found in some fixed expressions, albeit in the form of *archaïsmes*, *langue populaire* or *l'usage familier* e.g. *la bête à bon Dieu*¹⁴, *la Vache à Colas*¹⁵, *la barque à Caron*¹⁶ (1953: 761, 1964: 884).

Further to these sections, an historic paragraph (§ 214: 149^{5th}, §214: 153^{8th}) on the use of possessive *à* is included in each edition, which has an explanation that the prepositional complement (*complément déterminatif*) is most

¹⁴ Another term for a ladybird.

¹⁵ Expression referring to the 16th and 17th century French Protestants or Huguenots.

¹⁶ Reference to Greek mythology, Charon transporting the dead in his boat.

often introduced by *de*. It is here that reference to the origins of the use of possessive *à* is found. It is explained that in Old French along with the existence of simple juxtaposition between the prepositional complement (*complément déterminatif*) and the noun e.g. *Hôtel-Dieu*, the preposition *à* was also used to express possession. At this point we see another mention of a style label regarding the use of possessive *à*: indeed, the *Bon usage* notes that only a few traces of this type of construction are left in everyday language and they have become either *provincial* or *très familier*. It is stated that this use may be a continuation of practice that either goes back to the Gaulish language (§214: 150^{5th}, §113: 154^{8th}), according to Brunot (1922: 149), or to Vulgar Latin (VL), according to Nyrop (1904: 103). These carefully worded comments can either give the reader the impression that the use possessive *à* is restricted to old sayings (vestiges of historical usage) or that it is not a desirable element in everyday standard French, or both. Leaving the reader with the impression that it is not acceptable to use the preposition *à* to express possession.

The 10th (1975), 12th (1986) and 13th (1993) editions of the *Bon usage* maintain the same format as the previous editions reviewed, but with various additions. The 10th (1975) *Bon usage* has the same layout and content as the 5th and 8th editions. However, in the 12th (1986) edition of the *Bon usage* the chapter described above, *Emploi de certaines prépositions*, has been completely reworked and the mention of the use of *à* to express possession has been omitted in favour of a cross reference to another paragraph in the volume (§ 346) where the explanation of this use is discussed in detail.

The 14th (2008) and 15th (2011) editions give a more contemporary account of how prepositions are used and perceived today. In the case of possessive *à*, once again in chapter 5 (§352) covering the noun complement (*complément de relation*) the opening statement is that complements of nouns are ordinarily introduced by *de* (p435) . However, despite giving very similar examples to previous editions where possessive *à* is seen in fixed expressions, a new addition to the consideration of this variant is seen from the 14th edition onwards. Indeed, here we find the first change in attitude towards the use of possessive *à*, where it is explained that this use originates in either oral tradition or informal language, where it is still a common way of expressing possession (Grevisse and Goosse, 2011: 435). In addition, the first mention of the prescriptive opinion – quoted from the 2001 *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*

– that this expression is no longer in use, is also declared inadequate. This is the first reference to the *Académie Française*'s views in the volumes reviewed for this study. It is an interesting comment, and appears at the latter end of the timeline of the editions reviewed; the *Académie* had not pronounced on the subject before that. This quotation indicates a new perspective from the *Bon usage* that departs from just assigning a speech label. It appears to indicate that the publication is not advocating the use of one preposition in place of another, but is aiming to adequately describe the current usage, and is distancing itself from the *Académie Française*'s standpoint. The *Bon usage* thus implies that possessive *à* is commonplace in everyday speech, in contrast with the position of the *Académie Française*.

4.5.2 **Bescherelle (1997)**

When we consider the *Bescherelle*, a reference grammar often found in French households, and a staple item in many teachers' personal or professional libraries, there is no distinct section devoted to the use of possessive *à*. However, there is a section (1997: 117) explaining the differences between the *complément d'objet second* (COS)¹⁷ and the *complément du nom* (C. du Nom)¹⁸. Indeed, knowing the difference between these functions is often a source of difficulty for some native speakers of French. The confusion that can occur is relevant to this study for two reasons, firstly because the *Bescherelle* sees the importance of clarifying it for French native speakers, and secondly because possessive *à* is mentioned due to its connection with the construction concerned. The *Bescherelle* explains that in (19) below, the COS is 'completing' the finite verb *donner*, which already has a direct object (*Complément d'Objet Direct*). Therefore, in order to add a COS a preposition is obligatory. In the case of the verb *donner*, this can be either *à* or *de* to introduce a person: *à* for a recipient and *de* for the possessor of the direct object.

- (19) Elle donne [la pipe^{COD} [à Papa^{COS}]
She gives/is giving the pipe to dad.

¹⁷ The COS follows the direct object of an intransitive verb and is introduced by a preposition.

¹⁸ The *C du Nom* is the complement of a noun introduced by a preposition e.g. [de la journée] in 'La fin de la journée'.

In (20) the *C du Nom* is ‘completing’ the noun *pipe*, and needs to be introduced by a preposition; in standard French this would be *de*. However, confusion arises when *à* is used, because in non-standard usage this indicates possession. Therefore, example (20) could be interpreted in two ways (as indicated).

(20) Elle donne [la pipe^{COD} [à papa^{C. du Nom} [à réparer]]].

She gives/is giving the pipe to dad to repair.

Or

She gives/is giving dad’s pipe to be repaired.

These examples have been taken from the *Bescherelle* (1997: 217) and adapted with the addition of *COD/COS/C. du Nom* notation, square brackets, and translations for clarity.

4.5.3 Riegel *et al* (2009)

Another widely used reference work is the *Grammaire méthodique du français* by Riegel *et al*. This work has only one very small mention of the use of possessive *à* in contemporary French, which appears in the section devoted to the ‘*groupe nominal*’ (2009: 269-290). Here it is mentioned, in the notes at the bottom of the section entitled *sémantique*, that possessive *à* can be used for the reinforcement of a possessive construction, in order to produce an effect of emphasis. The examples given are juxtaposed to explain this use, x) *Son propre fils* (a Standard French construction) and x) *Mon ménage à moi* (Informal French). There is no elaboration on the subject, explication of its origins, or mention of standard constructions, and from the notation given in the examples we can accept that Riegel *et al* consider this emphatic use of possessive *à* to be informal.

4.5.4 Julaud (2011)

In addition to the traditional reference books discussed above, let us mention a popular line of autodidactic publication aimed at the general public. In “*Le Français correct pour les nuls*”, the author makes reference to the use of possessive *à* with examples from the French film *Voyous Voyelles*, (2011: 367).

(21) «C’est la correspondante anglaise à Auréline!»

(22) «C'est la correspondante anglaise de Auréline, et non pas la correspondante à Auréline, il faudra revoir vos règles de français! ...»

Julaud considers this use of possessive à to be unacceptable and asserts his view strongly: -

« L'appartenance, la dépendance, la possession, la relation, reposent en effet sur la préposition de et non à: Alain est un ami de Stéphane (et non: un ami à Stéphane) [...] »

(Julaud 2011: 367)

These comments clearly exhibit a prescriptive attitude, which, until now has not been encountered in the literature reviewed, however, Julaud does not make reference to a speech style until later on in this volume, when he refers to possessive à being *populaire*. Later on possessive à is again mentioned, this time in a section on *chausse-trapes* and while devoted to giving a brief historical account of the generalisation of possessive *de*, it does not elaborate on the reasons for possessive à being abandoned.

4.5.5 L'Académie française en ligne (2014)

The *Académie Française* is a well-known institution founded in France by Cardinal Richelieu in 1635. It is presently composed of 38 members, known as *immortels*, who pronounce on matters concerning the French language. It is not a governmental organisation and does not work in a recognised or official capacity connected to the French government. However, this said, it is often used and cited as being an authority on French language use. In the *Académie's* online reference pages for grammar questions from the public, it is explained that à can only be used in a possessive sense when it follows a verb such as *être* or *appartenir*, before a pronoun (*un ami à nous*), or to repeat a possessive (*sa manière à lui*). The standpoint of the text is that possessive à can no longer be employed in the French language; in fact the use of the preposition à between two nouns is proscribed as it is explained that, although it existed in Old French, it is only admitted now in *expressions figées* such as *Une bête à bon dieu*.

4.6 Specialist Hexagonal French literature

4.6.1 Introduction

In this section, we will consider more specialist literature where the (POSS) variable is mentioned, which includes both descriptive and prescriptive works.

4.6.2 Wagner and Pinchon (1962)

In *Grammaire du Français* by Wagner and Pinchon (1962), the use of possessive *à* is found in section 531, *Le groupe A + substantif détermine un substantif* which is split into two subsections. The first section mentions the possibility of using *à* in order to evoke a characteristic of the subject of the sentence, as in *L'homme à l'oreille cassée* or *La poule aux œufs d'or*. The section explains that constructions such as *Un chien à sa mémère* or *La fille au maire* are proscribed from standard use, with the exception that they can be found in literary language used by a writer to represent a character's speech style as old fashioned or informal. Once again, as with the *Bon usage*, an example from a well-known literary classic is given: - *C'est un cousin à Basin*. (M. Proust).

4.6.3 Martinet (1979)

A proscriptive assessment is also present in the *Grammaire Fonctionnelle du Français* by André Martinet (1979). Martinet not only considers the use of possessive *à* as colloquial in what are seen today as standard constructions e.g. *à* for emphatic reasons: *sa manière à lui*, but he also implies that other speakers that do not adopt a less formal speech style generally may produce these constructions in what he calls 'relaxed speech'. Martinet explains that this happens when one of two types of insistence apposition is used, i.e. the speaker will reuse the possessor's name or a pronoun in the dative case with the preposition *à* (1979: 62), e.g. *C'est la sienne à Jacques*, *C'est la sienne à lui*.

4.6.4 Judge and Healey (1983)

In 'A Reference Grammar of Modern French' (1983) which is for Anglophone learners of French, the case of possessive *à* is discussed briefly, and it includes some noteworthy details regarding historical changes. Judge and Healey explain that possessive *à* was once used for all cases where the idea of possession needed to be obvious – giving examples such as *la maison à Paul* – and that

similar or identical constructions have survived in certain dialects and set phrases. They add that grammarians outlawed this usage in the seventeenth century as it was considered 'vulgar', and therefore unacceptable (1983: 332). Despite the mention of the existence of this construction in certain dialects – often mentioned in French language grammars – no further information is given on this subject.

4.6.5 Hawkins and Towell (2001)

Hawkins and Towell's well-known reference grammar *French Grammar and usage*, surprisingly has little reference to the use of possessive *à* in its chapter on prepositions, except for a brief mention regarding its use before a disjunctive pronoun in section 13.2.8. This variant is also absent in the sections on stressed pronouns, and the use of the copula, both of which easily lend themselves to a mention of possessive *à*. This omission could be considered to be a deliberate choice to avoid discussing non-standard usage. Yet, other non-standard constructions or uses are discussed, such as *ça* used as the unstressed neutral subject pronoun in spoken French (2001: 64), and the omission of *ne* in negative expressions (2001: 368).

4.6.6 Leeman-Bouix (1994)

In *Les Fautes de français existent-elles?* (1994) Leeman-Bouix gives a more comprehensive review of this variable, in line with the nature of the book, which does not cover all grammar points and therefore allocates more space to those examined. In addition to talking about possessive *à* in a long paragraph in her introduction, Leeman-Bouix discusses possessive *à* (pp129-133) at length in the main body of the book. An interpretation of this non-standard use is undertaken, both with possible explanations for its existence, and reasons why purists or prescriptivists condemn it. It is interesting to note that Leeman-Bouix makes two links to explain this usage, one with standard constructions using the copula to express possession and, one like the *Bon usage*, with the syntactic constraint of possessive *à* only being used when the possessor is a person. This last point is considered to be a partial explanation for this use. However, contrary to previous literature consulted, she believes that possessive *à* should not be regarded as a working class feature, but as a linguistic tool that contributes to clarifying ambiguous phrases.

Leeman-Bouix is also the editor of a special issue of *Langue Française* entitled *Énigmatiques Prépositions* containing several articles treating the subject of French prepositions in detail. The issue is particularly concerned with the syntactic properties of French prepositions but has no mention of the use of possessive *à*. It does however, give important statistics regarding the frequency of use of the prepositions *à* and *de* in the French language in general e.g. number of occurrences in the GEOPO corpus of the preposition *à* is 5,421 and in FRANTEXT 11,438 (cf. Vaguer, 2008: 22)

4.6.7 Ball (2000)

In his textbook *Colloquial French grammar* (2000) Ball has an ascending order of grammar features (a to f) less colloquial to more colloquial, and the use of possessive *à* is listed under (f). He explains that, with the exception of possessive *à*, the variables on the list are becoming more widespread in conversation and writing, and so most people would no longer regard them as exceptionally colloquial e.g. *en bicyclette* vs. *à bicyclette*, *partir à Paris* vs. *partir pour Paris*. It is important to note that Ball does not include possessive *à* in this list of accepted and unnoticeable variants. A statement follows his examples of possessive *à*, he asserts that it is working class usage rather than informal and will likely stay that way in the future.

Ball, like Leeman-Bouix, also makes a link (2000: 129) between possessive *à* and standard constructions in French that use the copula e.g. *le vélo est à Marcel* and *à qui est le vélo?*. Nevertheless, he stipulates that the use of *à* for possessive constructions is reserved for cases 'involving ownership of an object, or a family relationship of some sort'. This implies that the 'possessor' has to be a person, e.g. *La voiture à mon père* or *la femme à l'épicier*, but not *la mort à Marcel*¹⁹ or *les roues au vélo*. This assertion parallels the mention in the *Bon usage* of possessive *à* only being found with people and never with things, which was a new addition in the *Bon usage* 14th edition (2008), in which the example of *L'écurie à la vache* (Collette, *Maison de Claud X*) is given.

¹⁹ The possessor in this case is a person, however, some scholars like Ball do not believe that one can own one's death.

4.7 Attitudes to possessive à in Canadian French reference works

4.7.1 Introduction

A multitude of dictionaries and other reference works have been published on the characteristics of Canadian French and more specifically Quebec French. Some of the literature is controversial, due to the fact that many scholars have differing views on how the French spoken in Canada should be classified. Some of the literature reviewed here dates back to the late 19th century, and this enables us to observe changes in the treatment of varietal differences and also the presence, or absence of the acceptance of certain elements of linguistic variation.

4.7.2 Rinfret (1896), Blanchard (1914) and Clapin (1918)

Several of the dictionaries consulted give a historical insight into the use of possessive à in Canadian French, and we often find a prescriptive opinion of its acceptability. The *Dictionnaire de nos fautes contre la langue Française* (Rinfret, 1896), the *Dictionnaire de Bon langage* (Blanchard, 1914) and the *Ne pas dire mais dire: Inventaire de nos fautes les plus usuelles* (Clapin, 1918) all consider the use of possessive à to be a language error, with no further elaboration on this viewpoint. However, interestingly Rinfret's dictionary gives a little more detail, specifying that à cannot be used to express possession, and mentioning that the *Académie Française* makes an exception when it comes to the *locution populaire: La barque à Caron* (Rinfret 1896: 2).

4.7.3 Darbelnet (1986), Poirier et al (1985), and Léard (1995)

The *Dictionnaire du Français Québécois* (Poirier et al., 1985) does not mention the use of possessive à in Quebec French, however, this is not surprising, since its aim is to present a lexicographical description of Quebec French words. However, contrary to Poirier et al's work, we would expect to find reference to possessive à in Darbelnet's *Dictionnaire des particularités de l'usage* (1986), and yet there is no mention of this usage. It does, however, have an entry for the dialectal differences found with the use of the preposition à in Quebec French with expressions of temporal frequency e.g. *à tous les soirs*. Interestingly for this particularity of Quebec French, the author deems its proscription unnecessary, even if this use is no longer present in francophone Europe (Darbelnet 1986: 9). Léard's *Grammaire québécoise d'aujourd'hui-Comprendre les québécismes* is

another reference work that has no mention of the use of possessive à in Quebec French.

4.7.4 Meney (1999)

The *Dictionnaire Québécois Français: pour mieux se comprendre entre francophones* (1999) is one of the few dictionaries consulted to have a comprehensive section on the use of possessive à. The subtitle that Meney adds (*pour mieux se comprendre entre francophones*) explains the author's objectives, i.e. to promote inter-comprehension between Francophones speaking different varieties of the same language. Meney's main goal was to accomplish this by using authentic Quebec French examples giving their equivalent in similar registers in Metropolitan French. The dictionary goes into detail regarding the use of possessive à (1999: 3) and mentions several interesting characteristics specific to this use in Quebec French i.e. *le Conseil du Trésor à...* e.g. *[les fonctionnaires] ont même réussi à envahir le rez-de chaussée de l'édifice "H", où loge le Conseil du Trésor à M. Daniel J [ministre dudit Conseil] pour crier leur réprobation*. Meney makes it clear that he accepts the existence of this usage as normal everyday practice in Quebec French. A noteworthy fact regarding this publication is the polemical reaction it provoked among other linguists in Quebec, and even in the same university department, due to the on-going debate on what constitutes Standard Quebec French, and how Quebec French should be exemplified. This subject was discussed in chapter 2 in more detail, suffice to say Meney's views underline again the fact that it is difficult to establish a norm to work by. In order to defend his position in writing this dictionary, and also to respond to some of the most scathing criticisms, Meney published *Polémique à propos du Dictionnaire québécois-français* (Meney, 2002).

4.7.5 Mougeon and Beniak (1982)

The work by Mougeon and Beniak (1982: 15-36) on the use of possessive à to express possession in informal Ontarian French has been a great source of inspiration and motivation for this study. Indeed, in our linguistic analysis of the (POSS) variable in chapter 5 we replicated many of Mougeon and Beniak's principle elements of investigation (albeit with very different results).

Their results indicate that the spread of possessive à use to nominal complements was not, as once thought, influenced by the reference of the

possessor (i.e. whether the possessor was human or non-human), but rather by the nature of the possessive relationship (i.e. partitive vs. non-partitive). Their research also found that in the sub-group of speakers most likely to use the possessive *à* variant – working class females with a frequency index of .91 or higher – the percentage was only 38%. This is a different result to other linguists' observations of the use of this variant in Parisian French, and the French spoken in the *Ile aux Coudres* (IAC), where possessive *à* is used more frequently with human possessors (even considered categorical by one linguist).

4.7.6 Office Québécois de La langue Française en ligne (2013)

In contrast to the historical volumes consulted on the use of possessive *à* in Canadian French, a more contemporary opinion was sought from an Internet source. Unfortunately, the *Office Québécois de la langue Française en ligne* (OQLF) in their *Banque de dépannage linguistique* has no explicit reference to the non-standard use of possessive *à*. The only mention of non-standard preposition use comes in a section on the standard construction of possessive *à* when it is used with disjunctive pronouns²⁰. However, contrary to the historical works consulted that have mentioned possessive *à* (Rinfret (1896), Clapin (1918), Blanchard (1914)), this contemporary reference makes no mention of the use of possessive *à* in Quebec French, even in the aforementioned section dedicated to the standard constructions that may have led to the non-standard use.

4.7.7 Dictionnaire Usito en ligne (2016)

The *Dictionnaire Usito* is designed and made available by the University of Sherbrooke and its principle aim is to describe Standard French currently in use in Quebec. The website explains that priority has been given to *Québécois* words that have been well-attested in careful written French (neutral register or formal language), and words associated with relaxed language (very familiar register, swear words, or highly criticised Anglicisms) have generally been left out. In addition, they state, as in the case of most dictionaries, that they have avoided including any uses that are considered marginal i.e. very rare, very old, very localised or very specialised.

²⁰ See: http://bdl.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/bdl/gabarit_bdl.asp?t1=1&id=3662

Interestingly, this dictionary makes no reference to the use of the non-standard possessive *à* variant in Quebec French (contrary to other non-standard variants examined in this study). However, it does have comments on the use of *à* in time expressions often found in Quebec French, such as *à toutes les quatre heures* which it considers to be a criticised form that therefore, does not have a full entry in the dictionary. The use of the variant *de* is listed as indicating the idea of belongings, and an example given is *la maison de ses parents*. On this entry's page there are no remarks made regarding the non-standard alternative use of *à* for this type of expression.

4.8 The (POSS) variants in north-western varieties of *Langues D'Oïl*

4.8.1 Introduction

In this section let us consider geographical diffusion, which often involves features of language that spread from a densely populated, economically and culturally dominant centre to other geographical areas in a wave-like process. In this process nearby towns and cities adopt the changes before more rural areas, with the new adopters of change being face-to-face users of language who are motivated for diverse reasons to take up the new linguistic forms (cf. Trudgill, 1982b: 52-87; Britain, 2002). However, models explaining geographical diffusion of language change have been supplemented by the concept of *levelling*. Kerswill (2003) explains this process as the “attrition or reduction of *marked* variants” (Trudgill, 1986: 98; emphasis in original) or parts of speech that are unusual or in a minority.

Despite the notion of *levelling* appearing to be straightforward, it becomes more complicated when we consider the closely related social psychological phenomenon of *speech accommodation*. Indeed, many short-term acts of speech accommodation between geographically neighbouring interlocutors can result in more long-term speech accommodation, which can, effectively contribute to the formation of innovative varieties that are devoid of any localised forms. In addition, the avoidance of negatively evaluated localised forms in these short or long-term accommodation acts, in favour of more geographically widespread forms, has the combined effect of levelling the differences found in the varieties.

These theoretical frameworks, although referring to language contact and the changes that result from it in neighbouring dialects, can contribute

considerably to our understanding of the variation that we find in Canadian varieties of French. It is possible that the language varieties of French spoken by the contingents of French speakers immigrating to Canada could have diffused via the processes of levelling and speech accommodation, therefore arriving at a mutually intelligible and unmarked variety.

A closely related process that might explain the reason for innovative variants emerging, or dialectal variants surviving, in Quebec French could be explained by Trudgill's (2004) theory of 'koinèisation'. It involves three developmental phases containing six stages of processes and is the collective result of the effects of mixing, levelling, unmarking, interdialectal development, reallocation, and focussing. These stages progress between generations of speakers whose descendants originated from the same regions of a country.

Although koinèisation chiefly concerns phonological variation it could explicate why certain grammatical variants, either non-existent in metropolitan French, or found in lower frequencies than in Quebec French, have subsisted. If we adhere to the possibility of the process of koinèisation in Quebec then the existence of the grammatical variants in some, if not all the language varieties spoken by the emigrants may have given rise to a process of levelling. In these cases, the majority dialectal variants could have been selected as the variant of the new variety. Further support for this theory is evidenced by Poirier (1994b: 256) who states that philological studies have proven the existence of a *Koinè Laurentienne* in the 17th century that was strongly influenced by dialectal uses of various provincial regions of France.

4.8.2 Lepelley (1999)

Since previous literature examined in this section has suggested that possessive *à* may be found in regional varieties in France, this possibility necessitates further inquiry. One of the main regions that contributed to the cohort of French emigrants in the early 17th century was Normandy, with an estimated 20.8% of the total numbers. Lepelley (1999: 89) confirms that in the Norman dialect the demonstrative pronoun post-determined by a noun complement is often used in conjunction with a possessive pronoun e.g. *Ch'est pas note vaque; ch'est la sienne au vésin*. Lepelley's view is that this use developed from Norman constructions in the 17th century that alternated the prepositions *à* and *de* to express possession. This would indicate that yet another *Langues d'Oïl*

employed possessive *à* to express possession and could have contributed to this variant becoming commonplace in the language of the emigrants.

4.8.3 Doussinet and Barthélemy (1983)

Despite the remarkable percentage of emigrants from the Normandy region, a substantial 29.9% (Charbonneau and Robert, 1987) is the estimated total of immigrants that originated from the *Poitou*, *Saintonge* and *Aunis* regions of France. The relevant point to consider here is whether these important contributors to the numbers of French settlers in Canada exhibited use of possessive *à* in their regional dialects.

Doussinet and Barthélemy (1983) write about the grammar of *Saintongeais*, spoken half-way down the west of France in the *Saintonge*, *Aunis*, and *Angoumois* provinces. This dialect is also used in parts of neighbouring *départements* of the *Deux-sèvres*, *Vendée*, and *Gironde*. *Saintongeais* is thought to have significantly influenced Acadian and Cajun French dialects found in Canada and America.

Doussinet & Barthélemy's chapter on prepositions shows examples of the use of possessive *à* for what they refer to as the *rapport de parenté* (kinship relationship). He believes that it is also used, but to a much lesser extent, to indicate possession, although the preferred variant for expressing possession is *de*, which is reflected in *Saintongaise* literature. Indeed, he indicates that although the simple juxtaposition of proper nouns is common in *Saintongaise* grammar, (possibly the oldest type of construction) the use of possessive *à* and *de* is also common.

Interestingly, possession in the domain of toponymy is also covered i.e. the use of *à* with a place name, (e.g. *Le Cap à Labranche*) a subject that has not yet been mentioned in our review of the literature. Doussinet believes that this use of possessive *à* in toponymic constructions dates back to the Middle Ages.

4.8.4 Jagueneau (1991)

A more recent specialist study, Jagueneau (1991) is a syntactic analysis of the use of prepositions in both Canadian French and Poitevin dialect in the mid-west area of France. Jagueneau's article gives an inventory of the specific uses of prepositions in these varieties and her main conclusion is that there are strong similarities of usage between the two. Jagueneau considers the similarities to be

a reflection of the demographic links dating back to the first settlers coming from France in the 17th century.

Unlike the many dictionaries and grammars that were consulted for historical insights on the question of possessive *à* in Quebec French, Jagueneau's article clearly accepts the use of possessive *à* as a normal part of everyday spoken French.

One major difference between Jagueneau's work and the other sources discussed here is that it is a syntactic analysis of the possible similarities between certain dialectal uses of prepositions. Therefore, no specifically sociolinguistic information is included, yet the article is important nonetheless, as it makes a strong link of possessive *à* to other metropolitan dialects.

4.8.5 Gautier and Bossy (1993)

In the *Grammaire du Poitevin-Saintongeais*, Gautier and Bossy (1993) examine the grammatical system of this regional dialect²¹ and give the reader an insight into the differences between *Poitevin* and contemporary French usage. The section on prepositions makes it quite clear that possessive *à* is used to refer to both possession, *le chapea a Jhane* 'le chapeau de Jeanne', and kinship relationships, *le draule a la Pivetéle* 'l'enfant de madame Piveteau' (1993: 140). Interestingly, *de* is listed as only being used in possessive constructions with appositives, e.g. *Le draule de Clément* (l'enfant Clément).

