YOUTH LANGUAGE MEETS POLITICAL DISCOURSE: USAGE OF FRENCH DISCOURSE MARKERS IN QUEBEC’S PRINTEMPS ÉRABLE

By

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A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2013
To the students of Quebec and all others fighting to make education available to and affordable for all
To my Mom, for her unwavering support
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank my professors, who have given me the priceless gift of knowledge and taught me to think “outside the box.” I would especially like to thank my committee members, Dr. Hélène Blondeau and Dr. Theresa Antes, for their guidance in the development and writing of this study. In addition, I would like to thank the faculty and staff of the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures at the University of Florida for their assistance. I also thank all of my classmates and colleagues in the department. I would also like to thank my family and friends for their support and encouragement throughout the process of writing this thesis and throughout my graduate education.
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<td>CLASSE</td>
<td>Coalition large de l'Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante</td>
<td>one of the three main student organizations involved in the strikes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FECQ</td>
<td>Fédération étudiante collégiale du Québec</td>
<td>one of the three main student organizations involved in the strikes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>FEUQ</td>
<td>Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec</td>
<td>one of the three main student organizations involved in the strikes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GND</td>
<td>Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois</td>
<td>co-spokesperson of the CLASSE.</td>
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<tr>
<td>LBB</td>
<td>Léo Bureau-Blouin</td>
<td>spokesperson of the FECQ.</td>
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<td>Martine Desjardins</td>
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This study analyzes discourse marker usage by three young student group spokespeople during Quebec’s *Printemps érable* of 2012, a social movement that was initiated by students protesting university tuition hikes. The corpus used was gathered from Internet sources of interviews or conference lectures involving one or more of the three speakers studied. The main goal of the study was to examine how the usually higher register of political discourse manifests itself in young speakers, whose language is generally analyzed in a more informal context. The discussion focuses on discourse marker forms and functions attested in the corpus and how they relate to each other, as well as observations on intra-individual variation seen in the speaker’s discourse marker usage. The most prominent of the functions studied in the corpus were the progression marker and the filler. The most common forms attested in the corpus were *donc*, *en fait*, *là*, and *puis*. This analysis showed that Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois displayed the most diverse usage of discourse markers in terms of form and function, while Léo Bureau-Blouin demonstrated a relatively restricted usage. The markers *comme*, *genre*, and (*ça*) *fait que*, which are usually not associated with more formal or standard speech, were
not attested in this corpus, suggesting that these speakers used a higher register when engaging in the political discourse seen in these interviews.
INTRODUCTION

In society as a whole, youth language as a vernacular is often stigmatized by adult speakers of the general population and viewed as a “less pure” variety of the standard language. Studies of language attitudes and representations (see Gadet 2007 and Faygal 2010, among others) have shown evidence of the marginalization and stigmatization of the youth language vernacular by older speakers of the language. In linguistic studies, and especially in sociolinguistics, youth language vernacular, particularly adolescent speech, has been shown by some studies to be a catalyst for linguistic change that is eventually adopted by the general population (See Labov 1972, Tagliamonte 1999).

In the Francophone world, attitudes towards youth language have evolved over the years: youth language or ‘le parler jeune’ has become more marginalized (Gadet 2007) and in some cases- such as youth language in the banlieues of Paris, where youth language has increasingly become characterized by mixing with immigrant languages, such as Arabic- youth language has even come to be stigmatized (Fagyal 2010). According to Gadet’s article, discussed in further detail in Chapter 2, attitudes toward youth language in French have evolved from regarding the vernacular as an elite code to regarding it as a marginalized variety of French. Fagyal’s study, which examined prosodic elements of youth language in the banlieues of Paris, discusses the stigmatization of the youth language vernacular, which is viewed by some as a detriment to the French language and national identity.

Linguistic studies with age groupings as a social factor have shown variation in the speech of young speakers in several areas, including the usage of discourse
markers (see Heisler 1996, Tagliamonte and Hudson 1999, Thibault and Daveluy 1989, and Sankoff et al. 1997). Thibault and Daveluy (1989), for example, studied the difference in usage of five discourse markers based on age (interviewing the same speakers at different times in their lives), finding both differences in usage as a speaker ages (generational differences) and evidence of linguistic change in progress. As Sankoff et al. (1997) stated, discourse markers are not taught in school and therefore represent a portion of a speaker’s language that develops through interaction with family, friends, and other members of the language community. In this way, discourse markers are unique: they are a part of discourse that is picked up from other speakers of the language and not covered in grammar books or explicitly taught in school. For this reason, variation in usage of discourse markers based on individual speaker differences, age, and register can give insight into how the discourse marker lexicon is developed. Do young speakers add or delete certain discourse markers to their lexicon as they get older? What other social factors (e.g. gender, socioeconomic background, education level, etc.) may influence which discourse markers are or are not used? Does discourse marker usage also vary based on the social context or register?

