

## The future in a Continental French dialect: polarity versus temporal distance

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Future temporal reference (FTR) has been widely studied across French varieties. For centuries, grammarians described the choice between the periphrastic (*elle va chanter*) and the inflected future (*elle va chantera*) as influenced by temporal distance; periphrasis was argued to express proximity (i.e. *futur proche*). While empirical studies of conservative varieties of Acadian (King & Nadasdi 2003) and Martinique (Roberts 2013) French support this description, the strongest predictor in Laurentian (Poplack & Turpin 1999) and Continental French (Roberts 2012) is sentential polarity: negative clauses strongly favour the inflected future.

To contribute to these lines of research, we examine FTR in a recent French corpus collected in Vimeu, a rural area of northwestern France where Picard, a Gallo-Romance language in which the inflected future is strongly preferred, still enjoys a relative vitality. We analyzed spoken French data from PicardFrench bilinguals and French monolinguals and considered social (sex, age, class, bilingualism) and linguistic (temporal distance, sentential polarity, subject type, etc.) factors proposed in the literature. Our results show that the inflected future is used at a rate of 38% in Vimeu French, much higher than in Laurentian varieties, but comparable to some Acadian varieties. Socioeconomic class is the only statistically significant social factor: upper-class speakers had higher rates of the inflected variant (54%, N=66) than middle- and lower-class speakers (32%, N=201). Preliminary results from multivariate analyses also reveal that temporal distance - not sentential polarity - constrains variant choice in Vimeu French, with proximate events (within the hour or sooner) strongly favouring periphrasis. This finding, while contrasting with other studies, closely mirrors patterns reported for Acadian and Martinique French.

Our study shows that dialectal diversity persists in Continental French and beyond by showing a robust division between two types of systems in FTR.