4.9 Conclusion

From this overview of relevant literature concerning the use of the (POSS) variable, it is immediately apparent that the more historical Canadian French references had the same prescriptive perspective as some contemporary metropolitan sources. While Goosse and Grevisse (all editions) just describe the use of *à* and apply one of several style labels (*familier, populaire, archaïque*), other works maintain that this variant is incorrect and attempt to justify this, with or without the use of vague historical references (Wagner and Pinchon, 1962).

Among the more modern publications concerning Quebec French, including online resources, the views appear to be mixed. Meney (1999) gives what could be considered an authentic account of the current use of possessive

²¹ There is disagreement among some experts over what constitutes the *Saintongeais* or *Poitou-Saintongeais* dialect.

à at the time of writing his dictionary, which from his description implies this variant is widely used. However, the *Office Québécois de la langue française*, having decided not to treat this variant in their online pages, appears to discount its use as legitimate. Many Quebec uses, such as temporal à (e.g. *à tous les soirs*) do figure in their *banque de dépannage linguistique*²² but are often considered to be unacceptable.

²² Accessible at :- http://bdl.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/bdl/gabarit_bdl.asp?t1=1&id=3632

5.1 Linguistic constraints

5.1.1 Introduction

In previous studies, scholars have examined a number of factors to determine their influence on the production of possessive *à*. Indeed, Seutin (1975), Mougeon and Beniak (1982), Poplack *et al* (2011) and Poplack (2014) have all identified several linguistic constraints. Seutin (1975: 337) found three constraints on the use of possessive *à* in the *Ile aux Coudres* (IAC) French variety: the avoidance of hiatus with vowel-initial words; the specific human possessor, and the reference of the possessor. Building on Seutin's initial study, Mougeon and Beniak (1982) comprehensively examined all these factors in the spoken French of adolescents in Ontario (as discussed in section 4.7.5 in chapter 4), with the addition of sociolinguistic constraints. In addition, Miller and Dion (2009) and Poplack (2014) also discussed the influence of the aforementioned constraints of the (POSS) variable, however, they chose to examine how their proscription has affected their use in educational settings. Despite the pertinence of the reflections of Miller and Dion and Poplack, their analyses will only figure here for comparative purposes, as the present study is not concerned with the influence of language teaching on the use of the (POSS) variable.

Following Mougeon and Beniak's example (1982), we will proceed with a consideration of all linguistic constraints identified in previous studies, and the sociolinguistic factors of age, sex and level of education.

5.1.2 Editing the Excel token lists

For this study, 21 CFPQ sous-corpus (SC) files were searched both manually and with Word and Excel, in order to generate token lists of the (POSS) variable. Details of these procedures and the methods used to obtain quantified data from the raw results have been explained in chapter 3.

5.1.3 Factor groups

Using the results from the coding and formula calculations (described in chapter 3), we will now consider each factor group independently and examine its

possible effects on the use of the (POSS) variable. Once this evaluation has been completed, we will progress through to an analysis of certain combinations of the most significant factors in order to determine their combined effect.

5.1.3.1 Reference of the possessor

We start by examining the effect of the reference of the possessor on the production of the (POSS) variable. This is a factor that has been studied in previous work and found to have a strong influence, and this is a logical place to start the analysis due to the importance the possessor has in a possessive construction. Two categories of possessor were established: human and inanimate. The production rates according to the reference of the possessor are set out in table (2).

Table 2: (POSS) frequencies according to: Reference of Possessor

Reference of Possessor	N of <i>à</i>	N of <i>de</i>	% of <i>à</i>
Human	158	96	62.2%
Inanimate	2	4	33.3%
Totals	160	100	61.5%

From these results we can see that the overall rate of possessive *à* is quite high (61.5%), in contrast with Mougeon and Beniak's findings in informal Ontarian French (1982: 27). In fact, their results of 13% of possessive *à*, and 87% production of possessive *de*, show a strong contrast of information to this study. With human possessors, possessive *à* (62.2%) is the preferred variant. One explanation for this could come from the historical development from Vulgar Latin of both *à* and *de* to express possession. As we have discussed above, Brunot (1899; 1905; 1906, 1922), Väänänen (1956), and Foulet (1977) all present diverging opinions concerning the evolution of possessive constructions from Latin to Old French. Yet, despite its disputed beginnings in Vulgar Latin, possessive *à* took on more and more uses in Early Old French, one of which was the expression of possession with human possessors. Additionally, in Old and Middle French possessive *à* is well attested: Einhorn (1974: 106) lists many uses

of *a*²³, notably the possibility to express possession e.g. *filz sont a contes* (the count's sons). Väänänen (1956: 15) also gives an insight into the competition between *à* and *de* to express possession by human possessors, in his study of 14 Old French texts dating back to before the 13th Century. He cites 1,645 possessive constructions not using a preposition, 18 instances of possessive *de* and interestingly 120 examples of possessive *à*.

The few tokens of possessive *de* (18) in Väänänen's study are also all expressing a partitive relationship concerning body-parts, which supports Mougeon and Beniak's (1982: 20) claim that the original extension of *de* to possessive nominal complements was to express partitive constructions. Possessive *à* constructions of a non-partitive nature with human possessors have also been attested in Middle French, notably in the language used by Marot, Ronsard, Desportes, and Montaigne, from the early 16th Century to the early 17th century.

To add to this already widespread usage in Middle French, possessive *à* was present in many dialects still being spoken in the regions that contributed to the cohort of emigrants to Canada departing in the early 17th century. For example concerning the *Poitevin-Saintongeais* dialect, Doussinet (1983) Jagueneau (1991) and Gautier (1993) all mention the use of *a*²⁴ to express possession, although Doussinet believes that *a* was used less than *de*, but still possible. This presence of possessive *à* in Old French, Middle French, and some *Oïl* dialects helps account for its high frequency of use in the speech of the CFPQ informants.

Table (2) suggests a large contrast between the rates of use of possessive *à* with human possessors (62.2%) and inanimate possessors (33.3%), though this interpretation must remain tentative given the low number of inanimate tokens. Mougeon and Beniak's work showed 0 tokens of possessive *à* with inanimate possessors and only 7 tokens for possessive *de*. They conclude, from their absence of data, and the lack of historical or other synchronic evidence, that *à* has never introduced inanimate possessors, i.e. that it is barred from these contexts. If this was indeed the case, then we should expect a similar lack of tokens in our study, however, we have two tokens of possessive *à* being employed for inanimate possessors, as in example (23) and (24).

²³ In Old French *a* did not carry an accent.

²⁴ In Poitevin-Saintongeais there is no accent on *a*.

- (23) Je faisais de la motoneige là pis on on rencontrait des quatre-roues aux à
aux hôtels n'importe où là

I was doing some skidoo there, and then we bumped into some four by
fours belonging to the hotels just out there [SC1, P21, L1]

- (24) je vas tout je checke tout à les: les compagnies

I am going to check everything, everything belonging to the companies
[SC8, P77, L4]

Although examples (23) and (24) confirm the use of possessive *à* with inanimate possessors, such occurrences are rare which reflects diachronic evidence from Vulgar Latin, Old French, and Middle French use, where the tendency was to favour possessive *de* for inanimate possessors.

5.1.3.2 Specific Human Possessor constraint (known or not)

In line with Mougeon and Beniak's study (1982: 29) and Seutin's (1975: 337) comments, we next consider the effect of the Specific Human Possessor constraint on the production of the (POSS) variable. This factor group assesses whether knowing, or not knowing the possessor personally has an effect on the speaker's production of possessive *à*. The rates of use of both variants analysed according to the Specific Human Possessor constraint are displayed in Table (3).

Table 3: (POSS) frequencies according to: Specific Human Possessor

Specific Human possessor	N of <i>à</i>	N of <i>de</i>	% of <i>à</i>
Known personally to speaker	140	56	71.4%
Not known personally to speaker	20	44	31.3%
Totals	160	100	61.5%

We can see from these results that the higher relative frequency (71.4%) is when possessive *à* is employed for possessors known personally to the speaker. Seutin (1975) posited that speakers from the *Ile aux Coudres* (IAC) employed *de* more frequently when talking about people they did not know

personally, and the Specific Human Possessor constraint was investigated more fully in Mougeon and Beniak's study. Their results revealed that possessive *à* was used twice as often (20%) with possessors known personally to the speaker. We have found that the use of possessive *à* in the CFPQ is nearly 2.5 times more common than possessive *de* when the speaker knows the possessor personally.

This strong tendency highlights the possibility of a link between the informality of language used in these contexts and tendency to use the non-standard variant. Interestingly, Seutin (1975) found that IAC speakers were more likely to talk about people known personally to them using the variant *à* and a proper noun. This led him to consider the constraint to be governed by the use of a possessor's first name, indicating that the speaker is more closely acquainted to the possessor. Indeed, his view is that a level of informality is triggered by the use of a proper noun, which in turn generates the use of the variant *à*. Mougeon and Beniak (1982: 29) quantified their results in accordance with this definition of the constraint, and both studies suggest that the level of formality in the conversation plays a part in the production of possessive *à*. However, there are subtle differences in their conclusions. Seutin believes speakers referring to acquaintances using possessive *de* display an attempt to raise the level of formality in the conversation. Whereas Mougeon and Beniak (1982) did not identify this correlation, preferring to categorise the variants themselves as formal or informal.

These debated characteristics do not provide a conclusive explanation for the use of the (POSS) variable with the Specific Human Possessor contexts found in the CFPQ data. This is especially true because the CFPQ interviews and the informants' familiarity with each other both suggest informality, and yet possessive *de* is still employed by the speakers, albeit in very limited numbers and in specific contexts. Indeed, a difference is seen in constructions where speakers talk about a specific human possessor disconnected from their personal network (cf. (25) and (26) below). In these instances, they tend to use *de*, we will discuss the Cognitive Sociolinguistic theories which could explain these results later in section 5.3.

(25) [...] c'est pas le frère *de* Ben Affleck...

[SC 9, P41, L10]²⁵

²⁵ Ben Affleck is an American actor

(26) [...] genre le frère **de** John F...

[SC 9, P49, L16]²⁶

5.1.3.3 Inalienable possession

The concept of 'inalienable possession' has provoked considerable debate because typological studies have found substantial variation across languages in the nouns employed in inalienable constructions. Due to this diversity, it has been difficult to settle on a classification of inalienably possessable nouns (cf. Heine (1997)). Yet, as Hollmann (2007: 9) suggests it is now thought to be possible to show what type of nouns are most likely to be used in these constructions. Therefore, certain scholars, notably Haiman (1985: 136); Seiler (1983: 13) and Chappell and McGregor (1996: 26) suggest that inalienable nouns can now be categorised, and Nichols (1988: 572; 1992: 160) has established a typological hierarchy (27). This hierarchy will serve as the basis for our analysis.

(27) The Inalienability hierarchy

Body parts and/or kinship terms >(e.g. my hair/ his brother) part-whole >
(e.g. The tree's branches) spatial relations (e.g. The car's interior)>
culturally based possessed items (e.g. age expressions in French such
as J'ai vingt ans)> other

In agreement with Hollmann (2007: 10) we believe that this inalienability hierarchy caters for the extremely diverse variation in the type of nouns found across languages in inalienably possessive constructions. In addition, with the first category jointly occupied by both body-parts and kinship terms, this juxtaposition of inalienable nouns appears to facilitate language variation. And it is a type of variation often expressed not only within a language, but also between varieties of the same language.

We categorised the noun types found in the CFPQ with the (POSS) variable using Nichols' (1988: 572; 1992: 160) typological inalienability hierarchy, which enabled us to establish separate groups for quantification. However, we did not use either the part-whole category or the spatial relations category in our quantification, the part-whole category is either included in the body parts

²⁶ The speaker is referring to John F. Kennedy, President of the USA from 1961 to 1963.

category, or expressed categorically by the preposition *de*. The concept of spatial relations has been discussed in chapter 2, and therefore will not be included as a separate category here for the reasons stated previously. The ‘possessed item’ quantification designates any ownership relationship, in this category we included any objects such as a car, but not culturally based ownership such as age. The group ‘other’ has permitted us to include quantification of abstract nouns that are typically perceived as belonging to a possessor, often a personal attribute, or a physical or mental state or characteristic (e.g. *l’opinion de Jacques, l’âge de Sophie*). The results of this categorisation are set out in table (4).

Table 4: (POSS) frequencies according to: Type of Possessed Noun

Inalienable possession constraint	N of <i>à</i>	N of <i>de</i>	% of <i>à</i>
Kinship nouns	77	36	68.1%
‘Possessed item’ nouns	56	32	63.6%
‘Other’ (abstract) nouns	19	23	45.2%
Body-part nouns	8	9	47.1%
Totals	160	100	

Mougeon and Beniak (1982: 30) conducted a similar classification under the heading ‘possessive relationship’. Interestingly, in all their categories possessive *de* was the preferred variant, and possessive *à* appeared to be equally distributed in the various categories. Conversely, we have found considerably higher frequencies of possessive *à* across the four types of inalienable classification, with the highest frequency being with the expression of kinship relationships (68.1%).

Unfortunately, a shortage of data prevented Mougeon and Beniak pronouncing on whether possessive *à* can be used for marking inalienable possession with human possessors. From our CFPQ data we are able to confirm the use of possessive *à* for inalienable possession constructions with body-parts (cf. examples (28), (29) and (30) below)

(28) [...] pis elle s’est accotée la tête sur le bras *à* Léo [SC 5, P13, L8]

(29) [...] quand Yan était dans le ventre à Raphaëlle [SC 13, P92, L2]

(30) [...] elle sait qu'il y a un petit bébé dans dans dans le ventre à maman [SC 5, P10, L14]

An important observation is that although these constructions are present in our data, the overall token numbers of possessive *à* with body-part nouns is small (8), one less than with possessive *de*. However, despite this nearly even distribution, a more in-depth examination of these tokens revealed an interesting characteristic similar to that found with the Specific Human Possessor constraint in the previous section. Indeed, possessive *à* here was predominantly (7/8 tokens) used when the speaker knew the possessor of the body-part personally. On the other hand, possessive *de* was the only variant used (9/9) when the possessor was not known personally to the speaker. Once again this highlights a possible connection with the conceptual construal of the relationship that the speaker has with the possessor.

5.1.3.4 The avoidance of hiatus constraint

Let us now move on to examine our data for evidence of a phonological constraint on the production of the (POSS) variable: the avoidance of hiatus. This was identified by both Seutin (1975: 337) and Mougeon and Beniak (1982: 30). Seutin found that the *Ile aux Coudres* (IAC) variety employed *d'* for words beginning with an *a*, and *d'* was generally used for words starting with any other vowel. Seutin also remarked on the possibility that the IAC inhabitants were conscious of certain levels of language register, and made distinctions between *à* and *de* when the noun following the preposition was not a proper noun. The results from our quantification of vowel-initial and consonant-initial words with the (POSS) variable are set out in table (5).

Table 5: (POSS) frequencies according to: Phonological Context

Following segment	N of à	N of <i>de</i>	% of à
Vowel	26	4	86.7%
Consonant	134	97	58.0%
Totals	160	101 ²⁷	61.3%

It is noteworthy that, despite a tendency in French phonology to avoid hiatuses, and contrary to both previous studies (Mougeon and Beniak & Seutin), the speakers of the CFPQ are not using *de* more in pre-vocalic contexts. The frequency of possessive *à* produced with vowel-initial words is very high (86.7%). Mougeon and Beniak's study found no examples of possessive *à* with vowel-initial words, but could not conclude that the avoidance of the hiatus was an important constraint. They also found that in most of their 15 examples of possessive *de* before vowel-initial words, the possessor was an indefinite person or someone not known personally to the speaker. Mougeon and Beniak (1982: 35) note that hiatuses are often phonetically fused with the following vowel in informal Canadian French, creating one lengthened vowel [a:] e.g. *le frère à Amable* [ləfrɛra:mab] 'Amable's brother'. Initially, it is possible to think that this could have posed a problem for our quantification, yet if the speaker fused the vowels in a possessive *à* construction, then no possessive *de* would be transcribed, indicating that possessive *à* was used.

The high frequency of use of possessive *à* in pre-vocalic contexts might be explained by the wish to avoid the hiatus. It is certain that from our results we cannot deduce that possessive *à* is barred by vowel-initial words, on the contrary its rate of use would even suggest that this linguistic context has, over time become more favourable to the use of possessive *à* because of the vocalic fusion tendency in this language variety. Baronian (2006: 36) believes that a new vowel /a:/ should now be admitted into Quebec French (QF) due to the history of vowel fusion, which has augmented since English borrowings with long vowels started penetrating Quebec French. It would, therefore, follow that the changing rate of

²⁷ The extra token here is due to an occurrence of self-correction.

vocalic fusion in Quebec French might influence the choice of preposition used with vowel-initial words.

Interestingly, the number of occurrences of possessive *de* before vowel-initial words (4) is extremely low in relation to possessive *à*. Moreover, in 2 out of the 4 examples of *de* the following vowel initial word was *une*. This would suggest, in line with Mougeon and Beniak’s conclusion (1982: 30), that indefinite articles (i.e. an indefinite possessor identity) do not present a context particularly conducive to the use of possessive *à*. Yet, in both our examples the indefinite possessor is known to the person, suggesting there is another reason for the avoidance of the use of possessive *à*.

5.2 Interpersonal Variation

We will now turn to investigating our results regarding interpersonal variation. As we discussed in chapter 3, the CFPQ website provides comprehensive information regarding the speakers’ age, socio-professional status and level of education, enabling a consideration of several sociolinguistic factors relevant to this study. As stated previously, we will not examine the data based on socio-professional information here. The reasons for this decision are complex and have been explained in detail in chapter 3. We will, however, proceed with a consideration of the sociolinguistic factors of gender, age, and level of education.

5.2.1 Global results for gender and age

To begin this section, it is necessary to consider the overall results for the (POSS) variable for gender. In table 6 we have detailed the number of tokens for both males and females and the relative frequencies of the variants *à* and *de*.

Table 6: (POSS) frequencies according to: Gender

Gender	N of <i>à</i>	N of <i>de</i>	% of <i>à</i>
Females	101	56	64.3%
Males	59	44	57.3%
Totals	160	100	62.5%

The main interpretation of this table is that males use possessive *à* moderately less than females, with a relative frequency of 57.3% as opposed to 64.3% for females. However, when we consider table 7 which refers to the age of all the speakers (both males and females), we find a much more interesting difference in use. Indeed, there is more than a 20% difference in relative frequencies between age groups 1 (15-29) and 2 (30-65), with age group 3 (66-95).

Table 7: (POSS) frequencies according to: Life-stage (Males and Females)

Life-stage for both Males and Females	N of <i>à</i>	N of <i>de</i>	% of <i>à</i>
15 - 29	51	37	58.0%
30 - 65	85	58	59.4%
66 - 95	24	5	82.8%
Totals	160	100	61.5%

5.2.2 Life-stages and Female language style

The analyses so far have indicated that possessive *à* is constrained by certain factors, including the identity of the possessor, and the type of noun possessed. Here we have separated our data into life-stage groups to determine if the sex and age of the speaker have an effect on its use. The three groups have been chosen because they represent an individual's progression through three life-stages: group 1 (15-29) Adolescence/Early adult life, group 2 (30-65) Adult professional and family life, and group 3 (66-95) Retired/Elderly life. As Eckert (1989: 246) explains, it is important to ensure any division of speakers into age groups also pays attention to the life stages that can make age socially significant. Several notable sociolinguistic studies have included an analysis of variables via a consideration of speakers' life-stages (Labov (1972a), (Eckert (1988) and Wagner and Sankoff (2011). Table (5) shows the relative frequency of possessive *à* production for the three age groups of female speakers in this study.

Table 8: (POSS) frequencies for Females according to: Life-stage^{1st Group}

Life-stage	N of <i>à</i>	N of <i>de</i>	% of <i>à</i>
Females aged 15 - 29	31	20	60.8%
Females aged 30 - 65	57	33	63.3%
Females aged 66 - 95	13	3	81.3%
Totals	101	56	64.3%

Our results appear to confirm that age has a considerable effect on the use of possessive *à*, with the older age group exhibiting an 81.3% relative frequency. This presents a substantial difference from groups 1 and 2. Some previous studies have shown that less prestigious variants are employed more often in younger and older age groups, with prestige variants being used more frequently by middle aged speakers, which is the classic age-grading pattern cf. (Downes, 1998: 224). Here, however, possessive *à* is more dominant in the older age group, and groups 1 and 2 are exhibiting lower and very similar relative frequencies. Yet, before we see this result as indicative of older females' speech, it is necessary to look at the data in more detail. An important element that must be taken into consideration is that group 3 has a very small number of interviews currently available, indeed, from 21 *sous-corpus* (SC) examined, only 14 speakers fall into this age category, 6 of whom are females. This is in stark contrast to groups 1 and 2, which have 16 and 19 female speakers respectively as can be seen in table (9)

Table 9: First grouping of female speakers

Group	Age	Number of speakers
1	15-29	16
2	30-65	19
3	66-95	6

In addition, we can see from table (8) that the overall token count for this group is also low (16), which is a practical complication discussed by Milroy and Gordon (2003: 164-165). If there are fewer than 10 tokens then the results are more likely

to be reflecting random fluctuation, whereas when the token count goes above 10, the sample can be considered to be moving towards a 90 per cent compliance with the predicted norm (Milroy and Gordon, 2003: 164). From his work on final stop deletion Guy (1980) recommends that scholars should aim to have a minimum of 30 tokens per variable, in order to lessen the risks of random fluctuation. Therefore, we must be cautious when interpreting the findings for group 3. These results may not be showing a reliable picture of possessive à use for this life-stage group of female speakers.

Over the last 10 years the normal retirement age for women in Quebec has been decreasing, with an average age of 59.5 in 2006 according to the *Régie des rentes du Québec*²⁸. This characteristic of women’s retirement practices in Quebec justifies a modification in the life-stage groupings we employ. For this reason, and in order to have a larger number of speakers in the oldest group, we brought down the cut off age to 60 for group 2, and increased the starting age for group 3 to 61. This produced a more even spread of *sous-corpus* across the life-stages, with 8 SC in group 1, 6 SC plus 2 informants in group 2, and 5 SC in group 3. The new distribution of female speakers is layed out in table (10) below, with the relevant frequencies for the new groupings detailed in table (11).

Table 10: Second grouping of female speakers

Group	Age	Number of speakers
1	15-29	16
2	30-60	16
3	61-95	9

²⁸ Accessible at http://www.rrq.gouv.qc.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/www.rrq.gouv.qc/Francais/publications/regime_rentes/retraite/travail_retraite.pdf

Table 11: (POSS) frequencies for Females according to: Life-stage^{2nd Group}

Life-stage (cf. p34 for changes)	N of à	N of de	% of à
Females aged 15 - 29	31	20	60.8%
Females aged 30 - 60	54	26	67.5%
Females aged 61 - 95	16	10	61.5%
Totals	101	56	64.3%

Here the oldest group now has 26 tokens of the variable, rather than (16) meaning we can have more confidence in the relative frequency produced. We can see that in contrast to table (8), there is a slightly higher relative frequency for group 2 (67.5%). It seems that, in this age group, speakers may have a tendency to employ possessive à more frequently than the younger and older generations. However, the differences are relatively slight, given the fairly modest number of tokens. At this stage in life speakers are believed to adhere to more conservative language norms, as a person's professional and personal life (marriage and child-rearing) are thought to have a vernacular-eroding effect on speech (Coveney, 2002: 85). However, the higher production of possessive à by the CFPQ females in this age range is not in line with these expectations; in fact we note the opposite effect. Furthermore, there is an increase of 6.7% in use from the adolescent/early adult life-stage group (15-29), which cannot be explained by the small difference in size between the two *sous-corpus*. Normally we would expect to see speakers during this life-stage exhibiting these patterns, but as it is not the case, the differences could be a reflection of the type of social networks these female speakers have established. In a review of language and networks, Milroy (2001) reveals that generally more vernacular speech is produced by members of the community that have the strongest network ties, although this is also influenced by the interaction of variables such as age and gender.

Compared to the first grouping, in the older life-stage group the relative frequency has fallen by nearly 20%. An immediate observation is that the three speakers that have moved from group 2 to group 3 have altered our results considerably. Looking in more detail at the data, it is speaker N (62) from *sous-*

corpus 12, and A (63) and An (65) from *sous-corpus* 20 that have moved groups. When we look at these speakers' production of the (POSS) variable, it is only speakers N and A that have contributed to the changes we have witnessed. Moreover, contrary to what we initially hypothesised, it is their greater use of possessive *de* that has had an impact on our results. When we look at the token counts for the two groups, before the changes, group 2 had a token count of 57 for possessive *à* and 33 for possessive *de*. After the grouping changes were applied, the possessive *à* token count went down by only 3 and the possessive *de* token count went up by 7. Group 3 has gained 7 possessive *de* tokens, and this is why we see the large reduction from 81.3% relative frequency of possessive *à* to 61.5% in group 3. It will be interesting to explore if other factors such as the speakers' level of education can shed light on these changes.

5.2.3 Life-stages and Male language style

Following on from the analysis of the effects of the constraints of life-stage with the female CFPQ informants, we now go on to examine the data for the parallel male informants. As with the first analyses of the female informants' data we divided the speakers into three life-stage groups: adolescence/early adult life, adult life, and retirement. The results, with our initial life-stage groupings, are set out in table (12), with the number of speakers per age group detailed in table (13).

Table 12: (POSS) frequencies for Males according to: Life-stage ^{1st Group}

Life-stage	N of <i>à</i>	N of <i>de</i>	% of <i>à</i>
Males aged 15 - 29	20	17	54.1%
Males aged 30 - 65	28	25	52.8%
Males aged 66 - 95	11	2	84.6%
Totals	59	44	57.3%

Table 13: First grouping of male speakers

Group	Males 1 st grouping	Number of speakers
1	15-29	13
2	30-65	13
3	66-95	6

What is obvious from the relative frequencies in table (12) is that both male groups 1 and 2 are displaying lower production rates of possessive à compared to the same female life-stage groups. This would suggest again that gender is a relevant factor in the use of this variant. It is possible that the males' speech in these two groups was affected by the need to speak in a more prestigious manner due to professional influences, or perhaps by a greater influence on them of the education system

When we consider the relative frequency for possessive à production in the 3rd life-stage group, we see considerable use of possessive à (84.6%). This could be explained by the tendency for older speakers to revert to using less prestigious variants after retirement from professional activity. Although, once again, as with the same grouping of female speakers, we must exercise caution in offering explanations for these patterns, due to the small number of tokens produced. The token count for group 3 is very low (9) meaning that we are confronted with a similar difficulty as before. This total is too small to produce a reliable relative frequency, so to increase the number of tokens in group 3 we have performed the same alterations as with the female informant groups. Therefore, we lowered the cut-off age for group 2 to 60 and lowered the starting age for group 3 to 61. The tendency regarding the retirement age of male Quebecers is very similar to that of women, with the average in 2006 being 59.9 years²⁹. Therefore, we can safely say that the new life-stage groupings are more in line with the possible influences that Quebec society might have on speakers' language. The adjusted life-stage groups and relative frequencies are displayed

²⁹See: http://www.rrq.gouv.qc.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/www.rrq.gouv.qc/Francais/publications/regime_rentes/retraite/travail_retraite.pdf

in table (14), and we can see from table (15) that the groups are more evenly distributed with regards to the number of speakers per age group.

