The Sociolinguistic Competence of Immersion Students

SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION
Series Editor: **Professor David Singleton**, *Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland*

This series brings together titles dealing with a variety of aspects of language acquisition and processing in situations where a language or languages other than the native language is involved. Second language is thus interpreted in its broadest possible sense. The volumes included in the series all offer in their different ways, on the one hand, exposition and discussion of empirical findings and, on the other, some degree of theoretical reflection. In this latter connection, no particular theoretical stance is privileged in the series; nor is any relevant perspective – sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic, neurolinguistic, etc. – deemed out of place. The intended readership of the series includes final-year undergraduates working on second language acquisition projects, postgraduate students involved in second language acquisition research, and researchers and teachers in general whose interests include a second language acquisition component.

Full details of all the books in this series and of all our other publications can be found on http://www.multilingual-matters.com, or by writing to Multilingual Matters, St Nicholas House, 31-34 High Street, Bristol BS1 2AW, UK.

SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION
Series Editor: David Singleton, Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland

The Sociolinguistic Competence of Immersion Students

Raymond Mougeon, Terry Nadasdi and Katherine Rehner

MULTILINGUAL MATTERS
Bristol • Buffalo • Toronto

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.
Mougeon, Raymond.
The Sociolinguistic Competence of Immersion Students/Raymond Mougeon, Terry Nadasdi and Katherine Rehner.
Second Language Acquisition: 47
Includes bibliographical references.
1. Second language acquisition. 2 Immersion method (Language teaching)
I. Nadasdi, Terry. II. Rehner, Katherine. III. Title.
P118.2.M678 2010
306.44–dc22 2009033796

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue entry for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN-13: 978-1-84769-239-9 (hbk)
ISBN-13: 978-1-84769-238-2 (pbk)

Multilingual Matters
UK: St Nicholas House, 31-34 High Street, Bristol BS1 2AW, UK.
USA: UTP, 2250 Military Road, Tonawanda, NY 14150, USA.
Canada: UTP, 5201 Dufferin Street, North York, Ontario M3H 5T8, Canada.

Copyright © 2010 Raymond Mougeon, Terry Nadasdi and Katherine Rehner.

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced in any form or by any means without permission in writing from the publisher.

The policy of Multilingual Matters/Channel View Publications is to use papers that are natural, renewable and recyclable products, made from wood grown in sustainable forests. In the manufacturing process of our books, and to further support our policy, preference is given to printers that have FSC and PEFC Chain of Custody certification. The FSC and/or PEFC logos will appear on those books where full certification has been granted to the printer concerned.

Typeset by Techset Composition Ltd., Salisbury, UK.
Printed and bound in Great Britain by the MPG Books Group.

Contents

Tables and Figures vii

Preface xi

1 Introduction 1
- Sociolinguistic Variation in First Language Speech Communities 2
- Variation in Second Language 4
- Research on the Learning of Sociolinguistic Variation by Second Language Learners 6

2 Methodology 23
- Research Goals 23
- Characteristics of the French Immersion Student Population under Study 26
- Speaker Sample 47
- Corpora Used as Comparative Norms 50
- Research Hypotheses 53
- Data Analysis 56

3 Variation in L1 Spoken French 58
- Introduction 58
- Grammatical Variation 59
- Lexical Variation 78
- Extra-Linguistic Constraints 80
- Linguistic Constraints 82
- Phonetic Variation 83
- Conclusion 90

4 Students' Learning of Variation 91
- Frequency and Treatment of Variants in the French Immersion Students' Educational Input 91
- Comparison of the Frequency and Treatment of Variants in Teachers' Classroom Discourse and the Teaching Materials 105

Types and Frequency of Variants Used by the French Immersion Students 109
Learning of the Linguistic and Stylistic Constraints of Sociolinguistic Variation 125
Effect of Independent Variables on the Learning of Sociolinguistic Variation 131

5 The Potential Benefits of Increased FL1 Input in an Eductional Context 140
Introduction 140
Effects of Increased Exposure to FL1 Speakers in an Educational Context 143
Conclusion 150

