Future Temporal Reference in Acadian French: Evidence from a Conservative Variety
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The future temporal reference variable in French has been heavily debated by grammarians and sociolinguists alike. The two main ways of expressing future temporal reference are the inflected future (1) and the periphrastic future (2).

(1) Je reviendrai demain.
    ‘I will come back tomorrow.’
    (Patrick, GC-18)

(2) Je vas rouvrir ma own petite besogne.
    ‘I’m going to open my own little business.’
    (Véronique, M-296)

Since the 16th century, grammarians (e.g. Maupas 1607) have described the periphrastic future as a variant which denotes proximity of the event to the moment of speech. However, studies of Laurentian French (Deshaies & Laforge 1981, Emirkanian & Sankoff 1985, Zimmer 1994, Poplack & Turpin 1999, Blondeau 2006, Grimm 2010, Wagner & Sankoff 2011) have shown that polarity is the best predictor of variant choice: negative contexts favour the inflected future and affirmative contexts favour the periphrastic future. In a study of Acadian French spoken in Prince Edward Island (PEI) and in Newfoundland (NL), King and Nadasdi (2003) have shown that the future temporal reference system of Acadian French is distinct from that of Laurentian varieties. Beyond a difference in rates (no study of Laurentian French report a rate of the inflected future beyond 22% while King and Nadasdi find it to be used at a rate of 53%), the results of the linguistic constraints show clear differences between the two dialects. Whereas polarity is the strongest constraint in Laurentian French, it plays no role in Acadian French. King and Nadasdi show that temporal distance is the most important factor group (proximate events favour the periphrastic future), thus supporting grammarians’ descriptions of the constraints on variant choice and highlighting an important difference between Laurentian and Acadian French.

This study examines the future variable in a conservative variety of Acadian French, that spoken in the Baie Sainte-Marie region of Nova Scotia. The analysis of a conservative variety of Acadian French will shed light on differences between Laurentian and Acadian French. Furthermore, the results will help us determine whether there are differences among varieties of Acadian French.

The results show that many constraints found in the PEI and NL varieties are also found in Baie Sainte-Marie Acadian French. For example, the strongest predictor of variant choice is temporal distance (proximate events favour the periphrastic future with a factor weight of .68 and at a rate of 82%). However, the Baie Sainte-Marie variety differs in some respects with the King and Nadasdi results: while the periphrastic future is favoured with events anticipated to occur up to a week following the moment of speech in the PEI and NL varieties, in Baie Sainte-Marie Acadian French events anticipated to occur in more than an hour up to a week favour the inflected future. These results suggest that in the Baie Sainte-Marie variety the periphrastic future is a marker of an immediate future eventuality while it may not be the case in other Acadian varieties. Despite these differences, in all Acadian varieties the periphrastic future clearly merits the appellation of \textit{futur proche}. 

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