Table 14: (POSS) frequencies for Males according to: Life-stage^{2nd Group}

Sex and life-stage constraints		N of <i>à</i>	N of <i>de</i>	% of <i>à</i>
Males aged	15- 29	20	17	54.1%
Males aged	30 - 60	20	23	46.5%
Males aged	61 - 95	19	4	82.6%
Totals		59	44	57.3%

Interestingly, with the revised groupings the relative frequency for group 2 has gone down by 6.3% taking it to a lower score than the younger life-stage group. This lower frequency is consistent with what we would expect to find for this age of male speakers, as many of them are more likely to be engaged in contexts requiring more use of standard variants. Once again this change in relative frequency has been brought about by the transfer of three speakers from group 2 to group 3. When we examine this in more detail, we are able to isolate the three speakers and examine their variable production to understand these changes. Table (15) shows the redistribution of the speakers after the grouping changes have been implemented.

Table 15: Second grouping of male speakers

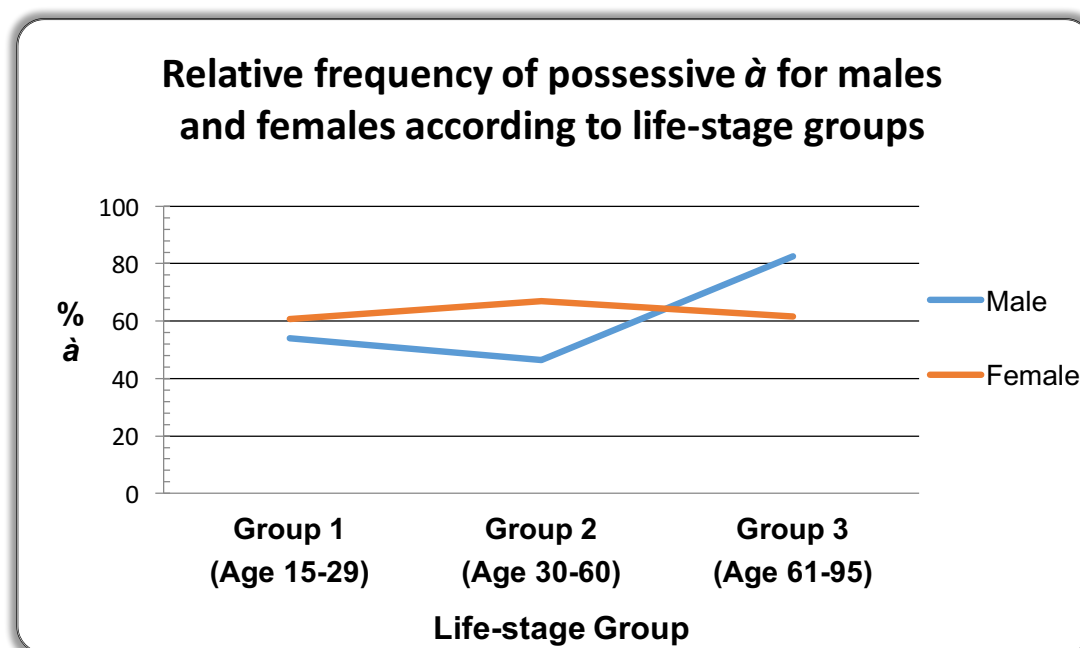
Group	Males 2 nd grouping	Number of speakers
1	15-29	13
2	30-60	10
3	61-95	9

The total number of speakers for group 3 is now 9 and their token count is slightly closer to the recommended minimum of 30, with 23 tokens overall for the (POSS) variable instead of 13 with the previous groupings. When we compare

the scores according to gender for this life-stage group, there is an interesting observation: contrary to the corresponding female group, the males do not exhibit a large reduction in the use of possessive *à*. Indeed, the difference between the two relative frequencies is only 2%. This could be due to the fact that the speakers in this life-stage age are all pensioners and know each other extremely well: in these situations, the majority variant (here possessive *à*) might be the result of speech accommodation between family members or friends that have known each other and/or lived together for a considerable length of time. Examining the changes in more detail, we see there are three 'extra'³⁰ speakers in group 3; yet this does not have a substantial effect on the relative frequency. Indeed, despite the fact three speakers have transferred from group 2 to group 3 among both males and females, the scores have not been affected in the same way. For the females' relative frequencies, we observed a reduction of 19.8% for group 3. For the male group 3, we can see that the token count for possessive *de* has only gone up by 2, whereas possessive *à* is showing an increase from 11 to 19 tokens. The relative frequency stays very comparable for possessive *à* and there is a 6.3% reduction in use for group 2. These results suggest that retired male speakers use this variant more than retired female speakers. We know that all the male speakers in this life-stage are retired except one, so it will be interesting to see if a link can be established with these speakers' level of education, compared to the same cohort of female speakers. Using these results we wanted to determine if there was evidence of language change. Therefore, we have drawn up a line graph in figure (15) to establish a visual representation of the use of possessive *à* for analysis.

³⁰ Three speakers have changed groups, giving group 3 three more speakers for quantification.

Figure 15: Relative frequency for possessive à by gender and life-stage.



With reference to life-stage groups, there are two different patterns for change, the expected shape for an idealised pattern of age-grading is a U or V shaped curve. This often shows that use of non-standard variants peaks during adolescence when, according to Holmes (1992: 184) there is more peer group pressure to flout society's norms (which can also be seen again during retirement). Due to professional and societal influences, such as parenting, middle-aged speakers are thought to follow community norms more closely, and non-standard features are employed less. Figure (15) does not reflect this pattern for the female CFPQ speakers, as our data does not exhibit a U or V shaped curve. As table (8) also shows, the female speakers have exhibited more use of the non-standard variant à during the group 2 life-stage, which indicates that they are not adhering to standard norms brought on by professional and societal pressures. For the male speakers we can say that there may be a change in progress away from non-standard à (cf. The pattern for the Norwich (ng) variable: (Chambers and Trudgill, 1980: 91))

5.2.4 Level of education

Let us now consider if there is a correlation with the speakers' level of education and the use of possessive à. We have divided the CFPQ informants into 5 groups of level of education attained: *Primaire, Secondaire, Cégep, Université 1er cycle,*

and *Université 2ème cycle*. The relative frequencies for possessive *à* according to education level are shown in Table (16).

Table 16: (POSS) frequencies according to: Level of Education

Level of education	N of <i>à</i>	N of <i>de</i>	% of <i>à</i>
Primaire	20	3	87.0%
Secondaire	78	29	72.9%
Cégep	30	28	51.7%
Université 1er cycle	32	32	50.0%
Université 2eme cycle	0	8	0%
Totals	160	100	61.5%

Clear differences in relative frequency between the levels of education are apparent from this table, for example a high score for possessive *à* (87%) is shown by the *Primaire* subgroup of speakers, which suggests that the level of education has a major effect on the production of this variant. Once again we are confronted with the issue of low token counts, which means our conclusions must be tentative. In addition, we must not dismiss the interaction with age: the *Primaire* speakers are also the oldest speakers in the corpus. It was not until 1943 that education laws in Quebec made schooling obligatory to the age of 14, which explains why many of the older speakers left school at the end of their primary education. It would follow that the speakers' level of education influences their language use due partly to the lower level of language instruction they received, and perhaps due to the fact that the influence of schooling diminishes over time. Therefore, we must be wary when interpreting these figures on the basis of education alone.

Speakers that have completed only *Secondaire* education exhibit the next highest relative frequency of possessive *à* (72.9%). It is well known that speakers' language use is heavily influenced by their social networks, and younger speakers have a greater tendency to adhere less to standard variants. Yet, here it is imperative to be cautious because only a small number (9) of the *Secondaire* subgroup of speakers is still in full-time education, with the remaining speakers (20) already in professional posts or even retired.

The *Université 2ème cycle* group produced no tokens of possessive *à*, and only 8 of *de*. This is not sufficient to produce reliable percentages. In addition, there are no tokens produced by female speakers from this education subgroup, which is not surprising as there are only 3 speakers who attained this level of education, 2 females, and a male. The entire token count for possessive *de* for the *Université 2ème cycle* education level can be attributed to one speaker, in *sous-corpus* 13. Is it the level of education or age that is exerting the greatest effect on the use of possessive *à*? Taking the results at face value, it seems that the level of education has the greater influence, since the range of the relative frequencies for those groupings (i.e. the difference between the highest and the lowest scores) is considerably greater than the range for the age groups. The total number of tokens produced by male and female speakers per level of education attained is detailed in table (17).

Table 17: Number of tokens produced by males and females

Level of Education	N of tokens produced by males	N of tokens produced by females	Total
Primaire	9	14	23
Secondaire	39	68	107
Cégep	17	41	58
Université 1er cycle	30	34	64
Université 2ème cycle	8	0	8
Total	103	157	260

Interestingly, research on Quebec French has shown a noteworthy tendency to shift away from the local vernacular over the past few decades, which might explain the differences between age group 3 male speakers and the younger males. In the case of Montreal (r), changes have been documented as either incremental or dramatic over the course of a lifetime (cf. Clermont and Cedergren (1979), Sankoff and Blondeau (2007) and Blondeau (2001)). Despite these studies pertaining to a phonological variable, such a trend could also be being expressed with the grammatical variable (POSS).

5.2.5 Variant clustering

While examining the transcripts of the spoken data from the CFPQ we wanted to ascertain if the (POSS) variants were frequently co-occurring within passages of discourse. Sankoff and Laberge (1978: 119) investigated the idea that, although successive co-occurrences of a variable had traditionally been considered binomial trials, important relationships between these occurrences could be revealed depending on the nature of the syntagmatic distance between them. They identified four types of proximity that categorised the occurrences; embedding-constrained; sequence-constrained; unconstrained and hesitation. The study mainly examines the switching rates for constrained occurrences, and does not take into account the clustering and switching of unconstrained variants. In our study, after analysing the transcripts, our findings show that the (POSS) variable occurs mainly in a specific manner that can be classified, in Sankoff and Laberge's (1978: 121) terms, as 'unconstrained'. This term designates two successive occurrences of the same variable that cannot be classified under one of the three other types due to the great distance between them.

Initially our thoughts were that the production of the (POSS) variable in the CFPQ data was topic specific and to a certain extent this is the case. However, this led to the question of whether we would perceive clustering of the (POSS) variable with possessors known to the speaker, vowel-initial words or alienable possession. After examination of the individual occurrences of variants in each *sous-corpus* we conclude that the CFPQ data present no discernible clustering of variant within these discourse contexts. The co-occurrence of more than two successive tokens of the same variant is rare, and, in these cases the same speaker often produces the occurrences. However, it is also common for another interlocutor in the group to repeat the first instance of a variant in the form of a question with raised intonation, or simply repeat the variant as a declarative.

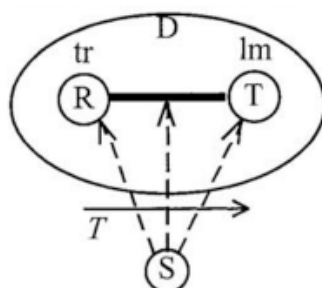
5.3 Cognitive Sociolinguistic considerations

In this study, we have chosen to incorporate the consideration of Cognitive Linguistic theories to complement our Sociolinguistic reflections, thus giving rise to a combined Cognitive Sociolinguistic approach. In chapter 2, we briefly outlined Langacker's reference point theory, here we will look into this in more detail with regards to the (POSS) variable, and the alternating variants *à* and *de* to express possession. Indeed, it is possible that this theory can inform us on the

choices made by speakers when using these variants. For example, there is evidence in the CFPQ interview data to suggest that the use of possessive *à* in inanimate possessor constructions could be the result of speakers extending the ‘dominion’³¹ of possessive situations. Reiterating the idea behind Langacker’s reference point theory (Langacker 1993a; 1995b; Taylor 1996), in a schematic description of possessive expressions, the reference point allows the conceptualiser to mentally access a target, due to a conscious connection between the reference point (R) and the subject of conception (S). That is to say the subject of conception is able to evoke (R) as a means of accessing, or identifying the target (T), which is sketched out in Langacker’s representation (cf. figure 16).

Figure 16: Langacker's possessive schema

(Reproduced from Langacker, 2006: 26)



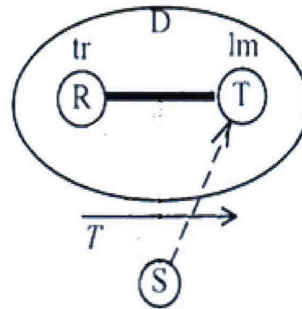
In the CFPQ data, there are 140 tokens of possessive *à* for possessors known personally to the speaker, and only 20 tokens of possessive *de* when the possessor is not known personally. In our opinion, this would indicate that in a straightforward case of inalienable possession, where the possessor is known to the speaker (cf. example 31 below), there is no need for the subject of conception (the speaker) to evoke a reference point, because they do not have difficulty mentally accessing or identifying the target. This is exemplified in a modified version of figure 16 (figure 17 below), which demonstrates the path from subject of conception to target. It shows there is only one path going directly from the subject of conception to the target, and the reference point is not required, therefore the path travelling from the subject of conception to the target via the reference point is no longer cognitively evoked by the speaker.

³¹ More details on the ‘dominion’ can be found in Chapter 2.

Figure 17: Adaptation of Langacker's possessive schema

(Reproduced and adapted from Langacker, 2006: 26)

(31) Le frère à ma copine.

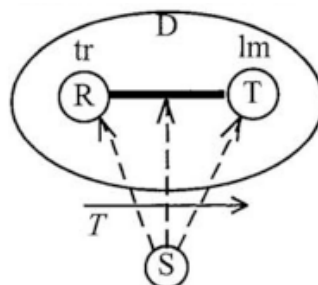


However, in the case of the CFPQ data when the subject of conception (the speaker) thinks about a target (the person) that is less connected to them in their consciousness, it appears that a reference point is needed, and thus evoked. This gives the subject of conception better access to identify and connect to the target, but it initiates a two-step system of access. Which, in our opinion produces the need for a change in variant i.e. the linguistic sign that shows the altered cognitive path taken by the speaker to access the target. Thus, in the case of example (32) the mental distance between the subject of conception and the target is greater, therefore necessitating the use of a reference point.

Figure 18: Langacker's possessive schema serving as the reference point schema in possessive constructions

(Reproduced from Langacker, 2006: 26)

(32) Tu tonds la pelouse *de* la voisine.



In this example, in order to mentally access the target, (*la pelouse*) the subject of conception evokes the reference point, which here is the person who owns/possesses the target. By evoking the reference point, the subject of conception can then identify the target. In cognitive terms this is a less direct mental exercise than if the target was known personally to the subject of conception (i.e. the speaker).

CHAPTER 6 The (ANTE) and (POST) variables: The variants and their treatment in the linguistic literature

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will define four variables, (ANTE-Loc), (ANTE-Temp), (POST-Loc), (POST-Temp), their variants, and their variable contexts. In these abbreviations, 'ANTE' and 'POST' represent the concepts 'before' and 'after', while 'Loc' and 'Temp' specify whether the sense is locative or temporal. The variant circumscription is followed by an overview of our factor coding process, and a discussion of the locative and temporal uses of these variants. This sets out the preparatory work that enabled the analysis of linguistic constraints in chapter 7. We follow with a review of the variants in standard French, regional French, and Quebec French reference works. A consideration of literature discussing regional and dialectal varieties is motivated by the origins of Quebec French previously described in chapter 3. Finally, the semantic distinctions between Metropolitan and Quebec French varieties is discussed in order to shed light on the language use found in the CFPQ data.

6.2 Defining the variables and their variants

In Standard French (SF) and Metropolitan French (MF) the prepositions *devant* and *derrière* are employed to locate a person, building, object or place, in relation to another: e.g. *Sam est derrière la voiture*. However, in Quebec French these prepositions are less frequently used locatively. Indeed, *devant* and *derrière* have dialectal or non-standard equivalents in Quebec French, which are used to refer to locative and temporal relations. Therefore, we set out to determine the variants used in place of *devant* and *derrière*, and their frequency and contexts of use. As far as we know, these variables have not been the object of any sociolinguistic study to date, and it is important to clarify at this point that all four variables will be analysed in this chapter due to the similarities in their functions.

The following circumscription of variables has emerged from data analysis of 21 transcribed interviews made available online via the CFPQ website, of

which details have been given in chapter 3. This data analysis work revealed the functional uses of certain prepositions in Quebec French that express space and time relations. Examples of these prepositions have been examined adhering to Labov's principle of accountability which revealed that non-standard (ANTE) and (POST) variants were employed in contexts that were not only variable, but also functionally parallel (Tagliamonte, 2012: 10). The variables and their variants are listed below, together with examples from the corpus.

6.2.1 The (ANTE-Loc) variable

Table 18: The (ANTE-Loc) variable and its variants

Variable	Variants
(ANTE-Loc)	<i>en avant</i> ^{locative} <i>en avant de</i> ^{locative} <i>à l'avant</i> ^{locative} <i>devant</i> ^{locative}

(33) ***en avant***^{locative}

SO : le pilote est **en avant** (en posant sa main droite sur la table) pis toi t'es assis en arrière (en posant sa main gauche derrière sa main droite)

'The pilot is in front, and you, you're sat behind' [SC7, P62, L15]

(34) ***en avant de***^{locative}

A : ils font faire le le besoin du chien **EN [2AVANT** de la maison as-tu déjà vu ça toi (en cognant à quelques reprises sur la table, comme pour montrer sa désapprobation)

'They let the dog do its business in front of the house, have you ever seen that?'

[SC5, P16, L7]

(35) ***à l'avant***^{locative}

S : [2non c'est une salle de spectacles là

M : ah / c'est pas un ah moi j'ai toujours pensé [1c'était un club

S : [1on voit le: (3") il y a un théâtre (.) en avant

<dim<il y a un:>>

M : <p<ah />>

S : [1<pp<ah oui>> (en hochant la tête affirmativement)

J : [1il y a une scène (.) à l'avant

'J: There's a stage at the front '

[SC12, P62, L4-10]

(36) **devant**^{locative}

J : la grosse dehors **devant** (en ouvrant sa main devant elle comme pour désigner l'endroit dont elle parle) (.) l'école (1,1") t'as jamais vu des photos de même/ (en hochant la tête négativement) (0:03:08.8)

'The fat one outside, in front of the school, you've never seen photos like it'

[SC1, P78, L18]

6.2.2 The (ANTE-Temp) variable

Table 19: The (ANTE-Temp) variable and its variants

Variable	Variants
(ANTE-Temp)	<i>en avant</i> ^{temporal}
	<i>en avant de</i> ^{temporal}
	<i>avant</i> ^{temporal}
	<i>devant</i> ^{temporal}

(37) **en avant**^{temporal}

S : pis: il est il est (.) contremaître là (en agitant sa main gauche, comme s'il n'était pas certain) mais c'est parce que lui ç- ça ça ç- c'est sûr ça doit être fatigant un peu (.) parce qu'il y avait peut-être des hommes ou des femmes plus âgés que lui qui auraient pu aspirer à ce type de de [3de poste-là (.) pis lui il a passé **en avant** par rapport qu'il est il est

'[...] So he got further ahead, because of what he is' [SC5, P91, L11]

(38) **en avant de** ^{temporal}

M : ce que le gars disait ce qui est vrai que dans la pl- la plupart des des places c'est que (.) la qualité (.) la quantité passe **en avant de** la qualité c'est ça qu'il disait

'[...] quality, quantity comes before quality, that's what he was saying'

[SC5, P53, L8]

(39) **avant** ^{temporal}

L : (il hausse les épaules, en signe d'ignorance) (.) il avait emmené son camion là (inaud.) (.) à [1deux jours **avant** (.) deux jours avant pis là après ça (.) il est allé rechercher son camion (2.5") parce que ç'est ça qu'il s'est acheté là un Nissan là hein /

'He brought his truck there two days earlier, two days before, then after that he went back to get his truck because he bought himself a Nissan'

[SC5, P90, L1]

(40) **devant** ^{temporal}

S : fait que/ (.) elle a quand même un bel avenir **devant** elle [12là t'sais c'est des belles jobs hein/

'Still, she has a bright future ahead of her you know those are good jobs at that place'

[SC15, P38, L 10]

6.2.3 The (POST-Loc) variable

Table 20: The (POST-Loc) variable and its variants

Variable	Variants
(POST-Loc)	<i>en arrière</i> ^{locative}
	<i>en arrière de</i> ^{locative}
	<i>à l'arrière</i> ^{locative}
	<i>derrière</i> ^{locative}

(41) **en arrière** ^{locative}

H : [2c'est la plus vieille taverne ça &<581495>

E : oui (.) [1la plus vieille

H : [1ben à Sherbrooke

E : ouin &<582951>

N : non mais le (.) ce coin-là là ils étaient censés là (.) t'sais il y avait un gymnase **en arrière** anciennement là

G : oui (.) [1oui oui sur la petite rue là

'N: No, but the, that area there, they were supposed to, you know there used to be a gymnasium behind there, previously'

[SC8, P62, L20-24]

(42) **en arrière de** ^{locative}

R : à Sainte-Marguerite (2.4") t'sais **en arrière de**: l'église Sainte-Marguerite là

'At Saint Marguerite, you know, behind the Saint Marguerite church there'

[SC4, P50, L7-11]

(43) **à l'arrière** ^{locative}

A : mon bras était rendu plus **à l'arrière** (en plaçant son bras en arrière comme pour mimer la position dont elle parle)

R : plus **à l'arrière**

'A : My arm was pushed further back'

'R : further back'

[SC20,P33, L17-19]

(44) **derrière** ^{locative}

S : elle s'est jamais demandé qu'est-ce qu'il y avait **derrière** la porte ↑

'She never asked herself what was really behind the door'

[SC9, P125, L12]

6.2.4 The (POST-Temp) variable

Table 21: The (POST-Temp) variable and its variants

Variable	Variants
(POST-Temp)	en arrière ^{temporal}
	en arrière de ^{temporal}

(45) *en arrière*^{temporal}

D : ça [1reste <len<confidentiel>>

V : [1<p<on peut pas revenir *en arrière*>> (RIRE)

‘V: We can’t go back in time’

[SC10, P129, L1-2]

(46) *en arrière de*^{temporal}

J : pas de formation pas d’année *en arrière de* [1lui pas de::

S : [1NON t’as pas d’expérience en tant que tel t’es

aux ÉTUDES t’sais/ (.) je le trouvais ben bon franchement je lui ai dit

•t’es ben chanceux°

‘J: No training, no work experience behind him, no...’

[SC15, P31, L16-17]

6.2.5 Editing the Excel token lists

Lists of all occurrences of the variants were drawn up by searching through the *sous-corpus* (SC) for the main word in each construction. This method was adopted because, once again, as with the search for the simple prepositions *à* and *de*, we encountered problems using the CFPQ concordancer. Indeed, although we needed to separate out the occurrences of *en avant*, *en avant de*, *devant*, *avant*, and *à l’avant* – and the (POST) variable counterparts – this was impossible to achieve with any degree of certainty. This is due to the fact that the variable occurrences being generated contained a mix of one, two, or all of the words in the constructions *en avant de* and *en arrière de*. Consequently, some results contained just the word *en* or *de*, which were of no use to this study. Therefore, a different approach was assumed, which was to simply search for the main word e.g. *avant* and then examine each token result individually. This enabled us to ascertain if the utterance consisted of the word *avant*, *en + avant*, *en + avant + de*, or another variant. Although this slowed down the search

process considerably, it proved to be the most logical and failsafe way to reliably isolate the variable occurrences.

Once this sorting work was completed, a list of each occurrence in every SC, including its surrounding context, was entered into an excel file. This procedure was undertaken in order to facilitate the coding of the variants for analysis. The lists include the SC number, speaker information i.e. age, sex, level of education, the variant used, the sentence where the variant occurred, and the (initial)³² Metropolitan French equivalent (cf. figure 19).

Figure 19: Initial token list with surrounding context

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
1	Sous-Corpus	ID	Age	Sex	Education	word	Hex French	Phrase
45	SC5	S	59	M	Secondaire	en arrière	derrière?	le grand-père avait son bicycle
46	SC5	L	61	M	Univ 1er	en arrière de	à l'arrière	eux-autres ils habitaient en ar
47	SC5	L	61	M	Univ 1er	en arrière	arrière	la vitre a cassé en arrière là da
48	SC5	L	61	M	Univ 1er	en arrière	à l'arrière/derrière	un camion qui était avec un ur
49	SC5	M	58	F	Secondaire	en arrière	en arrière	¹ ben premièrement c'est DEUX
50	SC5	S	59	M	Secondaire	en arrière	arrière	c'est la la petite Honda avec eu
51	SC6	J	47	M	Cégep	en arrière	en arrière	¹ la culture ² c'est c- c'est un mo
52	SC6	N	42	F	Cégep	en arrière de	à l'arrière ?	pis est-ce qu'ils marquent en a
53	SC6	J	47	M	Cégep	en arrière	en arrière	il y avait une de ses TANTES ell
54	SC7	I	34	F	Cégep	en arrière de	derrière?	la QUANTité d'autos stationné
55	SC7	SA	40	M	Univ 1er	en arrière	à l'arrière/derrière	¹ ah oui c'est l'alarme qui dit qu
56	SC7	SO	36	F	Cégep	en arrière	à l'arrière/derrière	fait que là elle dit •ça arrive ça
57	SC7	SO	36	F	Cégep	en arrière	derrière	le pilote est en avant pis toi t'e
58	SC7	B	36	M	Univ 1er	en arrière de	derrière?	les carnets de commande ils o
59	SC7	SA	40	M	Univ 1er	en arrière de	derrière	³ ah non c'est quelque chose pa

This file was then refined further by grouping the different variables together by type, i.e. all tokens of *en avant* were listed consecutively, as can be seen from column F below (cf. figure 20). This was undertaken to aid the circumscription of the variable context, as the grouped representation of each variant helped to determine if there were patterns of use in the data. Examining these structures not only helped clarify how the variants were being employed, but also facilitated an understanding of each variant's intended meaning. It also enabled a better analysis of what the Metropolitan French equivalent might be. Thus, the results from this editing work gave a clear view of the variables and their linguistic contexts.