The present study will focus on the speech of relatively young speakers and analyze the discourse marker forms and functions that they use in a very specific situation, that is, political discourse related to the student strikes known as the Printemps érable in Quebec during the spring of 2012. As public political discourse generally belongs to a higher register of speech (Martel 2008), it is expected that the speech of the young speakers studied in this corpus will represent a higher register of youth language than would that of a young person just speaking with friends or family.
How will the young speakers studied, who are being interviewed in a political context where they are playing a critical leadership role, use discourse markers, in terms of both form and function?

**Youth Language**

In recent decades, several studies (see Gadet 2007, Fagyal 2010, and Thibault 1997, among others) have focused on variation in youth language and linguistic attitudes towards the youth vernacular in French. As will be discussed in Chapter 2, youth language is often stigmatized but, at the same time, it can serve as a catalyst for linguistic change. (Fagyal 2010; Thibault 1997). Perhaps partially due to varying attitudes towards it, youth language has recently come to be viewed as a sociolect in its own right, garnering attention from countless sociolinguistic studies. Examples of variation in French youth language at the lexical level include borrowing, truncation of words, and verlanization, or the rearrangement of syllables to form new words (Gadet 2007). These types of variation can also, as Gadet notes, be combined, such as in the verlanization of a word borrowed from Arabic with an English suffix added. Lexical variation is just one aspect of youth language that creates a plethora of variables available for linguistic analysis. Other studies (e.g. Heisler 1996, and Sankoff et al. 1997) have examined the usage of discourse markers by young speakers of French. Heisler (1996) did not concentrate on young speakers as a group for his entire study, but rather examined age groups as one social factor influencing the usage of OK as a discourse marker. Sankoff et al. (1997) studied discourse markers of young Anglophone L2 French speakers because, as it is not taught in school, discourse markers usage is an indication of how well an L2 speaker has integrated socially into the Francophone community.
Although many studies have examined youth language as a whole, we will also see variation between individuals in this age group. These differences may be based on factors such as education, the region in which the speaker and his/her parents were born and grew up, socio-economic background, and others. Since the present study focuses on the speech of only three individual speakers, we will mostly discuss individual differences between these speakers rather than general tendencies in youth language. Similarly, as we are examining these speakers’ speech in one relatively narrow context, we will discuss their usage of discourse markers in this context only.

The corpus used in the present study was gathered from television journalistic interviews of three relatively young speakers: Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois (21 years old), Léo Bureau-Blouin (20 years old) and Martine Desjardins (30 years old). These speakers were chosen for the corpus because, as spokespeople for the three major student groups of Quebec, they were interviewed many times by journalists. Their discourse in the context of these interviews was also very political in nature, since they were representing the student population in negotiations with politicians. The fact that all of these interviews were filmed for television or the internet also adds a formality to the context of the interviews, as the speakers knew that they were being filmed and watched by countless viewers. Their speech in these interviews, therefore, represents a higher register of youth language, as they ultimately wanted to act in a professional manner and be taken seriously so that their agenda would be taken seriously. The interviews were conducted in 2012 during the *Printemps érable* in Quebec, which will be discussed in the following section.
The Context: Le Printemps Érable

The 2012 Quebec student strikes began as a student protest against tuition hikes announced by the government in 2010, but led to a larger social movement known as le Printemps érable (Sorochan 2012). The tuition hikes being protested, announced by premier Jean Charest and the Parti Libéral du Québec (PLQ) in early 2010, were intended to raise tuition by 75% over five years beginning in 2012 (Sorochan 2012). The students of Quebec first responded with petitions and small demonstrations and walkouts, but after the government’s refusal to negotiate with student groups, a majority of students voted in favor of a general unlimited strike in mid-February 2012 (Sorochan 2012). Three student groups were largely involved in the organization of the strike and represented the students in negotiations with government officials: the Fédération étudiante collégiale du Québec (FECQ); the Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec (FEUQ); the Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante (ASSÉ), specifically its temporary coalition formed for the 2012 student strikes, the Coalition large de l’Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante (CLASSE). The minimum demand of the strike was the rescinding of the tuition increase, but more radical demands called for movement to a tuition-free system; this goal was particularly sought after by the CLASSE, the most radical of the student groups, which holds in high esteem the ideal of free post-secondary education (Sorochan 2012).