6 Conclusion 155
Introduction 155
Sociolinguistic Variation in the Educational Input of French Immersion Students 156
Educational Implications of Results 164
Limitations and Directions for Future Study 168

Appendices 170
Appendix A: Semi-Directed Taped Interview Schedule – Including Reading Passages 170
Appendix B: Student Questionnaire Survey 173
Appendix C: Objectives of the Ontario Ministry of Education Concerning the Development of Sociolinguistic Competence by Secondary School French Immersion Students 187
Appendix D: Results of the GoldVarb Analyses of the Sociolinguistic Variables Focused upon in the Current Research 188

Notes 208
References 214

Tables and Figures

Tables

2.1 Immersion students' sex, place of birth and grade 28
2.2 Immersion students' social class background: mother, father and combined 29
2.3 Languages spoken fluently by immersion students' parents . . . 31
2.4 Languages spoken at home by immersion students' parents . . . 32
2.5 Languages spoken at home by the immersion students 33
2.6 Languages spoken outside of the home by the immersion students 34
2.7 Use of French by the immersion students within and outside the home 37
2.8 Use of French by the immersion students in the school setting 37
2.9 Languages of media use by the immersion students 38
2.10 Time spent in Francophone environments by the immersion students 39
2.11 Time spent in Francophone environments by immersion students as a function of place 40
2.12 Time spent with a Francophone family by the immersion students 41
2.13 Time spent with a Francophone family by immersion students as a function of place 42
2.14 Values associated by the immersion students with the importance of the French language within the Canadian context, the learning of French and the French-Canadian culture 46
2.15 Chief characteristics of the 41 student sample 48
2.16 41 students' curricular and extra-curricular patterns of French language use 49
3.1 Effect of linguistic context on schwa use and non-use 86
3.2 Sociostylistic status of variants in L1 Canadian French 89
4.1 Marked informal variants in the French immersion teachers' classroom speech and in L1 Canadian French 92

4.2 Mildly marked informal variants in the French immersion teachers' classroom speech and in L1 Canadian French 93
4.3 Percentage of formal variants in the French immersion teachers' classroom speech and in L1 Canadian French 94
4.4 Percentage of hyper-formal variants in the French immersion teachers' classroom speech and in L1 Canadian French 94
4.5 Percentage of neutral variants in the French immersion teachers' classroom speech and in L1 Canadian French 95
4.6 Marked informal variants in the French Language Arts teaching materials (compared to L1 Canadian French) 97
4.7 Percentage of mildly marked informal variants in the French Language Arts teaching materials (compared to L1 Canadian French) 98
4.8 Percentage of formal variants in the French Language Arts teaching materials (compared to L1 Canadian French) 100
4.9 Percentage of hyper-formal variants in the French Language Arts teaching materials (compared to L1 Canadian French) 101
4.10 Frequency distribution of variants *alors*, *donc* and (*ça*) *fait que* in the pedagogical materials according to syntactic context 102
4.11 Percentage of neutral variants in the French Language Arts teaching materials (compared to L1 Canadian French) 103
4.12 Distribution (%) of marked and mildly marked informal variants in L1 Canadian French, immersion teachers' French, French Language Arts materials (dialogues) and French Language Arts materials (texts) 106
4.13 Distribution (%) of neutral, formal and hyper-formal variants in l1 Canadian French, immersion teachers' French, French Language Arts materials (dialogues) and French Language Arts materials (texts) 107
4.14 Frequency (%) of marked informal variants in the speech of immersion students compared to L1 Canadian French, French immersion teachers, written dialogues and texts 111
4.15 Frequency (%) of mildly marked informal variants in the speech of immersion students compared to L1 Canadian French, French immersion teachers, written dialogues and texts 112
4.16 Frequency (%) of forms that resemble marked and mildly marked informal variants in the speech of immersion students compared to L1 Canadian French, French immersion teachers, written dialogues and texts 114
4.17 Frequency of non-native variants in the speech of immersion students 117