³² This initial assessment of the metropolitan equivalent was subject to change when the occurrences were examined in more detail at a later stage.

Figure 20: Refined token list with surrounding context

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	Sous-Corpus	ID	Age	Sex	Education	word	Hex French	Phrase
28	SC5	S	59 M		Secondaire	en arrière	derrière?	le grand-père a
29	SC5	L	61 M		Univ 1er	en arrière	arrière	la vitre a cassé
30	SC5	L	61 M		Univ 1er	en arrière	à l'arrière/derrière	un camion qui é
31	SC5	M	58 F		Secondaire	en arrière	en arrière	ben premièreme
32	SC5	S	59 M		Secondaire	en arrière	arrière	c'est la la petite
33	SC6	J	47 M		Cégep	en arrière	en arrière	la culture c'est
34	SC6	J	47 M		Cégep	en arrière	en arrière	il y avait une de
35	SC7	SA	40 M		Univ 1er	en arrière	à l'arrière/derrière	ah oui c'est l'al
36	SC7	SO	36 F		Cégep	en arrière	à l'arrière/derrière	fait que là elle c
37	SC7	SO	36 F		Cégep	en arrière	derrière	le pilote est en
38	SC7	SA	40 M		Univ 1er	en arrière	derrière/à l'arrière	ils rouvrent la tr
39	SC8	N	73 M		Primaire	en arrière	à l'arrière	mais là on essay
40	SC8	E	71 F		Primaire	en arrière	à l'arrière	ouin↓ mais sur
41	SC8	N	73 M		Primaire	en arrière	derrière	non mais le ce c
42	SC9	S	18 M		Cégep	en arrière	derrière/par derrière	il se fait il se fait
43	SC9	F	16 M		Secondaire	en arrière	derrière	il S'EST fait tirer
44	SC9	G	19 M		Cégen	en arrière	derrière	ma mère a ann

6.2.6 Locative and Temporal reference

The editing work described above enabled us to generate tables of the variants employed for the study of the (ANTE) and (POST) variables. In addition to helping circumscribe the variants employed for each variable, a major observation gleaned from the editing work was that our variants were employed in two types of utterance, temporal and locative. In a temporal construction the reference is a person, building, object or place, combined with its presence in time, past or present. In the case of locative constructions, the speaker is referring to the location of a person, building, object or place, often in relation to another. In each case the type of reference is found when we analyse the complement of the preposition i.e. the noun that follows the (ANTE) and (POST) variables.

Thus, the variants were classified, where possible, according to their type of reference (locative or temporal) which is detailed in table (22) and (23) below. In cases where the use of the variant token did not fit into either classification, a third category of indeterminate reference was established. This allowed for tokens that were used metaphorically, in expressions, or where the type of reference was not discernible. For future reference the complement of the prepositional phrase (PP) is a noun that belongs to one of these categories.

Therefore, the variables were divided into the following locative and temporal reference groups: (ANTE-Loc), (ANTE-Temp), (POST-Loc), and (POST-Temp). However, in some cases the reference type was difficult to determine, indeed the data presented a number of cases that proved difficult to

classify using the locative/temporal reference criteria. The following example (47) represents an utterance containing a token that has ambiguous reference.

(47)

S : pis il a passé euh: (.) il il trouvait ça lui f- pour son jeune âge (.) il a passé **en avant de** b:eaucoup beaucoup [1de monde

‘S: So, he got, eh, he thought that, he, at his young age, he got ahead of a lot of other people’ [SC5, P89, L20]

Here we can consider the variant *en avant de* in two ways, the first possibility is that it is referring to a point in time, that is, the person (through promotion) reached a more superior position in the company quicker than other employees. If we settle on this interpretation then the token is explaining the shorter time lapse that passed for this individual to arrive at a higher ranking in the company, compared to his colleagues. This would indicate that *en avant de* could be interpreted in a similar fashion to the Standard French equivalent *avant*, in a sentence such as *je suis arrivé au supermarché avant toi* (I got to the supermarket before you). With this example the word *avant* has purely temporal reference and there is no ambiguity. In Standard French, the preposition *avant* is used less to express locative reference. On the other hand, if we interpret the token of *en avant de* in (47) as inferring locative meaning, then the sentence would be understood in a more literal manner. The variant would be explaining that in a queue of people in line for promotion, this individual passed ahead of them spatially, and jumped the queue to get the promotion before them. Here the use of *en avant de* evokes the spatial position of the person in question in relation to other employees. Further analysis below will investigate this locative use of *en avant de* in Quebec French.

An additional example that exemplifies the problematic nature of certain tokens is shown in (48). Here the token of *en arrière de* could be interpreted as having temporal reference, implying that the man’s wife performs the same task after her husband has completed it a first time. In this sense the woman is adjusting or redoing what the man has already finished, thus indicating a temporal sequence of one thing being followed by another. Yet, it is also possible to interpret this use of *en arrière de* as having locative reference. In this case the

utterance would be implying that the women followed the man (she is spatially situated behind him), and when he had finished his task she would then redo it.

(48)

S : moi Luc (en pointant Luc) me disait •regarde Simone° parce que des fois je repassais au DÉBUT [1là (.) t'sais on commençait là dans la vie (.) euh: je repassais **en arrière de** lui

'S: Luke was telling me, look Simone, because sometimes I re-did, at the start there you know, we were starting out together in life, ehh I re-did things behind/after him' [SC1, P45, L10]

In the following example (49) of the use of the token *en arrière de*, it is even more difficult to decide on an interpretation of locative or temporal reference. Indeed, if we interpret *en arrière de* here with locative reference, the implication is that the girlfriend is situated spatially, at a location behind the boy's body piercing. As this is not a possible construal, we try to ascertain the sense of the utterance by interpreting the token as expressing temporal reference. Once again this does not help with the classification of this token because if *en arrière de* is inferring temporal reference, then the boy's body piercing would have appeared in front of, or before the girl, in terms of time, which is not the correct interpretation of this token either. In Standard French the *en arrière de* token would be substituted for the preposition *derrière*, which is a common figurative expression, *être derrière quelqu'un/quelque chose* (to be behind someone/something), that signifies that someone supports a person or is the instigator or the origin of another person's actions. In this case the speaker is implying that the girlfriend is the instigator or driving force behind the boy having a body piercing.

(49)

là je riais (.) je lui dis •mon beau Patrick (1,6") il y a-tu une fille **en arrière de** ton piercing mon grand/°

'There I laughed, I said to him, my handsome Patrick, is there a girl behind your piercing my son?'

[SC15, P31, L21]

However, the ambiguous nature of some utterances is not just caused by unclear contexts, it is also linked to the fact that not all the (ANTE) and (POST) variants are used with an overt complement as we discussed in chapter 2.

The tables below show the quantitative totals for each variable and their respective variants. This categorisation gave a clearer understanding of which variants were employed to express locative or temporal reference, and also within those reference types, which variant, if any, had the most or least remarkable usage. It is important to make clear at this stage that *devant* and *derrière* were found to behave differently to the other (ANTE) and (POST) variants, which has necessitated independent analysis of these items.

Table 22: (ANTE) frequencies according to: Locative or Temporal reference

Reference	<i>en avant</i>	<i>en avant de</i>	<i>avant</i>	<i>devant</i>	<i>à l'avant</i>	Total N
Locative	47	21	0	38	1	107
Temporal	1	2	292	2	0	297
Indeter	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total N	48	23	292	40	1	404

Table 23: (POST) frequencies according to: Locative or Temporal reference

Reference	<i>en arrière</i>	<i>en arrière de</i>	<i>derrière</i>	<i>à l'arrière</i>	<i>arrière</i>	Total N
Locative	76	52	5	2	1	136
Temporal	6	5	0	0	0	11
Indeter	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total N	83	57	53	2	1	148

Setting aside the consideration of the (ANTE-Temp) variant *avant*, which we will discuss later, the evidence regarding temporal reference use of the other variants is very revealing. As we can see overall the variants are used less temporally in comparison to their locative uses. There are only 5/112 tokens for the (ANTE) variable used for temporal reference and 11/148 of the (POST) variable used for temporal reference. Despite this low token count, two (POST-

Temp) variants, *en arrière* and *en arrière de* stand out and appear to dominate, as they are used five or six times more frequently than other variants to refer to time. This is more than likely explained by the existence of time expressions in French that use this variant, which is attested in both standard French and Quebec French, e.g. *revenir en arrière*, *retour en arrière*, *remonter en arrière*.

6.3 Meaning and *en avant (de)* and *en arrière (de)*

In order to examine the variants of the variables comprehensibly it is first necessary to determine their status and meaning in Quebec French. As we mentioned earlier, in general prepositions are thought to belong to a closed word class, and are often considered limited in number. This is mainly true for simple prepositions, however, when we consider what are sometimes known as complex prepositions these characteristics change. A complex preposition is defined as being composed of more than one item, and can have several different constituents. Additionally, they are more abundant in French than in English, and complex prepositions are an open class, meaning they can, and often do, accept new additions. Borillo (1997, 1999b, 2001) discusses more than 300 complex prepositions, and explains that their principal lexical unit can sometimes be an adjective, an adverb, or a verb, but most of the time it is a noun. In our opinion, following our discussion in section 2.4.1.1, and Borillo's (2001: 142) example, the variants *en avant (de)* and *en arrière (de)* can be classified as complex prepositions.

6.4 Reference Grammars

For an examination of these variants' word class affiliation, and most importantly the meanings attributed to each item, we consult various reference grammars. We start our appraisal with the *Bon usage*, and include online resources such as the *Larousse en ligne*. However, due to the limited treatment of the variants in more mainstream reference grammars, particularly those predominantly discussing contemporary Metropolitan French varieties, we have widened our consideration to include information from the *Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales* (CNRTL). This resource gives a broader look at particular items by listing entries from multiple sources, of which we will consider the *Trésor de la langue Française Informatisé* (TLFi), the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* (DAF) (4th, 8th and 9th editions), the *Banque de Données*

Lexicographiques Panfrancophone (BDLP), and the *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français* (DMF).

In addition to the aforementioned wider reaching resources, we wanted to investigate the possibility that the non-standard variants (ANTE) and (POST) variants could have origins in regional language varieties spoken by certain immigrants leaving France to live in the Quebec region in the 1700s. For this reason, we have included a review of French regional dialect literature that mentions the existence of these variants in order to establish if there is indeed a link.

6.4.1 Le Bon usage

According to the *Bon usage* (2007: 1268) both *en avant* and *en arrière* are classified as adverbial phrases, and used as adverbs of place alongside implicit complement prepositions such as *devant* and *derrière*. The *Bon usage*'s definition states (2007: 1187) that adverbial phrases are typically formed from a preposition ^[P] and an adverb ^[A] (or a preposition without a complement). In the case of the variants *en avant* and *en arrière* the composition is *en* ^[P] + *avant* ^[A] and *en* ^[P] + *arrière* ^[A].

However, the variants *en avant* and *en arrière* can also be classified as prepositions, particularly because scholars typically define complex prepositions as being made up of a combination of morphemes, starting with a simple preposition i.e. *à, en, de, sur, dans, par*, and followed by elements belonging to various word categories i.e. P=Preposition, N=Noun, Det=Definite determiner, etc.

6.4.2 Larousse en ligne

The Larousse *en ligne* lists the variant *en avant* in two places under the entry *avant* (which it describes as being either a preposition or an adverb). The definition is rather vague, explaining that *en avant (de)* means *devant*. This interesting entry insinuates, from the use of the parentheses around *de*, that it is considered to either take a complement or not, with no discernible change in meaning. The second mention of *en avant* is found under the *difficultés* tab, where it is listed in its full form, without parentheses, and here it is simply classed as a prepositional phrase meaning 'in the place of', 'in the situation that precedes someone or something', or 'in front of'.

For the variant *en arrière* the Larousse *en ligne* gives an explanation of its use under the heading *arrière* (which it describes as a masculine noun). The definition is similar to that of the TLFi (which we discuss below), as it is listed as expressing the opposite sense or direction to the one that the speaker is walking or looking in, or something or someone at a certain distance behind. One notable difference with this variant's treatment here as opposed to *en avant*, is that the preposition *de* in brackets is not included in this listing.

6.4.3 Trésor de la langue française informatisé

The *Trésor de la langue française informatisé* (TLFi) does not have a distinct listing for *en arrière*, however, searching for the adverb *arrière* generated results for *en arrière*. The TLFi gives the definition of *en arrière* by first describing the element *arrière* as an adverb of place, and then explaining that it is used in the formation of certain adverbial and prepositional phrases. Thus, as an adverbial or prepositional phrase – exactly which one is not specified – the TLFi explains that *en arrière* is used to express a sense of direction, the opposite of where one is looking or going, and examples of the variant being combined with a preceding verb are listed, e.g. *aller en arrière*. In addition, in some examples it is defined as meaning something that is at the back of something else.

In juxtaposition to this apparent ambiguity in the classification of *en arrière*, the TLFi states very clearly that *en avant* is an adverbial phrase that indicates movement in the direction that one is going, or looking. Again, as with *en arrière*, the TLFi explains that *en avant* also participates in the formation of adverbial phrases and prepositions of place, and on its own it is listed as expressing the opposite direction to where one is moving, or looking.

6.4.4 Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française en ligne

The *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française's* (DAF) 4th (1762), 8th (1932-1935) and 9th (*en cours de rédaction*) editions all define the variant *en avant* as an adverb of place which describes an area further away from where one is standing (*au-delà de là où on est*).

For the variant *en arrière* the 4th edition of the DAF only discusses a temporal use that indicates that someone is late with a payment or an action e.g. *un fermier est en arrière*, and there is no mention of a spatial use. It also has the addition of some figurative and non-standard expressions that use *en arrière* such as *il me*

loue en face et me déchire en arrière. The 9th edition of the DAF is even more instructive, although initially the definition of *en arrière* does not specify whether it is an adverbial phrase, or an adjective, it is listed as both. It is here we find the explanation that *en arrière* indicates the opposite direction of movement; both in space and in time by analogy e.g. *revenir en arrière* etc.

The variant *en arrière de* is listed separately as a prepositional phrase, where it is explained that it is used to talk about something that is found at a certain distance behind something else, or set back from something.

6.4.5 Banque de Données Lexicographiques Panfrancophone

The objective of the *Banque de Données Lexicographiques Panfrancophone* (BDLP) is to constitute a database of French from all Francophone countries or regions. Interestingly, it does not have a listing for the variant *en arrière* in Quebec French, although it figures under *Francophone Suisse* as an adverb of place that expresses a retrospective vision, or a length of time looking back in the past. Equally, there is no entry for *en avant* in Quebec French, either as a preposition, prepositional phrase, adverb, or adverbial phrase. In fact, the only entries found here regard its use in noun phrases such as an *en-avant* in rugby – which is a type of foul called a *knock-on* in English – or the locative interjection *en avant marche!*

6.4.6 Dictionnaire du Moyen Français (DMF)

Given that the origins of Quebec French are to be found in metropolitan varieties of the 17th century, it may be instructive to consider examples from the *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français* (DMF, 2015). The variant *en avant* appears several times in the DMF and is attributed different meanings, either as an adverb of time, meaning ‘before’, as in (50), again as an adverb of time in (51), but meaning ‘in the future/from now on’, or as an adverb of place in (52) situating something or someone ‘in front’. It is important to note here that the meanings ascribed to the variants by the DMF are consistent with our findings in contemporary Quebec French, however when the examples were translated into English by a medieval French³³ expert these meanings became less obvious. Despite these differences, we consider that the very existence of these variants

³³ All translations were provided by Dr Tom Hinton, University of Exeter, and we are sincerely grateful for his help with these examples.

in Middle French is noteworthy, and much like the existence of the (POSS) variable in early varieties of French, could be deemed important in the evolution of their use.

(50)

Or vous parlerons d'aucuns chevaliers englés, chapitains de garnisons, qui se tenoient en France et estoient tenus deux ans ou trois en avant, ancois que pais se fesist.

'Now we will tell you about some English knights, garrison commanders, who were in France and had been [stationed] there for two or three years **beforehand**, before peace was made/had broken out.'

(FROISS., *Chron.L.*,VI, c.1375-1400, 24)

(51)

Et encarga li rois d'Engleterre les armes de France et les esquartela d'Engleterre, et emprist en avant le nom dou roy de France

And the king of England adopted the French coat of arms and quartered them with those of England, and **henceforth** assumed the title of king of France.'

(FROISS., *Chron.L.*,I,c.1375-1400,186)

(52)

Je conclus, par voye seure, Que, puis que celle auctorité A eu de fait equacité Et que ce ver doux et sery Du saint prophette est advery, Avoir nous fault en avant Le ver qui est joignant devant, Moulit hault et noble, ou il y a Escript : misericordia Et veritas obviaverunt, Et après, obscultate sunt Et se paix et justicia.

I conclude, with certainty, that since this authority has confirmed the truth of this event, and that the sweet and peaceful verse of the Holy Prophet has been proven, we must **now** prove the verse which follows straight after it, a most high and noble verse, where it is

written: *misericordia et veritas obviaverunt*, and then afterwards *obscultate sunt et se paix et justicia*.

(*Myst. Pass. Troyes B.*, a.1482, 1083)

The DMF also has different entries for the variant *en arrière*, it is listed as an adverb of time meaning before, or once upon a time in (53), an adverb of time again in (54) but meaning 'late', and a preposition of place, meaning 'far from or far away from' in (55).

- (53) C'est la déclaration des acquisitions desquelles Jehan Vigenere s'est entremis çà en arrière pour et ou nom et requeste de Jacques Cuer.

This is the declaration of the goods which Jean Vigenere has purchased **in the past** for, and in the name (and on behalf) of, Jacques Cuer.

(*Aff. Jacques Coeur M.*, 1453-1457, 537)

- (54) ...je vous prie que (...) vous la lui faictes incontinent delivrer [la pension] et la lui envoyez, mais qu'il n'y ait point de faulte, car j'aymeroye mieulx avoir perdu dix foiz autant que luy avoir failly, et serois plus contant qu'il en demourast en arriere beaucoup d'aultres que luy.

I beseech you to have it [the payment] immediately provided and sent to him, but ensure that there is no error, for I would rather have lost ten times the sum than to have failed him, and would be happy to see many others paid **in arrears** as long as he is not.

(*Lettres Louis XI, V.*, t.9, 1481, 41)

- (55) Ce propoz dont je parle eust myeulx servy plus en arrière où je parleray du trespas dudict roy Edouard car il estoit encores vif au

temps dont parle ce chapitre ; mais je l'ay faict pour continuer le propoz de mon incident.

The matter which I relate [here] would have served better/been better placed **further on**, where I will tell of the death of the aforementioned king Edward, for he was still alive in the period this chapter covers; but I have done it this way so as to continue the story of the incident I am discussing.

(COMM., II, 1489-1491, 235)

6.5 Difficulties of definition for certain variants

6.5.1 *en avant de* and *en arrière de*

Unfortunately, the *Bon usage* does not discuss the variants *en avant de* and *en arrière de*. Therefore, for a description of their uses and formation it was necessary to consult the additional sources referred to above. However, the TLFi description for these two variants is not as helpful as we would like. It clearly classifies the variant *en avant de* as a prepositional phrase, and states that it indicates the position of something, or someone in connection to another. Yet, when we do a search for the definition of *en arrière de*, the TLFi database lists the construction under the headword *arrière* (an adverb of place), without classifying it formally as either a prepositional phrase or an adverbial phrase, saying that it enters into the formation of both.

The 4th edition of the DAF does not have an entry for either *en avant de* or *en arrière de*, however the 8th edition does list these variants. Both are defined as prepositional phrases (*en avant de* being said to function in both a literal and figurative sense) and accompanied by several examples but with no extra information. Remarkably the 9th edition of the DAF has no entry for either *en avant de* or *en arrière de*.

The BDLP has no entry for the variants *en avant de* or *en arrière de*, however the DMF does have entries for these items, and gives several examples to illustrate the different meanings. In (56) the variant *en arrière de* means 'far away from' or 'far from', in (57) 'far from someone', and in (58) 'behind'. Once again, as with the examples above, the English translations do not always adhere to the meaning given by the DMF, this is especially true for example (58).

However, as we mentioned previously, this does not negate the pertinence of these examples.

(56) ...mais voians que les Bretons les avoient habandonnéz et
relenquis (...), [les Espaignos] tournerent voiles aussi en arriere
d'Angleterre et lesserent François en ce dangier

...but seeing that the Bretons had abandoned them and fled (...) [the Spanish] turned their sails **far away from** England and left François in this difficulty.

(CHASTELL., *Chron. IV, D.*, c.1461-1472, 294)

(57) ...[le duc de Bourgogne] avoit peril a ung léz a le chassier [le daulphin] d'en ariere de luy, avoit peril a l'autre a le regarder et norrir

On one hand, it was dangerous for [the duke of Burgundy] to exile [the Dauphin] **far away from him**; on the other hand, it was dangerous for him to keep him and look after him.

(CHASTELL., *Chron. IV, D.*, c.1461-1472, 92)

(58) Messire Henry desmarcha en ariere de cely cop et poursievit fierement messire Jehan

Sir Henry **moved back** to avoid this blow, and pursued/attacked Sir Jehan with energy.

(CHASTELL., *Chron. IV, D.*, c.1461-1472, 167)

As we noted above the Larousse *en ligne* has a brief mention of the use of *en avant de*, although it does not stipulate whether it is a preposition or an adverb, and it is listed with the preposition *de* in brackets. The variant *en arrière de*, in its full version containing the preposition *de*, does not figure in the Larousse online dictionary, neither under the heading *arrière* or anywhere else.

6.5.2 *devant* and *derrière*

The *Bon usage* states, in its section on implied complements (2007: 1327 § 1040), that for reasons of economy the complement of a preposition is often not expressed if it has already been mentioned earlier, or if one can deduce it easily from the context or situation. It goes on to say that after some prepositions, such as *devant* and *derrière*, it is general use to omit the complement. This is the only information that the *Bon usage* gives regarding these variants.

According to the TLFi *devant* is both preposition and adverb, with its prepositional uses being used to express spatial anteriority, in the presence of someone or something, and opposite or in view of, someone or something. It can also be employed adverbially giving extra information in conjunction with a verb phrase. The variant *derrière* is also listed as being both an adverb and a preposition here, and its definition is listed as meaning behind something, or at the back of something. In the TLFi's description there is no mention of any particular constraints of usage for either variant.

Both the 4th and 8th editions of the DAF list *derrière* as a locative preposition, and explain that is the opposite of the preposition *devant*. Neither, however, mentions that it can also be used as an adverbial phrase, which does not figure until the 9th edition.

For *devant*, the 4th edition of the DAF lists its uses as a locative preposition, meaning facing the front side of something, and also as a preposition of order, with its meaning being the opposite of *après*. This also figures in the 9th edition's definition, in addition to the mention that it is also employed as a noun.

In the BDLP the variant *devant* is not listed, and the variant *derrière* figures only as part of a Quebec French expression that means to hide behind someone, to defend oneself, or excuse oneself by hiding behind someone or something i.e. *s'abrier derrière qqn, qqch*.

Interestingly the DMF has again several entries for *devant* and *derrière*. *Devant* is defined as meaning *en avant (de qqc.)* or *en avant (de qqn)* as in (59) and (60).

(59) ...et alla mettre le siège devant la ville et le chastel de Bourg, tant par mer que par terre. Lequel siège ne dura devant que cinq ou six jours.

And he laid siege to the town and castle of Bourg, by sea and by land. This siege lasted **no more than** five or six days

(CHART. J., *Chron. Ch. VII*, V., t.2, c.1437-1464, 261)

- (60) ...car la partie qui va devant est senestre et devant ou resgart de celle qui vient apres elle, aussi comme des personnes en une carole.

For the part which **moves forward** is left and **in front** with regard to the part which follows it, just like people in a *carole*³⁴.

(ORESME, *C.M.*, c.1377, 340)

The *Larousse* online does not make any reference to an obligatory complement with the use of *devant* and classifies it as both an adverb and a preposition. It does, however, give one of the definitions as *en avant (de)*, which as we have seen above is not labelled explicitly in the *Larousse* online. The variant *derrière* is described as both an adverb and a preposition but is defined as meaning *en arrière*, or *au dos (de quelque chose)*.

6.5.3 à l'avant and à l'arrière

Neither *à l'avant* or *à l'arrière* have a listing in the *Bon usage*, and this is also true for the CNRTL. The *Larousse* online does, however, mention the use of *à l'avant de*, classifying it as a prepositional phrase that is used to indicate the anterior part of something.

6.6 Discussion of the regional and Canadian use of the variants

6.6.1 Introduction

With many tokens in our data it was challenging, as a non-native speaker, to establish what the interlocutor was referring to when discussing locations of buildings, people or other entities. This problem was caused by two things, firstly the ambiguous meanings of some constructions, and secondly our lack of familiarity with these variants in Quebec French, and their corresponding

³⁴ A *carole* is a type of medieval dance. This example is referring to the movement of the planets.

expressions. These difficulties meant that the process of determining equivalent Standard French variants proved to be more problematic than with our previous analysis of possessive *à* and *de*. In example (61), the use of the variant *en arrière* after the phrase *un pick-up rouge avec le chrome là*, might be understood in Standard French to be indicating the geographic location of a particular pick-up truck (with the chrome). This interpretation might arise because the description comes after a slight rise in intonation (/), which could indicate that the speaker is looking for affirmation from the listener that they know what truck they are talking about. However, in Quebec French this is not the case, and the expression *en arrière là* used in this way is in fact indicating the location of the chrome on the vehicle, and not the vehicle's location. In Standard French, we would expect to see the use of the prepositional phrase *à l'arrière* here.

(61) G : [1t'sais↑ les cantines Gérard là↑ (.) [2il a euh il a un (.) un pick-up rouge avec le le chrome là/ **en arrière** là/ Gérard là/ c'est ça (.) ouin\

'G: You know, Gerard canteens yeh, he has, he has a red pick-up truck with chrome there, at the back, Gerard yeh, that's it, yes'

[SC1, P5, L5-7]

In addition to these particularities, there are certain semantic differences that arise with utterances in Quebec French that cause ambiguity, thus it was not always simple to determine the meaning of the variant token being used. This was often due to the semantics of the sentence as a whole, for example in (62) below, we can see that for a Metropolitan French speaker this utterance is not immediately comprehensible. However, contrary to example (61) above, here the ambiguity does not centre on the location of the object being referred to, but rather the meaning of the variant.

