

***J'ai* therefore *je suis*: A quantitative analysis of auxiliary alternation in Acadian French**

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Auxiliary alternation between *avoir* ('to have') (1) and *être* ('to be') (2) has been attested for centuries throughout the French language. Studies have shown that rates of *avoir* fluctuate considerably within the Canadian context. For example, a usage of 42% has been documented in Laurentian French (LF) spoken in Montréal (Sankoff & Thibault 1977) and 66% in Ottawa-Hull (Willis 2000), compared to 98% in Acadian French (AF) spoken in Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador (King 2013; King & Nadasdi 2005). In these Acadian varieties, *avoir* was found with intransitive and pronominal verbs. The same is found in contemporary Spanish (Penny 2000) where there is no *être* verbs anymore.

- (1) *J'**ai**_[avoir] retourné* mercredi après-midi. (12.3 : 1468)
'I returned Wednesday afternoon.'
- (2) *Je **suis**_[être] retournée* avant qu'elle est née. (20.3 : 2511)
'I returned before she was born.'

Considering that AF is widely assumed to be distinct from LF, is there a difference in the linguistic conditioning that motivates the selection of *avoir* between them? In order to address this question, I make use of a corpus of AF spoken in Northeast New-Brunswick (Beaulieu 1995) from which I extracted and coded over 675 contexts where *avoir* could have been selected. I coded each token from a variety of morphosyntactic factor groups which could have had an effect on variant choice. The method I employ for extraction and analysis is the same as was used in Sankoff & Thibault (1977) and Willis (2000), thus allowing for direct comparison of my results with theirs.

My results show that *avoir* is very utilized (82%) in Northeast New Brunswick in comparison with what has been found in LF. However, the structure of variability remains the same: the vast majority of verbs that select *avoir* are the same within those two varieties. Furthermore, among all the past participles retained in AF and in LF, two verbs (*venir* and *arriver*) are those with the highest proportions in both varieties. Although there is small differences in rates of *avoir*, my multivariate analysis with *GoldVarb* (Sankoff & al. 2005) allowed me to demonstrate that transitive and adjectival use of past participle represent the most favourable conditions to its selection, as has already been found in LF. Pronominal verbs are possible but more rare than what has been found in the other Acadian varieties. This suggests that AF from Northeast New Brunswick is less advanced in the generalization process of *avoir* auxiliaries.

My analysis allows us to better understand the similarities between AF spoken in Northeast New Brunswick and LF in synchrony. Here, I aim to show that tendencies observed in those two varieties are the same with respect to this variable. Even if the rates of *avoir* remain different in each case, they share the same highly structured hierarchy of constraints on the variable occurrence, challenging the common belief that AF patterns differently from LF.

References

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