4.18 Frequency (%) of formal and hyper-formal variants in the speech of immersion students compared to L1 Canadian French, French immersion teachers, written dialogues and texts 120
4.19 Frequency (%) of neutral variants in the speech of immersion students compared to L1 Canadian French, French immersion teachers, written dialogues, and texts 122
4.20 Linguistic constraints on the use of variants found in the speech of L1 speakers and French immersion students 126
4.21 Effect of stylistic parameters in the speech of French immersion students and L1 speakers of French 130
4.22 Effect of independent variables on variant choice in the speech of the French immersion students 132
5.1 Mildly marked informal variants for which beneficial effects are likely to obtain 144
5.2 Marked informal variants for which beneficial effects are likely to obtain 145
5.3 Formal variants for which beneficial effects are likely to obtain 146
5.4 Hyper-formal variants for which beneficial effects are likely to obtain 147
5.5 Variants for which negative effects are likely to obtain 149
5.6 Expected effects on French immersion students' speech of greater interactions with FL1 speakers in a school setting . . . 151
6.1 Sociostylistic status of the variants and their frequency in the immersion students' speech and their educational input and in FL1 speech 157

Tables in Appendices

D1 Effects of linguistic and extra-linguistic constraints on *ne* use versus non-use of *ne* 188
D2 Effects of linguistic and extra-linguistic constraints on *seulement* versus *juste* 190
D3 Effects of extra-linguistic constraints on *alors* versus *donc* 191
D4 Effects of extra-linguistic constraints on *alors* and *donc* versus *so* 192
D5 Effects of linguistic constraints on the use of three variants denoting future time reference 193
D6 Effects of extra-linguistic constraints on the use of three variants denoting future time reference 194
D7 Use of *je vais* versus *je vas* as a function of length of stay in a Francophone environment 196

D8 Effects of linguistic and extra-linguistic constraints on *nous* versus *on* 196
D9 Effects of linguistic constraints on singular versus plural verb forms in the third person plural 197
D10 Effects of extra-linguistic constraints on singular versus plural verb forms in the third person plural 198
D11 Effects of linguistic constraints on auxiliaries *avoir* versus *être* 199
D12 Effects of extra-linguistic constraints on *avoir* versus *être* 199
D13 Effects of linguistic and extra-linguistic constraints on *chez* 1 versus à *la maison* 200
D14 Effects of linguistic and extra-linguistic constraints on *travail* versus *emploi* 202
D15 Effects of linguistic and extra-linguistic constraints on *vivre* versus *habiter* 203
D16 Effects of linguistic and extra-linguistic constraints on *auto* versus *voiture* 204
D17 Effects of linguistic constraints on schwa use versus non-use 205
D18 Effects of extra-linguistic constraints on schwa use versus schwa non-use 206
D19 Effects of morphophonetic context on /l/ use versus non-use 207
D20 Effects of style on /l/ non-use in the speech of the French immersion students and Mougeon and Beniak's North-Bay Franco-Ontarian students 207

Figures

5.1 Rates of /l/ non-use (%) in interviews versus reading passages by unrestricted speakers, restricted speakers, and French immersion students 147
5.2 Rates of schwa non-use (%) in interviews versus reading passages by unrestricted speakers, restricted speakers, and French immersion students 148

Preface

This book is designed for three kinds of readers. First, it will be of interest to graduate students who are interested in sociolinguistic variation within the field of second language acquisition. We hope this volume will provide a solid foundation and theoretical orientation for scholars wishing to examine variation in a wide variety of languages in different settings. The second target audience for this volume are teachers of French as a second language. It is rare indeed for faculties of education to provide second language teachers with information concerning the variable use of linguistic forms, their frequency of use and the linguistic/social factors that govern their usage. Our book not only provides French as a second language (FSL) teachers with such information, but also offers them opportunities to reflect on the factors that condition the learning of sociolinguistic variation by French immersion students. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, our research is intended for those responsible for curriculum development. Policy-makers need to be made aware of the variable use of language in order to develop pedagogical materials that promote the acquisition of such use by classroom learners.