(62) H : sèche (.) parce qu'il y a humide pis il y a sèche (.) humide ils font des: hémorragies **en arrière** moi c'est pas fait que c'est pas: si pire

D : c'est moins grave

'H: dry, because there's humid, and there's dry, humid ones cause haemorrhages afterwards, for me that didn't happen, which is good'

[SC4, P99, L5-7]

Indeed, with this example it is difficult to determine if the variant *en arrière* is being used locatively i.e. to indicate the place where the haemorrhage might occur. Or on the other hand temporally i.e. to indicate that a haemorrhage might occur after an operation. If we were to interpret the variant locatively, the haemorrhage would occur behind somewhere, possibly behind the eye. If we interpret the variant in a temporal sense, then the haemorrhage could be understood to occur after the eye has been operated on. Consequently, taking into consideration the different semantic interpretations linked to the use of the (ANTE) and (POST) variables in Quebec French, which have been informed by a close study of the utterances produced by the CFPQ informants, we reason that the locative uses of *en avant/en avant de* and *en arrière/en arrière de* are non-standard variants of the Standard French words *devant* and *derrière*. We have concluded that the data has revealed a mix of complex prepositions that do not always express their complement overtly, but are, however, governed by a complement that is explicit or implicit. That is to say that both types of construction refer to a topological zone on, or around, the area referenced by the spatial relationship.

We discussed in previous sections some definitions of the (ANTE) and (POST) variants in reference works, and have seen that they are categorised as either adverbs or prepositions, depending on the existence of a complement in the phrase. We will now go on to review the treatment of the variants in literature concerning metropolitan regional language varieties, and Quebec French the former being relevant as they are spoken in regions that contributed to the cohorts of emigrants that settled in Quebec.

6.6.1.1 Darbelnet (1986)

The *Dictionnaire des particularités de l'usage* positions itself among reference books as a 'normative guide' for the user of Quebec French, which implies it adopts a prescriptive standpoint as well as giving descriptions. Darbelnet also clearly states that his attitude towards 'authentic' words and expressions – vestiges of metropolitan French – and Anglicisms is not the same. Indeed, he only accepts Anglicisms if they bring something to Quebec French that is not expressed adequately already. Bearing this in mind, the entries are what the author considers useful expressions that should be seen as resources that enrich Quebec French rather than impoverish it.

The variant *en arrière* is described as being an expression that specifies a certain distance that the word *derrière* cannot imply, indeed Darbelnet (1986: 23) uses three examples to illustrate this point, and here we also see the use of the variant *en arrière de*.

- (63) Le jardin est derrière la maison.
'The garden is behind the house'
- (64) La campagne s'étend en arrière de la maison.
'The countryside stretches out behind the house'
- (65) Il marchait derrière nous, et puis ralentit le pas et est resté *en arrière*
'He was walking behind us, and then slowed down and stayed further back'

In the CFPQ data we have found similar examples, but whether our data is consistent with Darbelnet's opinion concerning the difference in distance being expressed remains to be seen. According to Darbelnet (1986: 28) the variants *en avant* and *en avant de* should not be used in Quebec French, he again gives examples, however this time the examples are to explain what the 'correct' usage is as we can see from his note 'et non...'

- (66) On se tient devant un auditoire, et non "*en avant*".
'One stands in front of an audience'
- (67) La porte de devant (et non la porte d'*en avant*) s'oppose à la porte de derrière.
'The front door'

6.6.1.2 Doussinet (2005)

Doussinet's *Grammaire Saintongaise* is concerned with aspects of the *Langue d'Oïl* variety *Saintongais* (2005: 254). He defines the region where this language is spoken as the *Saintonge*, *Aunis* and *Angoumois* provinces, but does not include the *Poitou* region. This viewpoint is controversial in many ways; suffice to say that although the inhabitants of all these regions are believed to be able to

converse with each other with relative ease, it is still a matter of debate whether they are in fact the same dialect separated only by phonetic diversity and regional lexical variation.

Doussinet records the words *davant*, *darrière*, *dare*, *en arre*, as meaning *devant/en avant*, *derrière*, and *en arrière*, and they are considered to be adverbs and adverbial phrases that are able to express a diverse set of concepts. He notes that the word *davant* has kept the temporal meaning it had in Old French until the 17th century and gives an example.

- (68) En attendant que la mode n'en vinjhe, m'en vas aller davant
'While waiting for the fashion to come in, I'm going to get ahead of it'

(Doussinet 2005: 254)

In addition, it is explained that the word *davant* and *darrière* can both be employed as nouns and that the word *en arre* is usually used with a dynamic verb (*ibid.* p 282).

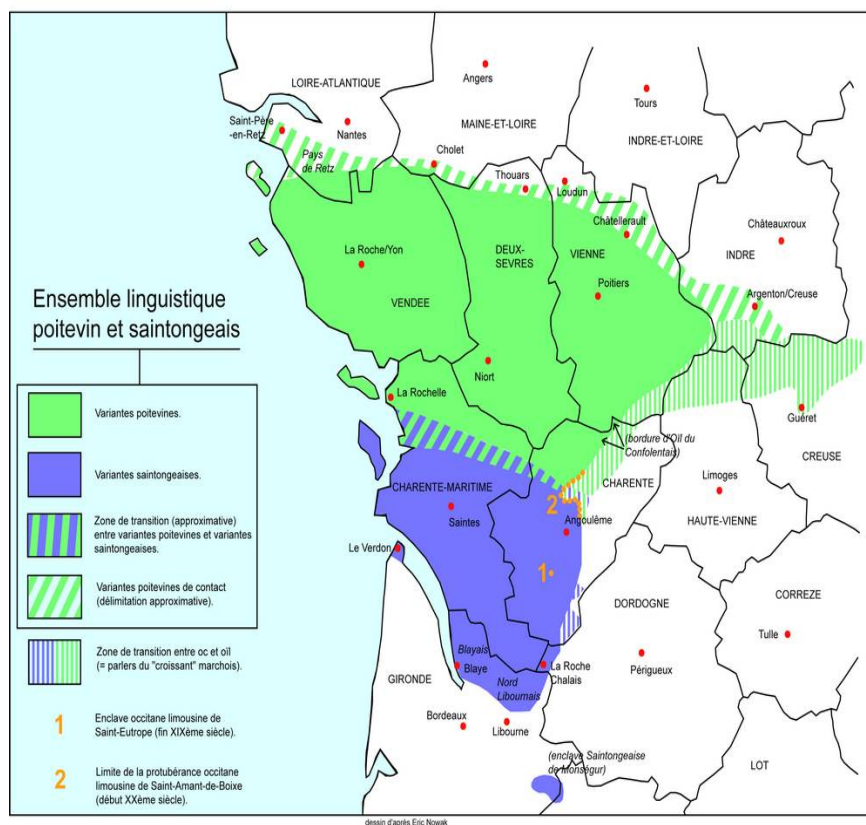
In Doussinet's chapter on prepositions he includes a comparative table of adverbs and adverbial phrases of place, with their corresponding prepositional phrases. It is stated that adverbs, prepositions, adverbial phrases and prepositional phrases can all be accompanied by the particles *de*, *en* and *peur*, making the sentences 'heavy' without contributing any more precision. It is here that we find all the variants we are concerned with in this study, as *en avant*, *devant* and *en arrière* are listed as adverbs and adverbial phrases and their corresponding prepositions are listed as *en avant de*, *devant*, and *en arrière de*. However, there is no more information given regarding these items uses, and no examples are provided.

6.6.1.3 Gautier *et al.* (1993)

Poitevin-Saintongeais is a regional language with a complicated history concerning its appellation, and scholars often disagree on exactly where the *Poitevin-Saintongeais* language is spoken. However, Gautier precisely sets out the area that was covered in his discussion of uses, with one main difference from Doussinet's work, which is that he includes the *Poitou* region in his description of this regional variety. For an indication of where this regional

language is spoken the following map from Nowak (2016) gives more precise details.

Figure 21: The *Poitevin* and *Saintongeais* linguistic region (Nowak, 2016)



Gautier's work has several mentions of the variants we are discussing, with some labelled as belonging to more specific areas within the region encompassed by his study. These details are accompanied, if necessary, with notes such as, Stg = Saintonge, Civ= Civrainsien and North Ruffec. The author is careful to point out one major issue regarding the use of these variants in this regional language, i.e. the difference between prepositions and adverbs is not always distinct. Indeed, some words come under a binomial classification, e.g. *deden* meaning both *dans*, and *dedans* (*ibid* p139). The variants in this study have been categorised in different ways in the literature we have reviewed, therefore for clarity we have set out their uses according to Gautier *et al*, and their standard French equivalents in figure (22).

Figure 22: (ANTE) and (POST) variants in *Poitevin-Saintongeais*
(Gautier *et al*, 1993 : 137-138)

	Poitevin-Saintongeais	Standard French
1	avant	avant, profondément
2	dare	derrière
3	darére	derrière
4	darière (Stg)	derrière
5	davant	devant
6	en avant	devant, profondément
7	pr en avant	devant
8	en are	en arrière
9	en arére	en arrière
10	en arrière (Stg)	en arrière
11	en ériére (Stg, Civ.)	en arrière
12	pr dare	derrière, par derrière
13	pr darére	derrière, par derrière
14	pr davant	devant, au devant
15	en davant	devant, au devant
16	pr en davant	devant, au devant
17	avant	avant
18	dare	derrière
19	darére	derrière
20	darière	derrière
21	davant	devant
22	en are (de)	'no equivalent given'
23	en arére (de)	'no equivalent given'
24	en ariére (de) (Stg)	'no equivalent given'
25	en avant (de)	devant
26	pr davant	devant
27	en davant (de)	devant
28	pr en davant (de)	devant

Gautier's classification is lexicographic in style, and for the most part there are no examples given to illustrate regional use. Figure (22) gives a Standard French gloss for every entry, however there are a certain number of inconsistencies in Gautier's variant classification and translation. For example, we found a marked difference in translation for the variants *en avant* and *en arrière*. Indeed, we note that Gautier translates all four variants, 8 (*en are*), 9 (*en arére*), 10 (*en arrière* (Stg)) and 11 (*en ériére* (Stg,Civ.)) as meaning *en arrière* in Standard French. However, variants 22 (*en are (de)*), 23 (*en arére (de)*) and 24 (*en arére (de)* (Stg)) are not translated, and no gloss is given. In our opinion these three variants would be translated as *derrière* in standard French, which we believe is confirmed by related studies examined below. One might assume the difference in translation is due to variants 22, 23 and 24 being accompanied by the preposition *de*, yet when we compare this with variants 6 (*en avant*) and 25 (*en avant (de)*), we see that both are translated as *devant*, *profondément*, or *devant*. This

demonstrates the difference in perception and use in this regional variety that may have had an impact on the use of the corresponding forms in Quebec French.

6.6.1.4 Rézeau (1976)

In Rézeau's (1976) study of the rural language spoken in *Vouvant* – a town in the southwest of the *Vendée* region, and a district of *Fontenay-le-Comte* – once again, as with Gautier *et al*, it is explained that the word class distinction between adverbs and prepositions is not as well defined as in 'literary' French. In fact, Rézeau adds that prepositions can take on an adverb's role, are frequently used in an absolute³⁵ fashion at the end of sentences, and in some uses the prepositional link is implicit (*ibid* p.73).

Regarding the (ANTE) and (POST) variables, Rézeau only explicitly mentions the use of *en arrière* in his list of principal prepositions and prepositional phrases (*ibid* p.86). Interestingly, it is translated into Standard French as *derrière*, and is categorised in the 'prepositions of place' list. We note the absence of *en arrière de*, *en avant* or *en avant de* in the book. In his section dedicated to adverbs of place, Rézeau only lists what he considers to be the most important, i.e. the words *dar*, and *darer*, which are translated as *derrière* in Standard French.

6.6.2 Canadian French reference works

6.6.2.1 Office Québécois de la langue française (2013)

According to the *Banque de dépannage linguistique* which is found on the *Office Québécois de la langue française's* website (OQLF), the word *avant* is used to form several locutions, including *en avant* which it defines as '*devant soi, dans la même direction que notre regard*, i.e. 'in front of oneself, in the same direction as one is looking'. It also lists *en avant de* as a locution, and defines it as '*devant*', i.e. 'in front of'. This entry in the *Banque de dépannage linguistique* is short, and not especially detailed, nevertheless it is accompanied by examples that could be useful for the interpretation of these variants in Quebec French.

(69) Nancy n'a pas vu la voiture en avant et elle l'a emboutie.

(70) Dans son rêve, il y avait une porte fermée en avant d'elle.

³⁵ 'Absolute' meaning the preposition has no complement.

From these examples, it appears there is no apparent difference in meaning between the two variants.

6.6.2.2 Brasseur (2005)

Brasseur (2005) contributes to a book on French spoken in the Americas and discusses the variants *en avant (de)* and *en arrière (de)*. This is only the second mention we have encountered concerning their use in Canadian French. They are classified here as non-standard locutions and considered, with their use of *en*, to be an addition to the phonetic substance of these *mots-outils*. Brasseur also sees these words as more than a simple extension of use, but as a categorical modification that has not undergone any semantic evolution. He sets out his theory of the formation of these items, and more specifically these variants as follows:

prep. > (prep. +) *en* + subst³⁶. + prep.

adv.> (prep. +) *en* +subst.

Brasseur (2005: 254)

This interpretation is, however, open to discussion due to the formal similarities between pre-existing items in regional dialects, and these locutions in Quebec French.

Brasseur also discusses standard French usage, and deems these locutions to have identical counterparts, albeit with more restrictive use than the original preposition, and interestingly differing semantics. He states that *en arrière de* meaning *derrière* in *Français d'Amérique* is the equivalent of *loin derrière* in standard French. Furthermore, *en avant de* would only be used in Standard French when marking the position between two entities. These are interesting points and are possible considerations to be included when we examine these variants below. We will also see if the CFPQ data substantiates Brasseur's analysis.

6.6.2.3 Meney (1999)

Meney references four uses of *en arrière* in the *Dictionnaire québécois français, mieux se comprendre entre francophones*, which he illustrates with examples. However, despite the treatment of some similar constructions, Meney only

³⁶ 'Subst'= substantive i.e. noun

discusses *en avant* and *en arrière* without the additional preposition *de*. The examples below do, however, give an insight into the semantics of the variants in contemporary Quebec French.

(71) dents d'en arrière
St Fr = dents du fond
'back teeth'

(72) porte d'en arrière
St Fr = porte de derrière, petite porte, porte de service
'back door'

(73) rang en arrière, rang d'en arrière
St Fr = rang éloigné, rang reculé (en général plus pauvre)
'lower rank, lower ranking'

(74) par en arrière
St Fr = par derrière
'By surprise'

(Meney 1999: 740)

Examples (71) and (72) are clearly being used with locative reference, yet this is not true of example (73) and (74), which can be interpreted as conveying more extended meanings. For the use of *en avant*, Meney also gives some examples, and here it appears this variant has more restricted use than *en arrière*. Once again, it is obvious from his examples that the variant *en avant* is not just confined to locative uses, but can also express temporality, as in (77) below.

(75) porte d'en avant
St Fr = porte de devant, porte d'entrée, porte principale, grande porte
'front door'

(76) dents d'en avant
St Fr = dents de devant
'front teeth'

(77) en avant de son temps

St Fr = en avance de

'before his time'

(Meney 1999: 741)

6.7 Discussion of the (ANTE) and (POST) variants in the linguistic literature

We see from the discussion of the reference works above that the classification of the (ANTE) and (POST) variants is not clear-cut. In addition, our study focuses on non-standard usage in Quebec French, which demands reflection on why we find these variants in this variety, and not in Standard French. Thus, in order to examine this non-standard use in greater depth we will combine our quantitative results with a consideration of theories of preposition use in other linguistic approaches such as Cognitive Linguistics. This choice is motivated by two factors: firstly, prepositions have the capacity to contribute internal conceptual structure to an utterance, and secondly the prepositions we are considering are difficult to classify formally. Therefore, we will proceed with a review of some major studies of prepositions, and discuss their relevance to the variants we are examining. This section will help determine how our variants, and their uses, differ semantically from Standard French. It will also help establish possible reasons for the differences in use between varieties.

In the circumscription of our variables we detected a clear difference between the use of the prepositions *devant* and *derrière* and *en avant (de)* and *en arrière (de)*, not only within the Quebec French variety but also compared to Standard French. In the case of non-standard *en avant (de)* and *en arrière (de)*, in addition to sociolinguistic factors that may influence their use, their conceptual import may have also been influenced by the language employed by the original immigrants coming from the regions we discussed in chapter 3. These conceptual differences imply that the meaning of these variants has been shaped over time, independently from Standard French, which further justifies the inclusion of the consideration of cognitive based theories of language use.

6.7.1 Borillo (1993, 1997, 1999b, 2001)

In chapter 2 we discussed the category of complex prepositions and their characteristic of being an open word class with members comprised of many

possible elements. Among the varying combinations that Borillo (1997) discusses, which were detailed in figure (1), we find type 8, [P N de] that we consider to be the correct classification for the variants *en avant de* and *en arrière de*. We have reproduced this type in figure (23) for information. When labelling these variants as type 8 [P N de], we acknowledge that the presence of the preposition *de* to introduce an explicit complement is not always necessary. This is consistent with Borillo's classification of these variants as either *préposition complexe régime* (governed complex preposition) or *préposition complexe orpheline* (non-governed complex preposition), which we will discuss in more detail below (cf. Figure 24).

Figure 23: Complex preposition type 8

(Reproduced from Borillo, 1997: 176)

[P N de] à *fleur de*, à *portée de*, à *proximité de*

Our quantification results so far do indeed suggest that a following complement is not always necessary, something which is often discussed in the literature. This characteristic appears to create a problem for the classification of some prepositions, and as we have seen, *en avant* and *en arrière* are not well defined in reference grammars. Indeed, scholars do not always deem them to belong to the word class of adverbs, or on the other hand prepositions, and in some instances, they are simply not discussed. We believe this inconsistency originates from the use of these non-standard variants without an overt complement, which creates ambiguity in their word class classification. When we examine Borillo's more detailed grouping again below this different way of using prepositions is confirmed, and we see that the non-standard variants *en avant (de)* and *en arrière (de)* are all listed.

Originally we examined Borillo's classification of these prepositions in figure 23, and in order to investigate the absence of an overt complement further we have reproduced it again below (cf. Figure 24). It confirms the use of certain prepositions without an overt complement, and that we can rightly assume Borillo's analysis that *en avant de* and *en arrière de* are complex prepositions. It also explains the difficulty in classification in certain reference grammars for their counterparts *en avant* and *en arrière*. Indeed, in many instances one would

immediately categorise these variants as adverbs, however Borillo (1999: 54) also shows that complex prepositions can be employed in two different ways. Either as governed complex prepositions (*Préposition complexe régime*), with *de* present, and introducing a governing noun, or as non-governed complex prepositions (*Préposition complexe orpheline*), without *de* present, and therefore not introducing a noun. As we discussed in section 2.4.1.1, when these prepositions are used without a governing noun, it is most often found or implied in the surrounding context.

Figure 24: Complex prepositions

(Adapted from Borillo's (2001: 142) classification of prepositions)

col. 1 Prep. simple régime	col. 2 Prep. orpheline	col. 3 NLI (Local. Intern)	col. 4 Prep comp régime		col. 5 Prep comp orpheline	col. 6 Adverbe
			à Det N de (N)	à/en/ par N de (N)		
dans N	dedans ¹	le dedans	en dedans de N au-dedans de N	en dedans	au-dedans	
sur N	dessus	le dessus	en dessus de N au-dessus de N	par-dessus N	? en dessus au-dessus	
sous N	dessous	le dessous	en dessous de au-dessous de n	par-dessous N	? en dessous au-dessous	
devant N	devant	le devant, l'avant	au-devant de N	en avant de N	en avant	devant, par devant en avant
derrière N	derrière	le derrière, l'arrière	à l'arrière de N	en arrière de N	?au-dernière en arrière	derrière, par der. en arrière
contre N	(tout) contre					
entre N	entre					
chez N						
parmi N						
			au dehors de, hors de	en dehors de	au dehors, en dehors	au dehors
			près de		(tout) près	
		? le tour	autour de N		(tout) autour	
		? le long, longueur	au/le long de N		tout le long	

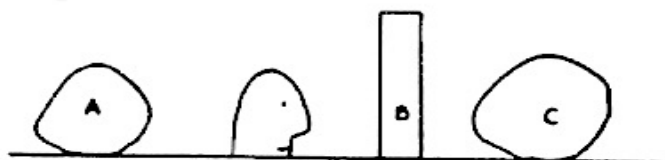
From our data analysis work we know that the speakers in the CFPQ use both types of complex preposition, i.e. with and without a complement. However, despite the importance of Borillo's more precise definition, we will also consider additional information that may inform us about the reasons for the non-standard

use of these variants in Quebec French, notably research that investigates the cognitive processes at work when speakers select prepositions.

6.7.2 Vandeloise (1986a, 1986b, 1987, 1991; 1993, 1999; 2004)

We previously touched on relevant work undertaken by Vandeloise (1986a, 1986b, 1987, 1991; 1993, 1999; 2004) where preposition use is covered in great detail. These articles give an insight into the semantics of prepositions, and how their meanings govern their use in the mind of the speaker. Of interest to the study of the (ANTE) and (POST) variables is Vandeloise's 1986 article in the *Revue québécoise de linguistique* (1986a) where the cognitive processes involved in the use of the variants *l'avant/l'arrière* and *le devant/le derrière* are examined. In this article these nominalisations are explored in connection with Vandeloise's theory of general orientation, and the idea that their use is governed by access to the perception of the spatial concepts of the prepositions *devant* and *derrière*. As mentioned earlier in chapter 2, Vandeloise puts great importance on the role of general orientation in the use and development of the prepositions *devant* and *derrière*. It is possible that non-standard uses of the variants *en avant*, *en avant de*, *en arrière*, *en arrière de*, and *devant* in Quebec French can be explained by these theoretical concepts. If we consider Vandeloise's example below (1986a: 283-286) we can see his consideration of the automatic processes occurring in a speaker's mind when a preposition is selected. Here in accordance with the speaker's general orientation, the wall (B) is in front of the speaker, and the rock (A) is behind the speaker.

Figure 25: Vandeloise's explanation of 'general orientation'
(Vandeloise, 1986a: 283)

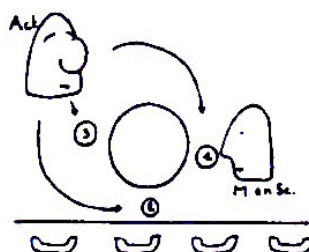


According to Vandeloise (1986a: 284) figure (25) illustrates how the position of the speaker, his/her line of sight, direction of movement, and the positive³⁷

³⁷ Here the word *positive* refers to the position of these attributes using the Cartesian coordinate plane.

position of certain anatomical traits (eyes, nose), all contribute to the choice of preposition used to describe the positions of the wall and the rock. However, this simple representation of the uses of *devant* and *derrière* gets much more complex in intricate situations, which is demonstrated well in Vandeloise's second example. Here in figure (26), the sentence *L'acteur est devant la table* represented by the image, shows the position of the actor can be interpreted in three different ways depending on the context of the situation. In position 1 it is the stage manager i.e. *M. en Sc.* who orientates the table, in position 2 it is the spectators, and in position 3 it is the actor.

Figure 26: Vandeloise's illustration of 'general orientation'
(Vandeloise, 1986a: 285)



L'acteur est devant la table ronde.

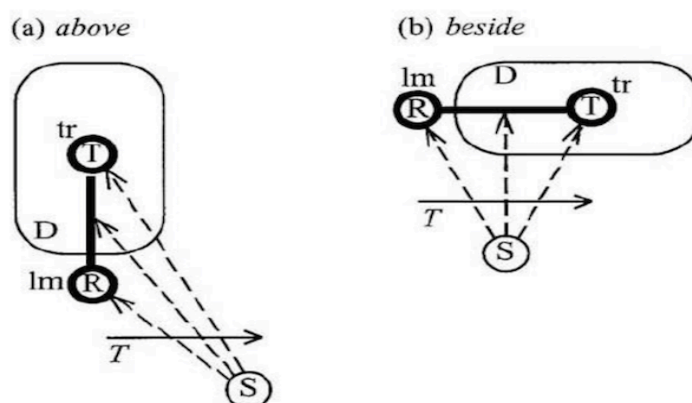
These concepts go some way to help us understand the complexities of preposition use from one perspective. However, they do not appear to fully explain the processes at work with non-standard utterances of certain (ANTE) and (POST) variants in Quebec French. Indeed, as we have seen, Quebec French exhibits non-standard use of the variants *en avant (de)*, *en arrière (de)* and *devant*.

6.7.3 Langacker (1987a; 1987b; 1993, 1999; 2010, 2011)

We previously considered Langacker's work on the subject of prepositions, both with regards to cognitive schemas, and as applied to the use of the (POSS) variable. Here we consider the theory of figure-ground asymmetry that Langacker applies to his work on spatial prepositions. It is a theory first posited by Talmy (1978: 627) and involves a situation 'where a physical object is located, or moves with respect to another object which serves as a reference point' (Thiering, 2011: 247,248). Langacker developed this further by introducing

the labels **trajector** and **landmark**, which serve as the figure and ground entities respectively. The figure-ground asymmetry framework is undeniably relevant to the consideration of the cognitive processes at work in the selection of spatial prepositions, however, Langacker (2011: 31) has highlighted that with the abstract organisations of prepositional meanings ‘it is not sufficient to say a preposition profiles a particular spatial relationship between trajector and landmark’. Indeed, an explanation for the relationship can only be found if a third element is taken into account, that of the **search domain** (cf. Miller and Johnson-Laird, 1976: 384; Hawkins, 1985). From Langacker’s description of the selection processes we can see that the search domain is of great importance to the consideration of the (ANTE) and (POST) variables. This is because Langacker defines it as ‘the spatial region to which a locative expression confines its trajector, i.e. the set of trajector positions that will satisfy its specifications’ (Langacker, 2011). If we consider figure (27), it shows that the prepositions *above* and *beside* both have a dominion (D) or **search domain**, that spans around the point of contact with the target (T) in all directions.

Figure 27: The 'search dominion' model, situating all relevant participants
(Adapted from Langacker 2011: 32)



S= Subject of conception R= reference point tr = trajector
T= Target D= search domain lm = landmark

Langacker’s main point is that prepositions are not specifying the exact location of the trajector in relation to the landmark, but just that it is to be found in an ‘extended’ region, i.e. the **search domain**. Langacker (2011: 32) suggests that the abstract organisation of prepositional meanings reflects the conceptual

archetypes of SEARCHING and FINDING, and represents a ubiquitous everyday experience of searching through space and finding something. He indicates that the most typical way we do this is by locating a salient reference object, which we know how to find, and then searching within its vicinity. If we take his example of giving someone directions to find a restaurant, one could tell them that is close to the post office, they would then locate the post office, then search around that area until they find the restaurant. In this instance, the landmark is the post office, the target is the restaurant, and the search domain is the area around the post office where the search was conducted. There are many trajectors that could be taken to locate the target (restaurant), but they all fall within the search domain and they all pass via the spatial landmark (post office). Therefore, the subject of conception (conceptualiser) evokes the landmark as a reference point, in order to situate the trajector cognitively, and then the target of the search. The search domain is thus the reference point's dominion, i.e. the region accessible through it. It is precisely this search domain that plays a part in many grammatical constructions involving preposition use (Langacker, 1999: 46), and in our opinion can explain the non-standard uses of certain prepositions in spoken language. Langacker (2011: 33) also posits that apart from the focal prominence of the trajector/target alignment in this schema, it is fundamentally identical to the possessive schema in figure (16). Which can explain why locative expressions are commonly extended to possessive use, and vice versa. In addition, the subject of conception (the speaker) is often referring to a target (object) that is in the speaker's, and thus the hearer's perceptual environment³⁸ (Boothe, 2002: 56). This can give rise to the object not being expressed, but only implied, which is a common occurrence found in the CFPQ data files.

³⁸ Defined by Boothe as the 'surroundings of observers that can be sampled with their own sense organs'.

CHAPTER 7 The (ANTE) and (POST) variables: Linguistic and Sociolinguistic analysis

7.1 Linguistic constraints

7.1.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we circumscribed each variant and its variable context in order to facilitate a linguistic examination of the (ANTE) and (POST) variables. We also discussed the treatment of the variants in both traditional reference grammars and specialist reference works. Moreover, a consideration of Internet and written references of these variants' regional uses was undertaken.

In this chapter, we will analyse the quantitative results that our previously described coding, and formula calculations generated. Using this data, and in the absence of previous studies regarding these variables, we will examine the linguistic constraints that could be exercising an influence on the use of the (ANTE) and (POST) variants in Quebec French.

7.2 Overall distribution of the (ANTE) and (POST) variants

The following tables give details of the (ANTE) and (POST) variables' overall distribution. Although the figures do not shed light on the linguistic contexts of the variants, they provide a clear picture of their frequencies of use in Quebec French.

An initial observation from tables (24) and (25) indicates that the most remarkable result concerns the low frequency of use of locative *derrière* and *à l'arrière*. We can see that there are 5 occurrences of *derrière* and 2 of *à l'arrière*, out of a total of 136 (POST) locative expressions. Interestingly, the token numbers for *devant* are not as low as its counterpart *derrière*, in comparison to constructions using the *en avant (de)* variants it is still used just under 30% less. We will investigate the importance of these figures later. Additionally, we can see from tables (24) and (25) that both null complement variants *en avant* and *en arrière* display the highest overall token counts with locative reference, 47 tokens (*en avant*) and 76 tokens (*en arrière*) respectively. This would imply that the absence of a PP complement does not adversely affect their rate of use, which is a factor we will look into below.

Table 24: Overall Distribution of (ANTE) variants in the CFPQ

	N
en avant ^{Loc}	47
en avant ^{Temp}	1
en avant ^{Indeterminate}	0
avant ^{Temp}	292
en avant de ^{Loc}	21
en avant de ^{Temp}	2
en avant de ^{Indeterminate}	0
devant ^{Loc}	38
devant ^{Temp}	2
à l'avant	1
TOTAL N	404

Table 25: Overall Distribution of (POST) variants in the CFPQ

	N
en arrière ^{Loc}	76
en arrière ^{Temp}	6
en arrière ^{Indeterminate}	1
arrière ^{Loc}	1
en arrière de ^{Loc}	52
en arrière de ^{Temp}	5
en arrière de ^{Indeterminate}	0
derrière ^{Loc}	5
à l'arrière ^{Loc}	2
Total N	148

7.3 (ANTE) and (POST) distribution according to reference type

Having established the overall frequencies of the locative and temporal uses of each (ANTE) and (POST) variant, we will now start our linguistic constraint analysis by considering the effect of these reference types on the use of the (ANTE) and (POST) variables.

7.3.1 Locative reference and the locating noun

As we have seen in tables (24) and (25) above, the data displays a predominance of locative use with both the (ANTE) and (POST) variables. Due to this tendency, we will examine the effect the choice of noun might be having on the speakers' use of a particular variant. Fundamentally, we want to determine if there is a correlation between the type of complement being referred to, and the variant chosen to locate it. However, in order to be able to interpret the effect of this factor group on the use of the (ANTE) and (POST) variables it was necessary to establish, for each utterance, the word category of the complement, i.e. the localisation noun's word category. On first examination, it appeared that this would not be a difficult task, yet, certain utterances proved to be problematic. This was due to a number of reasons, the first was the ambiguous nature of some phrases, for example in (78) we can interpret the speaker's sentence in one of two ways. Either the speaker is locating the person as sat behind them, or they are locating them as sat at the back of the skidoo.

(78)

C : sauf sauf pour le: le [1passager (en pointant derrière elle) **en arrière** il y a pas de rien [2de chauffant (RIRE)

'Except for the passenger behind/at/in/on the back there's nothing heated'

[SC1, P23, L6]

In each case the localisation noun can be a different noun type, if the speaker is locating the noun in relation to the driver, i.e. *le passager en arrière [du conducteur]*, then the locating noun is a person (the driver). If on the other hand we consider the speaker to be locating the noun in relation to the position of the speaker on the skidoo i.e. *le passager en arrière [du skidoo]*, then the locating noun is an object (the skidoo). We believe that we encountered this difficulty in interpretation mainly because of the distinctive semantic import of the variants being used in this variety of French, meaning we were not always able to make an intuitive decision regarding the referent of the variant in some utterances. Therefore, it became obvious that to make an informed assessment of what constituted the complement in the utterance, we needed to use our

understanding of the situation, coupled with the surrounding linguistic context as tools.

Our first problem solving approach was to employ a combination of constituency tests in order to decide on a reference noun category. Each referent was categorised using the same methodology, which helped determine the type of localisation noun, as well as serve as a framework for replicating the categorisation of these nouns for future studies.

The term 'constituent' is used in linguistics, particularly in syntactic studies, to refer to a string of words in a multi-word phrase that modify, or add details and meaning to the headword. In the utterances we are dealing with, as we have seen above, the headword is not always accompanied by its modifier or complement. In the case of prepositions, as we have discussed earlier, the modifier is most often a noun phrase. Therefore, for us to determine if the type of modifier governs the choice of headword, we need to categorise the noun.

The constituency tests we have chosen to use are echo questions and wh-questions. Echo question constituent tests typically take the utterance, and ask a question that will obtain the missing information using a question word at the end. Therefore, taking example (78) again, if we use the echo question constituency test we generate the following information (e.g. 79).

(79) Sauf sauf le le passager en arrière, il y pas de rien de chauffant

- Le passager *en arrière* [de quoi?] (echo question)
- Le passager *en arrière* [de qui?] (echo question)
- Où est ce que tu t'assois? (wh-question)
- Qui/qu'est-ce qui est en arrière? (wh-question)

Unfortunately, it is well known that constituency tests often deliver contradictory results, or at best no definitive answer. They are frequently ranked on a scale of reliability depending on how much they can help to identify the constituent of a sentence, and the less reliable tests are thought to be useful, but not sufficient on their own. In our case, the tests provided some help in establishing the localisation noun's category, and after performing the tests on each utterance we were able to divide the complements/localisation nouns into five groups. In instances where it was still not possible to determine what the noun type was we created an indeterminate group.

Hence, this factor group is made up of five factors: a person (P), a building (B), an object (O), a place (PL), and Indeterminate (I), which are all localisation nouns, except (I). The utterance below displays ambiguous reference, where the variant *en avant* is used to locate the noun spatially with regards to the other entities in the context. In order to work out what noun is being located by the variant we performed an echo question constituency test.

(80)

H : [1la propriétaire était **en** [2**avant** pis nous-autres on avait un patio pareil là t'sais/ là/ c'était bien

'The owner was in front, then us, we had a patio there too, there you know, there it was good'

[SC4, L20, P92]

- a. La propriétaire était en avant [de quoi?]
- b. En avant [de moi]
- c. En avant [de toi]
- d. En avant [de nous]
- e. En avant de [la maison ou appartement]

As we can see from the possible answers to our echo question, the complement of the PP could have been any of the four examples above. However, when we combine this test with a consideration of the context, the use of the third person pronoun *on* in the previous utterance, and the use of the first person pronoun *nous-autres* after the PP, it is more than likely to be (d) that answers the echo question. The test proved to be useful here to confirm our decision, and to rule out choosing the building (B) category for the classification of this implied complement.

Contrary to example (80) above, the variant *en avant de* is employed by the speaker in (81) below to locate the dog's 'business' spatially in relation to the house. The complement of the preposition is overt; therefore, we know the localisation noun is a building (B) i.e. the house, and this example is one of the more straightforward tokens to categorise. Here we did not need to perform any constituency tests to ascertain the complement of the preposition.

(81)

A : [1ils font faire le le besoin du chien <f<en [2avant de la maison as-tu déjà vu ça toi (en cognant à quelques reprises sur la table comme pour insister sur ses propos)

'They let their dog do its 'business' in front of the house, have you ever seen that?'

[SC5, L4, P16]

In summary, using the information gleaned from the context, and the constituency tests, we were able to allocate all the tokens for each variant to one of the five aforementioned categories, Person (P), Building (B), Object (O), Place (PI) or Indeterminate (I). We now proceed to examine the effect of these noun categories on the speakers' choice of variant.

7.3.2 Locative reference and the (ANTE-Loc) variants

Using our previous noun categorisation work, we start the analysis of our coded results to examine the effect of the noun category on the use of the (ANTE-Loc) variants. In table (26), the token numbers have been quantified and the results reflect their uses with each different noun category i.e. Person (P), Building (B), Object (O), Place (PI) and Indeterminate (I).

Table 26: (ANTE-Loc) frequencies according to: Locating Noun category

PP Comp	<i>en avant</i> ^{Loc}	<i>en avant de</i> ^{Loc}	<i>devant</i> ^{Loc}	<i>avant</i> ^{Loc}	<i>à l'avant</i> ^{Loc}	Total N
Person (P)	12 32.4%	5 13.5%	20 54.5%	0	0	37
Building (B)	5 31.3%	6 37.5%	5 31.3%	0	0	16
Object (O)	29 56.9%	10 19.6%	11 21.6%	0	1 1.9%	51
Place (PI)	0	0	2 100%	0	0	2
Indeter (I)	1 100%	0	0	0	0	1
Total N	47	21	38	0	1	107
Relative Frequency	44.0%	19.6%	35.5%		0.9 %	

From this quantification, we can see that the highest frequency of use for the (ANTE-Loc) variable is the variant *en avant*, and it is most used to locate objects (O). We will now go on to examine each noun category individually to determine if there is a correlation with the number of tokens produced for each (ANTE-Loc) variant.

7.3.3 (ANTE-Loc) and the Person (P) noun category

When we consider the effect of the localisation noun category Person (P) on the use of the variants, we can see from table (26) that not all the (ANTE) variants are used in an equal manner with this type of noun. The most frequently used variant for locating people is *devant* as in example (82). From our categorisation work on the CFPQ data – that we discussed earlier – we uncovered a pattern of use with *devant*, which indicates that it is employed differently to the other variants of the (ANTE-Loc) variable.

(82)

l : t'étais ah oui oui pis là tu te faisais ramasser **devant** la classe ben tu peux-tu être sûr qu'on traçait pas nos pourtours t'sais (dit en riant) (.) pis c'est ça c'était tous là les dessins pour faire des petits points pis j'aimais ça faire ça (.) c'était le fun [1mais c'est de la patience

' [...] you came a cropper in front of the class, and you can be sure we weren't drawing our outlines you know [...]' [SC 7, L1, P101]

Here the speaker is recounting an event where the participant falls down in front of the class, and *devant* is used with a dynamic verb (*se faire ramasser*) where the locating noun is a person/group of people. Contrary to *en avant*, which is preferred to locate a static object (O) with a preceding noun (e.g *le pick-up avec le chrome en avant*) the variant *devant* is rarely used in this way in the CFPQ. Indeed, out of 40 tokens of *devant* only 3 are used with a preceding locating noun. Additionally, examining the use of *devant* with different noun categories we can see that this variant is predominantly employed to speak about people, and seldom used to refer to places, which appears to be in striking contrast to its use in Standard French. This use of *devant* is clearly demonstrated in table (26) where the Person (P) category displays the highest relative frequency. Furthermore, our categorisation work has shown that *devant* is frequently employed when a person is being located in front of other people, coupled with an action being performed by one or both parties. In these instances, *devant* is the variant of choice, therefore for this reason we decided to code for the use of *devant* with dynamic and stative verbs and the results can be seen in table (27). For the total of 40 tokens used in the corpus, 35 were combined with a dynamic verb.

Table 27: Tokens of *devant* according to: Type of Verb (Stative or Dynamic)

Preposition	N Stative verb	N Dynamic verb	Total N
<i>devant</i>	5	35	40

The reason for the difference in use of *devant* with dynamic and stative verbs is not entirely clear, although it appears that the type of discourse context may be the deciding factor. One explanation comes from an inspection of the utterances where *devant* occurs, which shows that this variant is more common when speakers are recounting an event, typically using a type of narrative speech style to describe something that happened. Indeed, this type of speech style automatically involves the use of dynamic verbs, which in turn, appear to trigger the use of *devant* in place of the variant *en avant*. One could argue, given the non-standard nature of the use of *en avant* to locate a person in Standard French, that *en avant* would not be an option in these discourse contexts. However, as we can see in table (26) Quebec French does use this variant to locate people (12 tokens), therefore it would appear that, especially with a dynamic verb, a Person (P) localisation noun is a strong linguistic constraint exercising an influence on the use of the variant *devant*.

7.3.4 (ANTE-Loc) and the Building (B) noun category

Moving to the consideration of the (ANTE-LOC) variants and their use with the noun category Building (B), we can see immediately from the relative frequencies in table (26), that all the variants, with the exception of *à l'avant* and *avant*, are being used to a similar degree for locating buildings. The table also highlights the lack of use of the variant *à l'avant* to locate buildings, a finding consistent with Standard French usage. Interestingly, according to our relative frequencies, the building (B) noun type appears to trigger a slight preference for the use of *en avant de*, compared to the other noun categories examined thus far, which is evidenced by the variants' distributions i.e. 31.3% (*en avant*), 37.5 % (*en avant de*), and 31.3% (*devant*).

7.3.5 (ANTE-Loc) and the Object (O) noun category

The Object (O) category is found to display the largest number of (ANTE-Loc) tokens, indeed as we see in table (26), the total number of tokens for this variant is 51. However, from the table we also learn that over 55% of variant use to locate objects is with *en avant* (29/51 tokens). It appears that, despite the fact that *en avant* is not often accompanied by a following complement, it is the CFPQ informants' variant of choice when referring to objects. However, we exercise caution in our interpretation, as the data also shows that the complement was

often mentioned earlier in the utterance, before the use of the preposition *en avant*. Thus, the complement is not strictly missing; it is simply not following the preposition, but preceding it. With these cases the complements are what Borillo (1993, 2001) refers to as *nom de localisation interne*, which are often not governed by the preposition, but can be found in the context, and refer to a topological zone on or around it, we will look into this in more detail later.

Interestingly, in one extract even the metadata uses a variant that would not normally be seen in Standard French, [...] *l'espace entre les roues d'en avant*. Indeed, evidence from our data indicates that the high rate of use *en avant* to describe parts of a vehicle could be the explanation for its elevated relative frequency. This is exhibited in our coding files, as many conversations discussing parts of cars, such as wheels/tyres and grills, which we have classified as objects, contain this variant.

7.3.6 (ANTE-Loc) and the Place (PI) noun category

The low number of tokens with the locating noun category place (PI) indicates that informants very rarely use (ANTE-LOC) variants to locate generic places being discussed in their conversations. The two occurrences that were found are referring to living areas, and cannot be classed as buildings or objects. They are also both used with the variant *devant*.

7.3.7 (ANTE-Loc) and the Indeterminate (I) noun category

This category was established to quantify tokens of variants where the localisation noun was not discernible from the context, or by using a constituent test. The number of occurrences is low; indeed, we encountered only 1 instance where it was not possible to attribute a noun category as can be seen in (83).

(83)

MA : pis là je me retourne mais là j'ai peur qu'elle dise •retourne [1regarde *en avant*^o (dit en riant)

'So then I turn round but then I'm worried that she'll tell me to turn around and look towards the front' [SC 3, P88, L10]

The token poses a difficulty due to the impossibility of determining the reference noun of *en avant*. There are a few possibilities, which we have listed below as (83a-c), however, there is no way of deciding on one definite reference noun category, as they do not all belong to the same category:

(83a) pis là je me retourne mais là j'ai peur qu'elle dise retourne regarde *en avant*
(de ta/votre chaise ?) O

(83b) pis là je me retourne mais là j'ai peur qu'elle dise retourne regarde *en avant*
(de Marie ?) P

(83c) pis là je me retourne mais là j'ai peur qu'elle dise retourne regarde *en avant*
(de ta/votre place ?) PI

7.4 Locative reference and the (POST-Loc) variants

We now turn to examining the effect of the noun category on the choice of (POST-Loc) variants. As with the (ANTE-Loc) variable, we are interested in whether the noun being referred to influences the choice of variant used. The total token number for the (POST-Loc) variable is 136; thus there is a 29 token increase of use with this variable than with the (ANTE-Loc) variable. We will look into the different noun categories to examine the influence they may have on the speakers' choice of variants. Table (28) displays the overall token counts for each category, and the token counts and relative frequencies for each variant.

Table 28: (POST-Loc) frequencies according to: Locating Noun Category

PP Comp	<i>en arrière</i> ^{Loc}	<i>en arrière de</i> ^{Loc}	<i>derrière</i> ^{Loc}	<i>à l'arrière</i> ^{Loc}	<i>arrière</i> ^{Loc}	Total N
Person (P)	21 77.8%	6 22.2%	0	0	0	27
Building (B)	20 55.6%	16 44.4%	0	0	0	36
Object (O)	33 49.3%	26 38.8%	5 7.5%	2 2.9%	1 1.5%	67
Place (PI)	1 33.3%	2 66.7%	0	0	0	3
Indeter (I)	1 33.3%	2 66.7%	0	0	0	3
Total N	76	52	5	2	1	136
Relative Frequency	55.9%	38.2%	3.7%	1.5%	0.7%	

Firstly, if we examine the raw figures regarding the number of tokens per variant, we can see that the most dominant variants for this variable are *en arrière* and *en arrière de* with totals of 76 and 52 tokens respectively. In complete contrast to the variant *devant* for the (ANTE-Loc) variable, the use of the variant *derrière* is very low with only 5 tokens, and the use of *à l'arrière* is similar to that of *à l'avant* with only 2 tokens. The noun category Object (O) is displaying the highest number of tokens with 67, and again the place (PI) and Indeterminate (I) categories show very low token counts in comparison. In the Person (P) noun category the main distinction to be found between the (ANTE-Loc) and (POST-Loc) variable is the strikingly low number of *derrière* tokens compared to its counterpart *devant*.

Proceeding with an individual inspection of these noun categories, we are confronted with the fact that the variants *à l'arrière* and *arrière* have produced such low token counts that it is not feasible to analyse their use and draw reliable conclusions. The methodological issue of the infrequency of variants has been addressed earlier; therefore, due to limitations brought on by a very low number of tokens, we will just assess and comment on the individual occurrences of these variants.

In the case of *à l'arrière* there were 2 tokens in the CFPQ data that referred to an object, and both instances occurred in the same conversation.

(84)

A : mon bras était rendu plus **à l'arrière** (en plaçant son bras en arrière comme pour mimer la position dont elle parle)

R : plus **à l'arrière**

'A: My arm was swung back'

'R: Far back'

[SC 20, P33, L17-18]

Both the speaker and one other interlocutor used the variant to refer to the speaker's body. We believe it was employed to make a locative distinction; indeed, normally the variant *en arrière* or *derrière* in Standard French would have been employed to situate the speaker's arm behind or at the back of her body. However, in this case the speaker needed to emphasise an even more distinct location as she was explaining how her arms were swinging from front to back as she was walking. At the time of the incident her arm was at its furthest point back. In the case of the variant *arrière*, the CFPQ only yields 1 token that is employed as a preposition, although upon first inspection this token closely resembled a type of noun construction, such as a compound noun e.g. *arrière-cuisine*.

(85)

J : regarde tu me feras pas dire (1,4") <len<quand je sors la cassette (.) de Lyster l'hiver quand on fait du [1ski-doo dans les sentiers (.) des forêts **arrière** (en pointant derrière son épaule) (.) euh: ch- à Lyster avec la famille avec le (.) le contexte (en faisant une boule avec ses mains comme pour représenter le contexte) (.) avec euh le le>>

'[...] when we went on the ski-doo down the tracks in the forests at the back, eh at Lyster with the family and the context with the ...]

[SC 6, P28, L18]

7.4.1 (POST-Loc) and the Person (P) noun category

As we can see from table (28) above, there are two (POST-Loc) variants that dominate spoken Quebec French when referring to people (P), *en arrière* and *en arrière de*. On the other hand, the variant *derrière* is not observed to refer to people at all in the CFPQ. This is in stark contrast to its (ANTE-LOC) counterpart, i.e. *devant*, which had a high relative frequency of use for this noun category. It is possible that the absence of the variant *derrière* when talking about people is due to its close association with the noun *derrière* meaning a person's behind. We also note that the highest relative frequency to refer to people is with the variant *en arrière* with 77.8% relative frequency.

7.4.2 (POST-Loc) and the Building (B) noun category

Contrary to the (ANTE-Loc) variable, we can see from table (28) that the (POST-Loc) variants *en arrière* and *en arrière de* are the only variants used to refer to buildings (B). In addition, they are used at a higher rate (55.6% and 44.4% respectively) than *en avant* and *en avant de*, which displayed a 31.3% and 37.5% relative frequency. For *en arrière* the absence of a following noun complement does not appear to impede its use, but as we said earlier, this could also be due to the fact that the noun complement may still be overtly expressed in the utterance, simply before the preposition instead of after. The evidence in table (28) suggests that locating a building in Quebec French is solely accomplished by using the two variants *en arrière* and *en arrière de* and never with the variant *derrière* as in Standard French.

7.4.3 (POST-Loc) and the Object (O) noun category

Again, as with the (ANTE-Loc) variants it is the noun category Object (O) that displays the highest token numbers, with a total of 67 tokens of the overall total of 136 tokens. This noun category presents a skewed pattern of use that favours the variants *en arrière* and *en arrière de*, and displaying only very low use of the variants *derrière*, *à l'arrière*, and *arrière*. The highest relative frequency for this noun category is with *en arrière*, which exhibits a 49.3% percentage, which is followed closely by the variant *en arrière de* that shows a 38.8% rate of use.

Once again, similar to the variant *en avant*, the variant *en arrière* is the most popular variant among the (POST-Loc) variants to refer to objects. However, a slight dissimilarity can be found here, as unlike the variables *en avant*

and *en avant de*, which have a large difference in relative frequency, *en arrière* and *en arrière de* exhibit closer usage numbers. Indeed, there is only a difference of 6 tokens between the uses of the two variants, whereas there is a 19 token difference between the equivalent variants in the (ANTE-Loc) variable. This would indicate, once again, that the absence of the following complement does not influence these variants' usage. Indeed, in many cases of *en arrière* the object of the preposition was mentioned before the use of the variant, however, in some cases it was not mentioned at all, but is discernible from the context.

7.4.4 (POST-Loc) and the Place (PI) noun category

The (POST-Loc) variants used to refer to places in the CFPQ exhibit the lowest token numbers of all the noun categories identified. Only 3 tokens were identified that refer to places, three of them with the variant *en arrière de*. The occurrences that we observed are all designating geographical spaces that do not have particular names. The place (PI) noun category is therefore used to classify these nouns, as we have the certainty they are places and do not need to go so far as categorising them in the indeterminate category.

7.4.5 (POST-Loc) and the Indeterminate (I) noun category

The indeterminate category has a higher number of occurrences for the (POST-Loc) variable than it had for the (ANTE-Loc) variable. Indeed, here we have a total of 3 tokens that could not be classified with certainty. The lack of following complement more than likely explains why these tokens could not be classified according to their noun category type. However, when we look at some examples this is not the only condition that caused these occurrences to be classified as indeterminate. Indeed, as we mentioned in our overview above, we also encountered a number of expressions using the variant *en arrière* e.g. *revenir en arrière*.

In (86) below it is clear that it is not possible to determine what noun category the missing complement should be attributed to, thus this token is included in the indeterminate category. This category contains nouns that could not be classified as people, buildings, or objects and therefore are included here.

(86)

N : [1de la drogue il avait un commerce de drogue <p<ah c'est rendu **en arrière**>>
(en cherchant ce qui est tombé par terre)

'drugs, he had a drug business, ah that's going back now' [SC 12, P34,L9]

In this example the variant *en arrière* is being used in a common Quebec French expression, *être rendu en arrière*, which means to go back in time.

7.5 Locative reference and the (ANTE-Temp) variants

As we have seen previously the (ANTE) and (POST) variants are used predominantly to express locative reference. However, there are some examples of the variants being used to express temporal reference, albeit a small minority. Our results have been collated in table (29), which displays the low token numbers of non-standard variants employed in the corpus to express temporal reference. We will proceed to examine the individual tokens of (ANTE-Temp) variants that have been found in the CFPQ data. However, as can be seen from table (29), not all noun categories demonstrate use with these variants.