The idea for the present volume began more than 10 years ago when we extended the sociolinguistic methodology we had used to investigate variation and change in the speech of Francophone bilingual students residing in minority communities to research on the learning of variation by French immersion students. During the writing of this book, we have been fortunate enough to have interacted with a number of individuals who, contemporaneously, pursued research projects similar to our own. These researchers have helped through their own research, through their interest in our work and through various exchanges at conferences. We would like to express our gratitude to them here: Julie Auger, Bob Bayley, Hélène Blondeau, Jean-Marc Dewaele, Naomi Nagy, Denis Preston, Vera Regan, Gillian Sankoff, Pierrette Thibault and Alain Thomas.

We would also like to express our thanks to our family members, Françoise Mougeon, Paula Kelly and John Ippolito for their support and encouragement. We gratefully acknowledge funding support received from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and would also like to express our thanks to the French immersion teachers in

the Greater Toronto Area, who allowed us to gather the student speech corpus on which our research is based. Finally, we would like to thank Roy Lyster and Dalila Ayoun for providing insightful comments that have greatly improved the quality of our manuscript.

The present volume builds largely on previous work of scholars such as Elaine Tarone, Doug Adamson, Denis Preston, Bob Bayley and Vera Regan who initially conducted research on the variable use of target and non-target forms by second language learners. In our own research, we have extended the study of variation to a large number of variables involving target-language forms whose sociolinguistic status differs. By raising awareness of the sociolinguistic challenges that second language learners face, we hope to pave the way to new developments in second language pedagogy that pay greater attention to sociolinguistic variation. By doing so, we can expect the next generation of French immersion students to make even greater progress acquiring a native-like mastery of French.

Chapter 1
Introduction[1]

More than three decades of research focused on the second language outcomes of French immersion programs has produced a wealth of studies documenting the successes and limitations of French immersion students' communicative proficiency [see notably Calvé (1991), Harley (1984), Lyster (2007) and Rebuffot (1993) for overviews]. For the most part, these studies have concentrated on grammatical competence, that is the receptive and productive knowledge of the target-language system, and to a lesser extent on discourse competence, that is the receptive and productive knowledge of coherent and cohesive target-language discourse. However, considerably less research has been devoted to French immersion students' sociolinguistic competence, that is the receptive and productive knowledge of sociolinguistic variants and of the linguistic, social and stylistic factors that govern their usage.

The goal of this volume is to bring together and discuss from both a theoretical and applied perspective the results of a research project that focuses on the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence by French immersion students.[2] In so doing, we hope to make a significant contribution to this understudied aspect of French immersion students' communicative competence. In the chapters that follow, sociolinguistic competence will be examined in relation to the learner's knowledge of sociolinguistic variation. More specifically, we will be assessing the extent to which French immersion students master a full repertoire of sociolinguistic variants, acquire their discursive frequency and observe the same linguistic and extra-linguistic constraints on variant choice adhered to by first language (L1) speakers of French. We will also assess the extent to which the French immersion students' learning of sociolinguistic variation is affected by a number of crucial independent variables (e.g. the learners' extra-curricular exposure to L1 French and the treatment of sociolinguistic variation in the educational input of the French immersion students). It should be pointed out at the outset that the present volume constitutes a unique and original contribution to research on

the learning of sociolinguistic competence by advanced second language learners in an educational setting. To our knowledge, there has not been any book written on this topic before and the findings reported upon in the present volume are based on more than a dozen detailed studies on the learning of a wide range of sociolinguistic variants pertaining to the different components of language (phonology, lexicon, morphology and morphosyntax). Furthermore, ours is the only research of which we are aware that investigates the effect of educational input on learners' sociolinguistic competence.

Before we provide more specific information about the goals and methodology of our research, we will situate the research on the learning of sociolinguistic competence by advanced second language learners in the broader fields of variationist sociolinguistics and second language acquisition (SLA) research. We will also provide a state-of-the-art review of studies that have focused specifically on the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence by advanced learners of French as a second language.