Table 29: (ANTE-Temp) tokens according to: Locating Noun category

PP Comp	en avant ^{Temp}	en avant de ^{Temp}	avant ^{Temp}	devant ^{Temp}	Total N
Person (P)	1	1	0	2	4
Building (B)	0	0	0	0	0
Object (O)	0	1	0	0	1
Place (Pl)	0	0	0	0	0
Indeter (I)	0	0	292	0	292
Total	1	2	292	2	297

The main category that dominates the use of the (ANTE-Temp) variable is the indeterminate category (292 tokens). This can be described as an almost categorical use of the variant *avant* for temporal reference. The use of *avant* in these types of utterances necessitates an indeterminate categorisation due to the lack of reference noun. Indeed, this variant was mainly used to refer to a range of situations that could not be categorised as a person, object or other. Despite this high token count, there are also a small number of tokens in the Person (P)

and Object (O) noun categories. Here, notwithstanding the reference to the timing of an event, the speaker chose a different variant to *avant*, and from the context it was possible to determine the reference noun in the utterance. However, these two categories exhibit much lower tokens numbers in comparison to the high numbers found with the (ANTE-Loc) variable, (37 and 51 tokens respectively). Below we will discuss their uses in more detail.

7.5.1 (ANTE-Temp) and the Person (P) noun category

We have identified 4 tokens that express temporal reference in the Person (P) category with (ANTE-Temp) variants, of which 2 tokens use the variant *devant*, and 2 use the variants *en avant* and *en avant de*. As we can see below in (87) and (88), in both cases of the variant *devant*, it is used to refer to a point in time in a person's life, and the speaker uses the variant to indicate this future time reference.

(87)

G : fait que: c'était quand même: fait

R : [1faut que t'aies une bonne journée **devant** toi

'R: You need a good day ahead of you'

[SC 13, P11, L8-9]

(88)

S :[11fait que/ (.) elle a quand même un bel avenir **devant** elle [12là t'sais c'est des belles jobs hein/

'S: So, she still has a good future ahead of her, you know they're good jobs'

[SC 15, P38, L10]

These occurrences can be considered to adhere to Standard French use, where *devant* is often the variant employed to refer to something happening in a person's future, and yet their frequency in Quebec French still appears to be very low (2 tokens). In addition, from our quantification we have established no other (ANTE-TEMP) variant is used in place of *devant*^{Temp} for this type of utterance, unlike the division of labour we found with the (ANTE-LOC) variants *en avant (de)* and *devant*.

Interestingly, in examples (89) and (90) we can see a subtle difference in use of the (ANTE-Temp) variant *en avant de*, which is that here it is being used to refer to the timing of an event involving people. Yet, despite this non-standard use, the utterances are not difficult to comprehend, and one would assume that this use of *en avant* (which was also found), and *en avant de* might be more common due to the higher occurrence of *en avant* and *en avant de* to express locative reference in Quebec French. In Metropolitan and Standard French these variants would not be employed in such contexts, in fact the variant of choice would more than likely be *avant* in these cases.

(89)

S : pis il a passé euh: (.) il il trouvait ça lui f- pour son jeune âge (.) il a passé **en avant de** b:eaucoup beaucoup [1de monde

‘S: Then he passed, he thought that, he, for his young age, he passed in front of a lot of people’ [SC 5, P89, L21]

(90)

S : pis lui il a passé **en avant** par rapport qu’il est il est

‘S: ...then he got ahead, because he is, he is...’ [SC 5, P90, L3]

7.5.2 (ANTE-Temp) and the Object (O) noun category

In the object (O) category there is only 1 token that can be attributed to the (ANTE-Temp) variable, and the variant used here is *en avant de*. As we can see in example (91), this type of time expression in Metropolitan French would have triggered the use of *avant*. The variant *avant* is found in the CFPQ (292), however we have not undertaken a linguistic analysis of its uses in this study.

(91)

M : [1ce que le gars disait ce qui est vrai que dans la pl- la plupart des des places c’est que (.) la qualité (.) la quantité passe **en avant de** la qualité c’est ça qu’il disait

'M: what the guy was saying which is true is that in most places it's that quality, quantity that goes before quality, that's what he was saying'

[SC 5, P51, L13]

7.6 Locative reference and the (POST-Temp) variants

Once again in table (30) below we can see that in the CFPQ data the use of (POST-Temp) variants is very low. Indeed, in comparison to its counterpart variable (POST-Loc), it shows 125 fewer tokens. In addition to this very low usage rate, this variable is also only employed to refer to people, objects, or indeterminate nouns. We will proceed with an examination of only the relevant categories here.

As before, with the (ANTE-Temp) variable, we can again conclude that a large majority of the (POST-Temp) variable use is attributed to time expressions. The fact that we have a higher number of tokens, 11 as opposed to 5 (not including the 292 tokens of *avant*) for the (ANTE-Temp) variable suggests that these time expressions are more popular. This may be explained by the lower use of the variant *en avant (de)*^{Temp}. However, we have also found that the metropolitan equivalent of this variant is not used in the CFPQ to express temporal reference.

Table 30: (POST-Temp) tokens according to: Locating Noun category

PP Comp	<i>en arrière</i> ^{Temp}	<i>en arrière de</i> ^{Temp}	<i>derrière</i> ^{Temp}	<i>à l'arrière</i> ^{Temp}	<i>arrière</i> ^{Temp}	Total
Person (P)	0	3	0	0	0	3
Building (B)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Object (O)	0	2	0	0	0	2
Place (PI)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indeter (I)	6	0	0	0	0	6
Total	6	5	0	0	0	11

7.6.1 (POST-Temp) and the Person (P) noun category

For the Person (P) noun category we have observed 3 tokens that use *en arrière de* to refer to people. In these cases, the person referred to is not mentioned by name, but a personal pronoun is used, or nothing at all if the variant is employed in a sentence where the complement of the preposition can be gleaned from the

context. With two of the occurrences, example (92) and (93), the same speaker describes actions that her partner completes, that she then repeats. We discussed these occurrences previously, as they were initially difficult to categorise. We settled on classifying them under temporal reference. We arrived at this decision because the utterances were describing a chain of events in time. Although it was possible to perceive the speaker as being positioned locatively behind her partner, it is unlikely that this was the intended meaning of the variant used.

(92)

S : moi Luc (en pointant Luc) me disait •regarde Simone° parce que des fois je repassais au DÉBUT [1là (.) t'sais on commençait là dans la vie (.) euh: je repassais **en arrière de** lui

'Luke was telling me, look Simone, because sometimes I redid things at the start there you know, we were starting out together in life, err I redid things after him]
[SC 1, P45, L10]

(93)

S : non mais (.) je repassais **en arrière de** je sais pas il passait il faisait quelque chose pis je repassais après (.) t'sais comme les serviettes [1comme tu dis peut-être (.) je les mettais plus à mon goût pis tout ça (.) fait que Luc me disait •ben regarde (.) si t'es si fine toi (.) [2fais-le toi° (.) [3là j'ai

'No but I redid it after, I don't know, he went round, he did something then I redid it after, you know the napkins, you might say perhaps, I did them more my way, so Luc said 'look if you're so kind³⁹, do it yourself...'

[SC 1, P46, L1]

7.6.2 (POST-Temp) and the Object (O) noun category

When we consider the Object (O) noun category there are even fewer utterances with tokens of the (POST-Temp) variable. We have a total of 2 occurrences here, and both are with the variant *en arrière de*. The reason that these occurrences

³⁹ The word *fine* in Quebec French is translated as *kind*, *nice*, or *sweet*.

are categorised under the object (O) noun category is that the complement of the preposition is an object. In both cases the variant *en arrière de* is employed in an expression, and the complement is overt as in example (94).

(94)

B : [4parce qu'ils parlaient que c'était pour euh fluctuer les actions (en bougeant sa main gauche de haut en bas comme pour représenter les fluctuations du marché) pis euh (.) ils ont dit ça devrait pas faire grand-CHOSE mais (.) c'est tannant pareil là (.) les les carnets de commande ils ont de la misère à en avoir pis là (.) un **en arrière de** l'autre [5comme ça là/ (0:07:49.3)

'B: because they were saying that it was to have an effect on the shares, then they said that it shouldn't have much of an effect but it's so annoying, the order books, they have such trouble getting any, then they come one after the other like that'

[SC 7, P 63, L2]

7.6.3 (POST-Temp) and the Indeterminate (I) noun category

The indeterminate noun category contains the highest number of tokens (6), however, interestingly it does not contain a mix of different variants, just the variant *en arrière*. The number of occurrences in this category is explained by the lack of reference noun or complement that accompanies the preposition, this means that some occurrences were placed in the 'indeterminate' category because the implied noun is uncertain. However, there is also an interesting correlation here between the higher token count of this category, and the variant being used. Indeed, the predominant factor affecting this categorisation is the use of time expressions preceding the variant *en arrière*. The example below is a case in point, and as we can see this type of expression is also found in Metropolitan French.

(95)

M : ben premièrement c'est <f<deux heures>> **en arrière** là bas (en pointant derrière elle) ou si ils sont à la même heure que nous-autres là/ deux [4heures

'M: well firstly it's two hours behind over there, or if they are the same time as us, two hours'

[SC 5, P 87, L4]

7.7 Interpersonal variation

So far our analyses have indicated that there is a complex set of internal linguistic constraints that have an effect on the use of the (ANTE) and (POST) variants. These include the locating noun category i.e. Person (P), Building (B), Object (O), Place (PI) and Indeterminate (I), and the type of reference, i.e. locative or temporal. In this section, we will examine our results to determine if there is evidence of interpersonal variation with the use of the (ANTE) and (POST) variables. As we discussed in chapter 3, the CFPQ website provides comprehensive information regarding the speakers' gender, age, socio-professional status and level of education, enabling a consideration of several sociolinguistic factors relevant to this study. However, as already mentioned previously, we will not examine the data on the basis of socio-professional information here. The reasons for this decision are complex and have already been explained in detail above.

Here we confine ourselves to a consideration of the sociolinguistic factors of age, gender and level of education. We have separated our data into life-stage groups, an operation that we performed previously when examining interpersonal variation with the (POSS) variable. As with our (POSS) variable, the three groups have been chosen because they represent an individual's progression through three normative life-stages. Having already determined that our original life stage groups (15-29, 30-65 and 66-95) did not reflect Canadian society norms⁴⁰, we made changes to our age groupings and it is our amended groupings that we will adopt here. Therefore, to reiterate, group 1 (15-29) represents adolescence/early adult life, group 2 (30-60) signifies adult professional and family life, and group 3 (61-95) denotes retired/elderly life.

For clarification table (31) below shows the number of speakers in the 21 interviews (available at the start of this study) examined for this study. The overall number of speakers in the CFPQ corpuses is subject to change as more interviews are verified by the University of Sherbrooke, and made available for analysis.

⁴⁰ Statistics show a lower retirement age average of 60, for both males and females, cf. chapter 3.

Table 31: Number of speakers per life-stage group

Life stage	Males	Females	Total
Age group 1 (15-29yrs)	13	14	27
Age group 2 (30-60yrs)	10	17	27
Age group 3 (61-95yrs)	10	10	20

7.7.1 Age and sex constraints on the (ANTE-Loc) variants

We start with a consideration of the age and sex of speakers on the (ANTE-Loc) variants, level of education will be explored separately at a later point in this chapter. In order to examine the effect of these constraints, it was first necessary to determine the number of (ANTE-Loc) variants produced by males and females in the data. Once these totals had been arrived at, we coded for the use of each variant by sex, and again for each variant by life-stage group. The results are listed in table (32).

Table 32: (ANTE-Loc) frequencies according to: Gender and Life-stage

Group	<i>en avant</i> ^{Loc}	<i>en avant de</i> ^{Loc}	<i>devant</i> ^{Loc}	<i>à l'avant</i> ^{Loc}	Total N
Female	17	8	28	1	54
	31.5%	14.8%	51.9%	1.8%	
Male	30	13	10	0	53
	56.6%	24.5%	18.9%	0%	
Age group 1 15-29yrs	9	4	16	0	29
	31%	13.8%	55.2%	0%	
Age group 2 30-60yrs	21	9	16	1	47
	44.7%	19.1%	34.0%	2.1%	
Age group 3 61-95yrs	17	8	6	0	31
	54.8%	25.8%	19.4%	0%	
Total	47	21	38	1	107

7.7.1.1 Sex and the (ANTE-Loc) variants

Precise age and education information regarding one informant included in these calculations is not available, therefore estimated values have been attributed. An

initial observation from table (32) is that both sexes have produced a very similar number of (ANTE-Loc) tokens in the CFPQ data, with males producing 53 tokens and females producing 54 tokens. However, looking more closely at the results it is possible to see that the variants are being employed very differently by males and females, and also by the different age groups. For example, if we examine the speech of the female interlocutors more specifically, we can see that they use the variant *devant* 51.9% of the time in their speech, which is over 30% more use than males. If we assume that *devant* is the Standard Quebec French variant in these utterances, then the females' much stronger tendency to use this variant as opposed to the males use of the variants *en avant* and *en avant de* (56.6% and 24.5% respectively) corresponds to the well-known Sociolinguistic Gender Pattern (Labov, 2001).

As we discussed earlier, the variant *devant* is predominantly employed with dynamic verbs and we detected a correlation with narrative speech, which could explain why females use *devant* more often. Indeed, in a study of thirty-three women's stories and twenty-five men's stories told by inhabitants living in and around cities in Indiana in America, Johnstone (1993: 62-80) found that women's narrative often revolves around the norms of the community and joint action by groups of people. Interestingly, females also showed a higher occurrence of reference to specific people; which is evidenced in Johnstone's data, as names are mentioned in fifteen women's stories, as opposed to only seven of the men's. Johnstone's findings help explain our earlier findings in table (26), where we saw a 54.5% relative frequency of *devant* used for referencing a person (P). Therefore, it appears that the higher use of *devant* by females co-varies with the use of the Person (P) noun category, and the tendency of this variant to be employed in Quebec French to relay dynamic actions in narrative discourse.

The elevated use by males of the variant *en avant* may also be explained by the fact that an important number of *en avant* tokens were employed to refer to vehicles and parts of vehicles, often with the reference noun preceding the variant. When the reference noun precedes the variant, the speaker does not need to use the preposition *de* to introduce the variant's complement. Much descriptive discourse referring to objects is male-dominated in the CFPQ interviews, and this correlation is mentioned in the literature again with Johnstone's (1993: 72) study, where five men's stories referred to objects, as

opposed to only one women's story. This is also shown in our previous results (cf. table (26)) where we saw use of the variant *en avant* displaying a 56.9% relative frequency with the object (O) noun category.

7.7.1.2 Age and the (ANTE-Loc) variants

When we consider the effect of a speaker's age on the use of the (ANTE-Loc) variants, table (32) reveals an interesting pattern. It shows that age group 1 has a total token count of 29 variants, the lowest token total for all age groups. However, within this age group we can see that the overall distribution of variants is not uniform; it is dominated by the use of the variant *devant*. Indeed, speakers aged between 15 and 29 years have a 55.2% relative frequency of use for this variant.

In contrast, the 30-60 year-olds use *devant* 34% of the time, and the 61-95 age group use it at a rate of 19.4%. This striking result shows that the standard variant is used most by the youngest age group, which is consistent with a change in progress.

The pattern could also partially be explained, as we discussed in the previous section, by the high use of this variant by females in this age group. However, in addition to our previous findings, we also find a correlation with Eckert's (2004: 367) discussion of the central role that dramatised narrative has in adolescent discourse, which might also shed light on the dominance of the variant *devant* for this age group. Eckert discusses a connection with the discourse of secondary school and college adolescents, and the use of dramatised narration to recount past events, especially those referring to specific people. Interestingly, our second life-stage group exhibits a slightly higher token count of the variant *devant*, which could be explained by the influence of professional situations and its connection to the use of narrative discourse. However, age group 3 does not follow suit, which is an interesting finding. It might suggest that speakers in this life-stage group do not engage in narrative discourse to the same extent as the other two groups.

7.7.2 Age and sex constraints on the (POST-Loc) variants

In this section we proceed with an examination of the use of the (POST-Loc) variants. Once again we have divided our data up into groups according to gender and life stage, in order to examine the influences these factors could be exerting

on the use of the variants of this variable. Our results are shown in table (33) below.

We can see that the (POST-Loc) variable token numbers are slightly higher than the overall token numbers for the (ANTE-Loc) variable (135 tokens as opposed to 107), and that there is a 5 token difference in the use of variants between males and females. Here, however, contrary to the (ANTE-Loc) variant, males are responsible for the higher token count.

Table 33: (POST-Loc) frequencies according to: Gender and Life-stage

Group	<i>en arrière</i> ^{Loc}	<i>en arrière de</i> ^{Loc}	<i>derrière</i> ^{Loc}	<i>à l'arrière</i> ^{Loc}	Total N
Female	27 41.5%	35 53.9%	3 4.6%	0 0%	65
Male	25 35.7%	41 58.6%	2 2.9%	2 2.9%	70
Age group 1 15-29yrs	18 38.3%	26 55.3%	3 6.4%	0 0%	47
Age group 2 30-60yrs	19 32.2%	37 62.7%	1 1.7%	2 3.4%	59
Age group 3 61-95yrs	15 51.7%	13 44.8%	1 3.5%	0 0%	29
Total	52	76	5	2	135

7.7.2.1 Sex and the (POST-Loc) variants

Aside from the small 5 token difference of production for this variable between males and females, it is also obvious, contrary to its counterpart (ANTE-Loc) variant *devant*, that the Metropolitan French standard variant *derrière* does not exhibit such high token numbers. Indeed, the use of *derrière* shows relative frequencies for females and males of only 4.6% and 2.9% respectively. Females use the variant only slightly more than males, and no linguistic constraint for this appears to be obvious. The reason for this lack of use, and the apparent

difference between the two variants *derrière* and *devant* will be investigated below.

Our results show two dominant variants for the (POST-Loc) variable, *en arrière* and *en arrière de*, which share the majority of the tokens produced. However, for both males and females we can see a lower rate of use for *en arrière* than *en arrière de*. This could be explained by the greater specificity achieved when the variant *en arrière de* is used. The communicative function of this variant is to situate an object, person or building and the use of the preposition *de* and a complement realises this more clearly. Overall, it is also the most used variant for this variable, and we note from our previous quantitative results that it is predominantly used with the noun categories buildings and objects. There is a less than 5% relative frequency difference between male and female uses of all variants of this variable. However, if we compare the males' use of *en arrière* with their use of *en arrière de* there is a difference of 22.9% as opposed to a difference of 12.4% for females. This gives a conflicting view to what we previously thought, and demonstrates that although males and females both use *en arrière de* more than *en arrière*, the males' use displays a bigger difference between the two variants, suggesting that males prefer using the variant *en arrière de* more than females do.

The variant *à l'arrière* displays a low token count for both males and females, in fact there are no occurrences of this variant produced by females, and the male speakers only produce 2 tokens. This is undoubtedly intrinsically linked to the semantic import that *en arrière* and *en arrière de* have in Quebec French, which has consequently made *à l'arrière* virtually redundant. Indeed, it would appear that the variant *à l'arrière* is not needed to express the location of one item in relation to another, as the two variants *en arrière* and *en arrière de* take on this role in Quebec French. Interestingly, the 2 tokens produced in the corpus were from a male and a female in the same conversation, where the female was describing the position of her arm, and the male, in an echo answer reproduced the variant *à l'arrière*.

7.7.2.2 Age and the (POST-Loc) variants

Once again, contrary to the stark result demonstrated with the high token numbers of the variant *devant* found earlier with the (ANTE-Loc) variable, here the variant *derrière* is not produced in great numbers by any age group. This is

consistent with our findings above, where we considered its use with male and female speakers. We reiterate here that the variant *derrière* is employed at considerably lower rates than its counterpart *devant*, and in general is not employed as a locative preposition in the same way, or to the same extent that we would expect to see in Metropolitan French. Indeed, it is possible to see from the data that a large quantity of instances of the variants *en arrière* and *en arrière de* would, in fact, be produced using the variant *derrière* in Metropolitan French. We touched on a possible reason for this earlier (cf. § 7.4.1) i.e. the connection with the noun *derrière*, which might be creating a negative connotation and influencing the speakers' choice of preposition. However, there is another, more probable explanation for the lack of use of *derrière*, it could be that its use was influenced by other variants (*en are de* etc) spoken by the cohort of immigrants moving to Canada in the 18th century (cf. § 6.6.1.3).

If we examine in more detail the two occurrences of *à l'arrière* we can see that they are both produced by speakers in age group 2, although this variant has very low usage in Quebec French, these speakers may have been exposed to different varieties of French in their professional encounters. However, as we discussed in the previous section, the detail of these two occurrences i.e. the echo answer nature of the second token, could also explain their incidence. If however, the variant *à l'arrière* was produced due to the speakers encountering it in their professional lives, then we might also expect to see a higher relative frequency for the variant *derrière* for this age group, which is not the case.

Contrary to the high token count in age group 2 for the (ANTE-Loc) variant *en avant* (44.7%), the highest relative frequency for the (POST-Loc) variable is the variant *en arrière de*, with 62.7%. Interestingly, it is also in group 2 (30-60 yrs.) that we find this high score, and although we are examining this variant as a non-standard occurrence of the standard preposition *derrière*, it is worth contemplating that there may be an even finer layer of standard language preference at play here. With Quebec French having the possibility of using both variants *en arrière* and *en arrière de*, one of these might conceivably be considered more standard in Quebec French than the other.

7.7.3 Age and sex constraints on the (ANTE-Temp) and (POST-Temp) variants

We documented the overall token numbers for the (ANTE-Temp) and (POST-Temp) variables in table (24) and (25) in section 7.2. Here we will examine the

occurrences, and note that they have a very different distribution to their (ANTE-Loc) and (POST-Loc) counterparts (cf. Table 34).

Table 34: (ANTE-Temp) frequencies according to: Gender and Life-stage

Group	<i>en avant</i>^{Temp}	<i>en avant de</i>^{Temp}	<i>avant</i>^{Temp}	<i>devant</i>^{Temp}	Total N
Female	0 0%	1 0.6%	162 98.2%	2 1.2%	165
Male	1 0.8%	1 0.8%	130 98.5%	0 0%	132
Age group 1 15-29yrs	0 0%	0 0%	108 100%	0 0%	108
Age group 2 30-60yrs	1 0.9%	2 1.8%	108 95.6%	2 1.8%	113
Age group 3 61-95yrs	0 0%	0 0%	76 100%	0 0%	76
Total	1	2	292	2	297

7.7.3.1 Sex, age and the (ANTE-Temp) variants

The very low number of occurrences for three of the four variants of this variable makes it difficult to determine what interpersonal constraints could be exercising an influence. Indeed, here our analysis simply extends to observing the occurrences produced. Table (34) shows that both gender groups and all three age groups have near-categorical use of *avant*^{Temp} (the Standard French variant) at rates of over 95%. None of the three other variants is used at a rate higher than 1.8% by any group.

7.7.3.2 Sex, age and the (POST-Temp) variants

For this variable, the main observation in table (35), is that the overall number of tokens for non-standard variants is very low indeed (11). This means that there is very little to be said about group differences. There are no tokens of *derrière*

or à l'arrière with temporal meaning and just 6 of *en arrière* and 5 of *en arrière de*.

Table 35: (POST-Temp) frequencies according to: Gender and Life-stage

Group	<i>en arrière</i> ^{Temp}	<i>en arrière de</i> ^{Temp}	<i>derrière</i> ^{Temp}	<i>à l'arrière</i> ^{Temp}	Total N
Female	3 42.9%	4 57.1%	0 0%	0 0%	7
Male	3 75%	1 25%	0 0%	0 0%	4
Age group 1 15-29yrs	2 100%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	2
Age group 2 30-60yrs	3 37.5%	5 62.5%	0 0%	0 0%	8
Age group 3 61-95yrs	1 100%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1
Total	6	5	0	0	11

7.7.4 Level of Education

The extralinguistic variable of a speaker's level of education is regularly analysed in sociolinguistic studies along with a speaker's social status. Indeed, Labov (1972b: 115-118) states that the *socioeconomic index* is most reliable when it is calculated using the combined indicators of productive status i.e. occupation, education and income. However, for this study it is not possible to determine the speakers' socioeconomic status based on occupation, mainly due to the high number of non-working informants. Indeed, many of the speakers are either retired or not of working age. Moreover, information regarding the CFPQ speakers' income is not available. In some studies researchers remedy the lack of direct socioeconomic details by considering other information from the speakers' background. For example in Eckert's study of phonological variation in Belten High (2000) the education level of the students' parents was taken into consideration, in order to establish the families' socioeconomic status. Unfortunately, this information is not available to us either for the CFPQ, therefore

we are not able to determine a speaker's socioeconomic status using a combination of occupational, and educational (or financial) information.

Despite not having the possibility to use the combined indicators mentioned above, as we touched on in chapter 3, Canada is often not considered to be socially stratified in the same way as some other developed countries. This might be due to the absence of an aristocracy or any upper class, nevertheless many sociolinguistic studies have found evidence of sociolinguistic variation according to social class or the 'Linguistic Market Index'.

For practical reasons, we rely on details available regarding the level of education attained by each informant to consider whether there are any correlations between 'status' (in a broad sense) and linguistic variability. Which is in line with the work of Scherre & Naro (1992)⁴¹, who considered education separately from social status in their study of noun/verb agreement in Brazilian Portuguese.

We have used information regarding speakers' level of education to examine any connections that may arise with the use of the (ANTE) and (POST) variables. In table (36) our speakers have been divided into 5 groups depending on the education level they had reached at the time of their participation in the CFPQ. However, some speakers may continue their studies, which would affect further analyses.

For information, we have created a table that quantifies the total number of both male and female speakers, which has also been categorised by the level of education attained. The number of participants for each group was calculated using the 21 *sous-corpus* that were available at the time of this study. As mentioned above, these numbers will change as more interviews are checked and made available online for analysis.

⁴¹ Scherre & Naro (1992) found the level of education of informants was directly linked to the percentage of noun/verb agreements produced i.e. lower levels of education gave lower percentages of noun/verb agreement.

Table 36: Number of speakers according to level of education

Level of Education	Males	Females	Total
Primaire	2	5	7
Secondaire	14	15	29
Cégep	8	14	22
Universitaire 1	8	8	16
Universitaire 2	2	1	3
Total	34	43	77

7.7.4.1 Level of education and the (ANTE-Loc) variable

We proceed now with an analysis of the variant usage for the (ANTE-Loc) variable according to the speakers' level of education. This variable has four variant uses and a total token count of 107. The highest token number is seen with the *Secondaire* education group, which is also the group with the most speakers. It might be hypothesised that the more educated groups would show greater use of the standard variant *devant*. We will proceed with an examination of the data in table (37) by considering the results for each education level in turn. Since the *Universitaire 2* group produced no tokens of the variable they will not be considered further in this section.

Table 37: (ANTE-Loc) frequencies according to: Level of Education

Level of Education	<i>en avant</i> ^{Loc}	<i>en avant de</i> ^{Loc}	<i>devant</i> ^{Loc}	<i>à l'avant</i> ^{Loc}	Total N
Primaire	4 57.1%	3 42.9%	0 0%	0 0%	7
Secondaire	21 48.8%	10 23.3%	11 25.6%	1 2.3%	43
Cégep	11 37.9%	6 20.7%	12 41.4%	0 0%	29
Universitaire 1	11 39.3%	2 7.1%	15 53.6%	0 0%	28
Universitaire 2	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0
Total	47	21	38	1	107

The *Primaire* education level quantification exhibits the second lowest token total (7) of all groups. There are two important reasons that might explain this low token count. Firstly, as we can see in table (36) there are only 7 speakers in this education group. Secondly, when considering the primary education group, it is also necessary to bear in mind the intrinsic connection with the age of the speakers that attained this level of education. Indeed, this group of primary school educated speakers is composed of older people (in age group 3) aged between 61 and 95 years old, who either did not have access to secondary education in their youth, or for whom it was not compulsory. These two factors, together with the fact that the age of the speakers may also have had an influence on the type of discourse topics discussed, could have affected their production of these variants. The use of particular variants by this group can only be commented on in comparison to other education level groups. Primary-educated speakers produced just 4 tokens of the variant *en avant*, 10% or more than all other groups with a relative frequency of 57.1%. The variant *en avant de* is the second most frequent for this group. The standard variant *devant* displays a token count of 0,

which is quite remarkable in comparison to the other groups, and also the overall locative token number of 38.

Speakers that are currently in education at secondary school level, or those that did not go further than this level of education produced the most tokens (43) of the (ANTE-Loc) variable, no doubt because they were the most numerous education group (29 individuals). Contrary to possible assumptions regarding the impact of the high use of the variant *devant* by this education group, it is not this variant that is mainly responsible for the high token numbers here, rather it is their frequent use of *en avant*. This group of speakers use *devant* far more than the *Primaire* group (25.6% compared to 0%), but nearly 16% less than the *Cégep* speakers and 28% less than the *Universitaire 1* group. Secondary-educated speakers use both variants *en avant* and *en avant de* much more than those with a higher education level.

Cégep-educated speakers show lower rates of use of the variants *en avant* and *en avant de* than those of the *Primaire* education level. For the variant *devant*, *Cégep*-level speakers have a frequency of use that is over 18% higher than *Secondaire* level speakers, and they have no tokens of *à l'avant*. The *Cégep*-educated speakers also use the variant *en avant* less than *Secondaire* speakers, with a relative frequency of 37.9% compared to 48.8% for *Secondaire* speakers.

Universitaire 1-level speakers produce a very similar number of tokens to the *Secondaire* level speakers for the (ANTE-Loc) variable. Yet, there are some differences in use for individual variants. If we take the use of the standard variant *devant*, we can see that *Universitaire 1*-level users produce the highest frequency of this variant for any education group (53.6%). This is 8.3 % higher than the *Cégep* group of speakers, and over 26% higher than the *Secondaire* group of speakers. Therefore, for this variant we can see a steady increase in use, starting from zero with *Primaire*-educated speakers to this 51.6% relative frequency in *Universitaire 1* speakers. This finding is very striking, especially if we remember the possible connection we made above with its use in narrative discourse, and its connection to the age, and gender of the speakers. This result confirms that *devant* is a standard variant used more and more frequently as the speakers get more educated. Despite the relatively modest number of tokens for (ANTE-Loc), there seems to be a clear correlation with educational level: the higher the level

of education, the greater is the tendency to use the standard variant *devant*, as opposed to the non-standard alternatives.

7.7.4.2 Level of education and the (POST-Loc) variable

Here we proceed with an analysis of the variant usage for the (POST-Loc) variable according to speakers' level of education. Table (38) details token numbers for each variant, in addition to relative frequencies for the use of all (POST-Loc) variants by the four education groups.

Table 38: (POST-Loc) frequencies according to: Level of Education

Level of Education	<i>en arrière</i> ^{Loc}	<i>en arrière de</i> ^{Loc}	<i>derrière</i> ^{Loc}	<i>à l'arrière</i> ^{Loc}	Total N
Primaire	3 27.3%	7 63.6%	1 9.1%	0 0%	11
Secondaire	43 59.7%	26 36.1%	3 4.2%	0 0%	72
Cégep	20 64.5%	10 32.3%	1 3.2%	0 0%	31
Universitaire 1	9 45%	9 45%	0 0%	2 10%	20
Universitaire 2	1 100%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1
Total	76	52	5	2	135

Once again, as with the (ANTE-Loc) variable, we can see from table (38) that the primary-educated speakers produced only a small number of tokens (11). When examining the results regarding the speakers that have attained secondary education, table (38) shows that this group of speakers produces the highest number of tokens for this variable (72).

The *Cégep*-level of education group is the second highest producer of tokens for this variable. The group has an overall token total of 31 which, although not as high as the *Secondaire* group, is still higher than other groups.

Contrary to what we might suppose, the higher level of education attained by the *Universitaire* 1-level does not appear to have had an effect on the speakers' use of the variants of this variable. The group does not display a particularly low relative frequency of overall token production, and even produces more tokens than the *Primaire* group of speakers. It does however, as mentioned earlier, have a lower overall token count than both the *Secondaire* group and the *Cégep* group. As with other groups the vast majority of tokens produced were *en arrière* or *en arrière de*.

7.7.4.3 Level of education and the (ANTE-Temp) variable

Due to the near categorical pattern demonstrated in table (39) we will examine the relative frequencies found here in one section. The most striking point from table (39) is the dominance of the standard variant *avant*, as an equivalent of 'before' in the temporal sense. Indeed, from the overall token count of 297 for the (ANTE-Temp) variable, 292 tokens can be attributed to the use of *avant*^{Temp}.

Table 39: (ANTE-Temp) frequencies according to: Level of Education

Level of Education	<i>en avant</i> ^{Temp}	<i>en avant de</i> ^{Temp}	<i>devant</i> ^{Temp}	<i>avant</i> ^{Temp}	Total N
Primaire	0	0	0	24 100%	24
Secondaire	0	1 0.8%	0	124 99.2%	125
Cégep	0	0	1 1.5%	64 98.5%	65
Universitaire 1	1 1.4%	1 1.4%	1 1.4%	71 96.0%	74
Universitaire 2	0	0	0	9 100%	9
Total	1	2	2	292	297

All that can be said is that the two groups (*Primaire* and *Universitaire 2*) produced no tokens of all of the three other variants, and that even the three other groups (*Secondaire*, *Cégep*, *Universitaire 1*) produced so few tokens of them that it is impossible to discern any meaningful differences between the groups.

7.7.4.4 Level of education and the (POST-Temp) variable

As shown in table (40), the total number of tokens of the (POST-Temp) variants is very low (11), and it is not possible to observe any meaningful differences between the groups.

Table 40: (POST-Temp) frequencies according to: Level of education

Level of Education	<i>en arriere</i> ^{Temp}	<i>en arriere de</i> ^{Temp}	<i>derrière</i> ^{Temp}	<i>à l'arrière</i> ^{Temp}	Total N
Primaire	0	0	0	0	0
Secondaire	1 50%	1 50%	0	0	2
Cégep	3 50%	3 50%	0	0	6
Universitaire 1	2 66.7%	1 33.3%	0	0	3
Universitaire 2	0	0	0	0	0
Total	6	5	0	0	11

7.8 Cognitive Sociolinguistic considerations

We have included a consideration of Cognitive Sociolinguistic models in order to shed more light on the use of the (POSS), (ANTE) and (POST) variants. In chapter 2, we briefly outlined the theories relevant to a Cognitive Sociolinguistic analysis of the (ANTE) and (POST) variables. In chapter 5, we examined the possibility that Langacker's (2006) reference point theory could explain the alternation of the (POSS) variants *à* and *de*, and prove that (in)alienability can have structural implications on spoken Quebec French. Here, our focus is on an examination of Cognitive Linguistic theories that, combined with Sociolinguistic investigation, might explain the use of the complex spatial prepositions *en avant* (*de*), and *en arriere* (*de*) in the CFPQ interviews.

In chapter 2, we touched on the theory of subjectification put forward by Langacker (2006), with a view to expanding the discussion in this section. The basic principle of Langacker's model of subjectification is that in linguist interaction the terms 'subject' and 'object' refer to entities with distinct roles in the construal of the situation. An entity that is objectively construed goes 'onstage'

and is an explicit, focused object of conception. On the other hand, an entity that is subjectively construed stays 'offstage' and is an implicit, unself-conscious subject of conception. This relationship between the participants implies an inherent asymmetry between the conceptualiser and the conceptualised, and is maximised to its fullest when the subject of conception completely lacks any self-awareness. This happens when the subject of conception is engrossed in taking in the current 'onstage' situation, while the object of conception is salient, well-defined, and perceived extremely clearly.

In more recent work, Langacker has adjusted his theory of subjectification and come to see it as a type of semantic 'bleaching' or 'fading away'. One example that is noteworthy for a study of non-standard use of prepositions is Langacker's (2006: 22-23) discussion of the use of the preposition 'across' in English, (cf. (96) below).

- (96) a. A giant chicken marched angrily across the street.
b. There's a KFC right across the street.

Example 96a is represented in the diagram in figure (28), and we can see that the 'onstage' participant (the chicken), can occupy all possible positions in a spatial situation (*vis à vis* the street) that have been profiled by the path preposition (i.e. across). The chicken needs to go across the street in order to reach the other side. In doing so it travels along in time from one side of the street to the other, and the subject of conception necessarily conceives of the chicken occupying all the interim positions along the way. On the other hand, for example 96b, represented in figure (29), the KFC outlet is located in a set position, which is the endpoint of the path. The conceptualising subject scans mentally along the same path, all the while considering the trajector's static location. The path taken in the conceptualiser's mind still traverses the street, but this time there is no 'moving' onstage participant.

Figure 28: Representation of the 'onstage' participant's (the chicken) position with the preposition *across*

(Reproduced from Langacker, 2006)

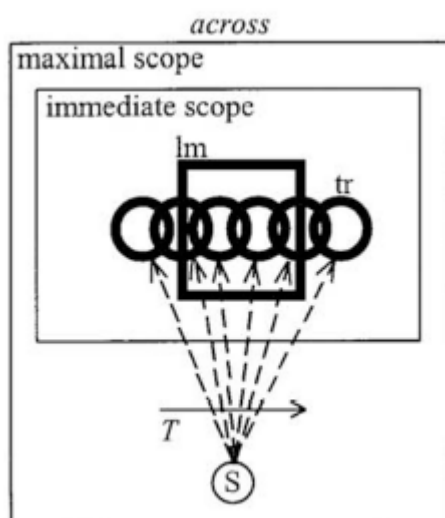
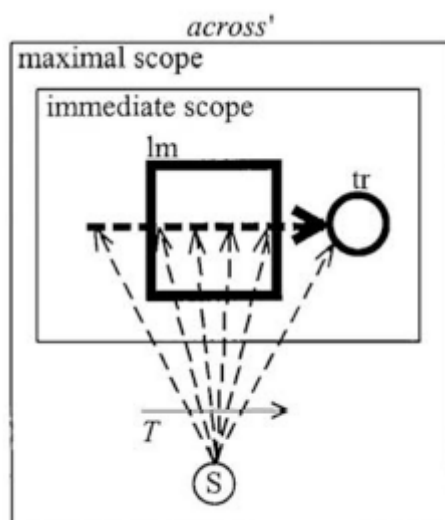


Figure 29: Representation of the trajector (the KFC outlet)

(Reproduced from Langacker, 2006)



What is important here, is that in these two representations of the preposition *across*, the subject of conceptualisation still scans the paths in order to arrive at the endpoint. The only difference is the presence of the 'onstage' participant (cf.96a and figure 28). This analysis allows us to perceive a difference in the subject of conception's mental image schema, which in turn indicates that the preposition *across* has a different conceptual import. In our study of the (ANTE) and (POST) variants *en avant de*, *en arrière de* and *devant*, we believe it is

possible their non-standard use is revealing a subtle difference in conceptual import, much like the differences we can see between examples (96a) and (96b). With examples such as (97), the CFPQ interview data suggests that the variant *devant* in Quebec French is the preferred variant when referring to a situation where the ‘onstage’ participant is objectively construed. That is to say, the ‘onstage’ participant is an explicit, focussed object of conception.

(97) t'étais ah oui oui pis là tu te faisais ramasser **devant** la classe ben tu
peux-tu être sûr qu'on traçait pas nos pourtours t'sais (dit en riant)

[SC 7, P102, L1]

In the case of *en avant (de)* and *en arrière (de)*, example (98) shows an instance where the object of conception is an entity that is subjectively construed, i.e. ‘offstage’ and implicit in the conceptualisers mind. Here, the object of conception is the person talking (or their house to be more precise), which is objectively construed because it is ‘offstage’ and implicit in the utterance. It does not occupy the ‘onstage’ position, and therefore it is not necessary for it to be explicitly mentioned because the focus of conception is the ‘propriétaire’ and his/her position in the street.

(98) la propriétaire était **en avant** pis nous-autres on avait un patio pareil là
t'sais/ là/ c'était bien

[SC4, P92, L20]

In the two examples above, (97 & 98) the distinctions between the image schemas in the conceptualiser’s construction of the situation could explain the variation in prepositions selected by the speaker, i.e. different prepositions are applied to the construction depending on whether the entity (participant) is objectively construed (as in 97), or subjectively construed (as in 98). Thus, when the conceptualiser’s mental image of the situation sees the entity as subjectively construed, then *devant* instead *en avant (de)* or *en arrière (de)* is the preferred variant, and vice versa for objectively construed entities.

Therefore, in light of Langacker’s theory of subjectification we hypothesise that the results from our corpus analysis suggest that the use of these variants (in place of the standard variants *devant* and *derrière*) serve in Quebec French as a reference point to situate the subject referent.

7.9 Conclusion

An initial categorisation of the variants of the (ANTE) and (POST) variables was carried out in chapter 6 which led to their analysis here. We divided our variants by locative and temporal reference, and then again by interpersonal variation factors such as age, gender and education.

We were able to determine that the variant *avant*^{Temp} is used in a similar way to metropolitan French, but on the contrary the variants *devant*, *en avant (de)* and *en arrière (de)* are all used in ways proper to Quebec French. The use of *en avant (de)* and *en arrière (de)* shows that, as prepositions, they function well without an overt complement (without the use of *de*), either because the complement is implicit or has been mentioned earlier in the utterance. Speakers in the CFPQ use the variant *en avant* at a relative frequency of 30.8% and *en arrière* at a relative frequency of 70.0%. The different rates of usage between the variants is explained by the high rate of use of the variant *devant* (56.4%) for the (ANTE-Loc) variable, which has skewed our results. However, this did also highlight an important distinction in the use of this variant in Quebec French. Notably, that it is predominantly employed to refer to people, and with narrative discourse using dynamic verbs, not however, as in metropolitan French, i.e. simply to locate entities locatively.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Using the combined approach of Sociolinguistics and Cognitive Linguistics (Cognitive Sociolinguistics) we have conducted a study of grammatical variation in Quebec French from data contained in the *Corpus de français parlé au Québec* (CFPQ). After circumscribing the (POSS), (ANTE) and (POST) variables we examined the use of non-standard prepositions. However, the study of the non-standard occurrences of certain variants of these variables posed methodological and theoretical problems for this study, hence our combined theoretical framework.

In chapter 5 we saw that for the (POSS) variable there are several factors influencing the use of possessive *à*. Firstly, with the reference of the possessor factor, possessive *à* was preferred for human possessors with a relative frequency of 62.2%. The type of noun possessed was also seen to have an influence, with kinship nouns showing 68.1% relative frequency of possessive *à*. Contrary to previous studies, the 'avoidance of hiatus' constraint did not show a strong influence, indeed possessive *à* was more common in pre-vocalic contexts, with an 86.7% relative frequency. Lastly, speakers favoured the use of possessive *à* when the possessor was known personally to the speaker, with a relative frequency of 71.4%.

The main interpersonal variation factors shown to have an influence on the use of possessive *à* included the age of the speaker, with older speakers, those in the 66-95 age group, showing an 82.8% relative frequency of use. But as we discussed earlier, this also correlates with the level of education attained by the speakers. Many speakers in this age group did not go further than primary school education, which also shows a higher relative frequency of use of possessive *à* (87.0%). The relative frequencies exhibited by the males in the first two subgroups of speakers are both lower than in the female groups. If we compare the relative frequency of the 30 to 60 life-stage group in males (46.5%), and then in females (67.5%) there is a considerable difference. Milroy (1987) found that differences in men's and women's use of vernacular variants varied depending on the type of social networks they had developed. Speakers with locally-based networks are more likely to use more non-standard language.

From the Cognitive Linguistic perspective, the use of the possessive *à* suggests that the speakers' perceived conceptual distance between themselves and the target of possession triggers a change in variant. It could be hypothesised that this distance has assisted the formation of a constructional schema that permits a change in preposition when the possessor is known or not known to the speaker, i.e. variants are alternated when there is greater or lesser perceived conceptual distance. This is also reflected in the higher relative frequency of use of possessive *à* for possessors known personally to the speaker (71.4%) as opposed to 31.3% for those not known personally.

For the (ANTE) and (POST) variables we found that, despite obvious assumptions about the necessity for the complement of the preposition to be overt, the use of the variants *en avant* and *en arrière* without *de* (in locative utterances) were the most frequent in the CFPQ data. Their high relative frequencies, 44% (as opposed to *en avant de* at 19%) and 55.9% (as opposed to *en arrière de* at 38.2%) show that speakers do not need the complement of the preposition to follow the preposition, or be explicit, either because it is implied in the utterance or has already been mentioned earlier, i.e. before the preposition. Interestingly, with the (ANTE) variable the variant *devant* was found in completely different contexts to its counterpart *derrière*, as it was predominantly used in narrative speech. In this capacity, it was constrained by the type of verb in the sentence, either dynamic or stative, with 35/40 tokens of *devant* used with dynamic verbs. The interpersonal variation findings for these variables indicate that the variant *en avant* is preferred by males with a relative frequency of 56.6%, and the use of *devant* is employed more by females in the 15 to 29 age group (55.2%).

Along with what we consider to be strong historical linguistic indications explaining the existence of variants similar to, if not identical to, *en avant (de)* and *en arrière (de)* in certain *Langues d'Oïl* spoken at the time of the settlement of the emigrants in Canada, our findings also highlight the possibility of a connection to the Cognitive Linguistic theory of subjectification (cf. § 7.8). Indeed, the use of the variants *en avant (de)* and *en arrière (de)* in place of what are considered the standard variants *devant* and *derrière* may have two possible explanations. Firstly, the use of *devant* in predominantly narrative discourse with dynamic verbs suggests that this preposition is part of a construction that changes the conceptual import in image schemas related to the position of participants in a

scene or scenario. Coupled with the use of mainly dynamic verbs, and the variant *devant*, the indication is that this image schema involves types of movement and positioning that are different to other locative descriptions in Quebec French. This image schema then necessitates a change in variant from either *en avant (de)/en arrière (de)* to *devant*. Coming from the opposite position, if we consider Langacker's theory of subjectification in the use of the variants *en avant (de)* and *en arrière (de)*, the variants are triggered, once again, by the existence of different conceptual schemas that map the pathway to the target of conception depending on the conceptual distance perceived by the subject of conception. This possibility suggests that the existence of an 'objectively' or 'subjectively' construed participant in a situation determines or influences the use of a variant by the conceptualiser.

Finally, it is appropriate to mention some ways in which future research might usefully build on and develop the work embodied in this thesis. Firstly, as larger amounts of data on spoken Quebec French become available, it would be valuable to analyse larger numbers of occurrences of the prepositional variables (POSS), (ANTE) and (POST), in order to investigate further the influencing factors suggested in the present study. Secondly, this thesis has shown that the study of variation in the use of prepositions is a potentially rich vein of research, and it is to be hoped that future scholarship will extend this into other prepositions involved in variation and change, whether in Quebec French or other varieties.

APPENDIX

The (POSS) variable and its variants

Variable	Variants
(POSS)	à
	de

à

S : [...] c'est fini mais comme tu (en pointant Marie) disais que les gens qui sont l- les [3les copains à Yvan là/ (.)

'[...] it's finished but like you (pointing at Marie) were saying that the people who are Yvan's friends there [...]

[SC5, P5, L5]

de

M : [...] pis elle a été obligée de rappeler (.) la mère de la petite elle lui [3dit elle dit •viens la chercher je suis plus capable° (dit en riant) (RIRE)

[...] so she had to call the mother of the little girl back, she told her come and get her I'm not able to look after her anymore'

[SC 5, P8, L7]

The (ANTE-Loc) variable and its variants

Variable	Variants
(ANTE-Loc)	<i>en avant</i> ^{locative}
	<i>en avant de</i> ^{locative}
	<i>à l'avant</i> ^{locative}
	<i>devant</i> ^{locative}

en avant^{locative}

SO :le pilote est **en avant** (en posant sa main droite sur la table) pis toi t'es assis en arrière (en posant sa main gauche derrière sa main droite)

'The pilot is in front, and you, you're sat behind'

[SC7, P62, L15]

en avant de ^{locative}

A : ils font faire le le besoin du chien **EN [2AVANT** de la maison as-tu déjà vu ça toi (en cognant à quelques reprises sur la table, comme pour montrer sa désapprobation)

'They let the dog do its business in front of the house, have you ever seen that?'

[SC5, P16, L7]

à l'avant ^{locative}

S : [2non c'est une salle de spectacles là

M : ah / c'est pas un ah moi j'ai toujours pensé [1c'était un club

S : [1on voit le: (3") il y a un théâtre (.) en avant

<dim<il y a un:>>

M : <p<ah />>

S : [1<pp<ah oui>> (en hochant la tête affirmativement)

J : [1il y a une scène (.) **à l'avant**

'J: There's a stage at the front '

[SC12, P62, L4-10]

devant ^{locative}

J : la grosse dehors **devant** (en ouvrant sa main devant elle comme pour désigner l'endroit dont elle parle) (.) l'école (1,1") t'as jamais vu des photos de même/ (en hochant la tête négativement) (0:03:08.8)

'The fat one outside, in front of the school, you've never seen photos like it'

[SC17, P78, L18]

The (ANTE-Temp) variable and its variants

Variable	Variants
(ANTE-Temp)	<i>en avant</i> ^{temporal}
	<i>en avant de</i> ^{temporal}
	<i>avant</i> ^{temporal}
	<i>devant</i> ^{temporal}

en avant ^{temporal}

S : pis: il est il est (.) contremaître là (en agitant sa main gauche, comme s'il n'était pas certain) mais c'est parce que lui ç- ça ça ç- c'est sûr ça doit être fatigant un peu (.) parce qu'il y avait peut-être des hommes ou des femmes plus âgés que lui qui auraient pu aspirer à ce type de de [3de poste-là (.) pis lui il a passé **en avant** par rapport qu'il est il est

'[...] So he got further ahead, because of what he is' [SC5, P91, L11]

en avant de ^{temporal}

M : ce que le gars disait ce qui est vrai que dans la pl- la plupart des des places c'est que (.) la qualité (.) la quantité passe **en avant de** la qualité c'est ça qu'il disait

'[...] quality, quantity comes before quality, that's what he was saying'

[SC5, P53, L8]

avant ^{temporal}

L : (il hausse les épaules, en signe d'ignorance) (.) il avait emmené son camion là (inaud.) (.) à [1deux jours **avant** (.) deux jours avant pis là après ça (.) il est allé rechercher son camion (2.5") parce que ç'est ça qu'il s'est acheté là un Nissan là hein /

'He brought his truck there two days earlier, two days before, then after that he went back to get his truck because he bought himself a Nissan'

[SC5, P90, L1]

devant ^{temporal}

S : fait que/ (.) elle a quand même un bel avenir **devant** elle [12là t'sais c'est des belles jobs hein/

'Still, she has a bright future ahead of her you know those are good jobs at that place'

[SC15, P38, L 10]

The (POST-Loc) variable and its variants

Variable	Variants
(POST-Loc)	<i>en arrière</i> ^{locative}
	<i>en arrière de</i> ^{locative}
	<i>à l'arrière</i> ^{locative}
	<i>derrière</i> ^{locative}

en arrière ^{locative}

H : [2c'est la plus vieille taverne ça æ<581495>

E : oui (.) [1la plus vieille

H : [1ben à Sherbrooke

E : ouin æ<582951>

N : non mais le (.) ce coin-là là ils étaient censés là (.) t'sais il y avait un gymnase

en arrière anciennement là

G : oui (.) [1oui oui sur la petite rue là

'N: No, but the, that area there, they were supposed to, you know there used to be a gymnasium behind there, previously'

[SC8, P62, L20-24]

en arrière de ^{locative}

R : à Sainte-Marguerite (2.4") t'sais **en arrière de**: l'église Sainte-Marguerite là

'At Saint Marguerite, you know, behind the Saint Marguerite church there'

[SC4, P50, L10]

à l'arrière ^{locative}

A : mon bras était rendu plus **à l'arrière** (en plaçant son bras en arrière comme pour mimer la position dont elle parle)

R : plus **à l'arrière**

'A : My arm was pushed further back'

'R : further back'

[SC20,P33, L17-19]

derrière^{locative}

S : elle s'est jamais demandé qu'est-ce qu'il y avait **derrière** la porte ↑

'She never asked herself what was really behind the door'

[SC9, P125, L12]

The (POST-Temp) variable and its variants

Variable	Variants
(POST-Temp)	en arrière ^{temporal}
	en arrière de ^{temporal}

en arrière^{temporal}

D : ça [1reste <len<confidentiel>>

V : [1<p<on peut pas revenir **en arrière**>> (RIRE)

'V: We can't go back in time'

[SC10, P129, L1-2]

en arrière de^{temporal}

J : pas de formation pas d'année **en arrière de** [1lui pas de::

S : [1NON t'as pas d'expérience en tant que tel t'es

aux ÉTUDES t'sais/ (.) je le trouvais ben bon franchement je lui ai dit •t'es ben chanceux°

'J: No training, no work experience behind him, no...'

[SC15, P31, L16-17]

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