Sociolinguistic Variation in First Language Speech Communities

Language variation is observable in all components of every human language (syntax, morphology, lexicon and phonology). It involves an alternation between different elements of a given language whose meaning (or phonological status, if they are sounds) is identical. There are two types of language variation: linguistic and sociolinguistic. With linguistic variation, the alternation between elements is categorically constrained by the linguistic context in which they occur. With sociolinguistic variation, speakers can choose between elements in the same linguistic context and, hence, the alternation is probabilistic. Furthermore, the probability of one form being chosen over another is also affected in a probabilistic way by a range of extra-linguistic factors [e.g. the degree of (in)formality of the topic under discussion, the social status of the speaker and of the interlocutor, the setting in which communication takes place, etc.].

An example of linguistic variation is the grammatical notion of plurality in spoken English, which can be conveyed by various affixes whose use is constrained categorically by the linguistic context in which they occur: *finger* versus *fingers* [z]; *cheek* versus *cheeks* [s]; *bridge* versus *bridges* [ɘz]; *foot* versus *feet*; *ox* versus *oxen*, etc. By 'constrained categorically' we mean that in a given linguistic context L1 speakers of English will always use the same form to convey a notion. Thus, in the above example, with nouns that end in a voiceless consonant, L1 speakers will always use the plural affix [s], with nouns that end in a voiced occlusive consonant, they will always use the affix [z], etc. An example of linguistic variation in French is the alternation between full and contracted forms of the definite

article. The full form occurs before all consonant initial nouns (e.g. *le livre* 'the book' and *la table* 'the table'), whereas the contracted form is found categorically before words beginning with a vowel (e.g. *l'avion* 'the plane' and *l'assiette* 'the plate'). In linguistics, the different forms that speakers alternate between are referred to as 'variants' and the notion they convey is referred to as the 'variable'.

An example of sociolinguistic variation is the *-ing* variable, which involves the alternation between two pronunciations of the final sound of English words ending in *-ing*, such as *morning*, *nothing* and *doing* (e.g. *good morning* [n] versus [ŋ] or *nothing* [n] versus [ŋ]). L1 speakers of English tend to use variant [n] more frequently when *-ing* occurs in verbal forms, as in *he's eatin'*, than in nouns, such as *morning* or *Kipling*, where it is less likely to occur (a probabilistic linguistic constraint), see Houston (1985). L1 speakers of English also use [n] more often when discussing an informal topic, telling a funny story, etc. or if they hail from the lower social strata (probabilistic extra-linguistic constraints), see Trudgill (1974) and Downes (1998). A similar example from French is the variable use or non-use of /l/, which is also influenced by linguistic and extra-linguistic constraints. L1 speakers of Canadian French delete /l/ much more frequently when it occurs in a subject pronoun (e.g. *i(l) faut* 'it is necessary') than in definite articles (e.g. *dans (l)a cave* 'in the basement'). Also, male speakers and speakers from the lower social strata tend to delete /l/ more often than female speakers and speakers from the upper social strata (across all linguistic contexts), see Sankoff and Cedergren (1976) and Poplack and Walker (1986). It should be noted that these probabilistic linguistic and extra-lingusitic constraints are shared across speakers in a given speech community and are a feature of their native language competence. Furthermore, to distinguish the variants that are involved in linguistic variation from those involved in sociolinguistic variation, the former can be referred to as 'linguistic variants' and the latter as 'sociolinguistic variants'. Likewise, the notions conveyed by linguistic variants are, as pointed out above, referred to as linguistic variables, while the notions expressed by sociolinguistic variations are referred to as sociolinguistic variables.

Sociolinguistic variants are of special interest to linguists and language educators because they can be used as markers of style or register, social status, group membership, etc. For instance, returning to the *-ing* variable, speakers of English may elect to use variant [n] along with other informal variants (e.g. informal content or grammatical words such as *pal* for *friend*, *juice* for *electricity*, *gonna* for *going to*, etc.) to reduce the psychological distance between themselves and their interlocutors, to impart a humoristic tone to their speech, etc., and, in contrast, they may choose to use [ŋ] and the other formal variants mentioned above to heighten the psychological distance, to show respect to their interlocutor, because they are delivering a formal speech, etc.