Not surprisingly, the involvement of these student groups and the high profile nature of the strikes led to a high amount of public discourse on the topic of the strikes, especially by the relatively young spokespeople of these three groups. During the strikes, they were interviewed by countless journalists and gave press conferences and motivational speeches to the student population. The controversial nature of the topics
discussed in these interviews and the somewhat diverse social backgrounds of the spokespeople make this an important area of study for the sociolinguistic aspects of public discourse. Specifically, this study will analyze the discourse markers used by the spokespeople of these student groups during interviews with the press, examining their functions in the context of public political discourse. Examining discourse marker usage is a clear way to analyze public discourse in these interviews and compare the results with previous studies on similar forms and functions of discourse markers.

During the student strikes, the spokespeople for the student groups took on political leadership roles in the students’ fight against the tuition hikes. They represented the student groups in negotiations with political leaders and participated in debates with politicians and pundits, which likely made their language use more politician-like than student-like. Youth language vernacular often includes the use of less formal lexical items, such as slang, or modification of existing lexical items, effectively making them seem less formal, such as borrowing, verlanization, and truncation. Since youth language is generally considered to be a less formal vernacular, in some cases to the point of stigmatization, its combination with political discourse, which usually takes on a more formal register, promises to be a fascinating topic of study. Whereas youth language has largely been studied in a vernacular context (see Gadet 2007, Fagyal 2010), observations of youth speakers in a political discourse context will show another register of youth language that has not yet been well documented. Examining the student spokespeople’s discourse during the strikes will provide insight into how younger speakers vary their speech stylistically from their usual less formal vernacular
to match the more formal register expected from a political figure, by using a different register than they would use in conversation with family or friends.

Gadet’s (2007) Chapter on stylistic variation discusses variation based on context and interlocutor. According to Gadet, speakers of every language change various aspects of their speech based on the person to whom they are speaking. In French, there are four levels of language, which are, from least to most formal: *populaire*, *familier*, *standard*, and *soutenu*. It is expected that observations made in this study will show one of the higher levels of language, due to the fact that the speakers are being filmed and participating in public political discourse.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Age in Sociolinguistics

According to Gadet (2007), young speakers of any given language in any given culture set themselves apart from adults through increased usage of vernacular language and unique codes, known in French as *verlan* (Gadet 120). Gadet asserts that youth language has only recently come to be considered a sociolect by sociolinguists, primarily due to a prolonging of adolescence due to economic dependence, unemployment or difficulty finding work, or, on the other hand, increase in young people’s influence as consumers (Gadet 121). She also discusses the paradox presented by the fact that youth language is simultaneously stigmatized and considered a source of linguistic change, as it is instable and in constant evolution (Gadet 121). The traits of youth language that Gadet discusses at the lexical level include borrowings (from Arabic, English, and African languages), truncation of words (e.g. *ouette* for *cachouète*), reduplication (e.g. *zonzon* for *prison*), metaphor or metonymy, and *verlan* (rearrangement of words, e.g. *céfran* for *français*) (Gadet 124). As in most vernacular forms of languages, especially oral forms, the usage of these traits is highly variable and the language is subject to combinations of these variations, such as the verlanization of words borrowed from Arabic, followed by an English suffix (Gadet 124).

Although Fagyal’s (2010) study focuses on the prosodic traits of popular French spoken in the Parisian suburbs and the effects of contact with immigrant languages, she also makes some general comments on the study of youth language. In the 1980s, youth language was considered a style reserved for adolescents under 20; there was a “jargon” or code specific to this age group that was known only to its members and had
to either be explained to or guarded as a secret from their parents (Fagyal 28). During these years, the youth language was viewed by the press as a hip code, much like that of a secret society, that represented a new, better version of French whose use was to be restricted to only young people and forbidden to their parents (Fagyal 28-29). In the mid-1990s, the primary characteristic of youth language changed: instead of being a variety mainly used by speakers of a certain age group, what was considered youth language became a vernacular mainly used by speakers in the suburbs (Fagyal 29). Rather than being considered “hip” or “in” by the media, youth language became more marginalized and more secretive, which caused objections from speakers of the variety, who complained that they were not understood due to the obscurity of their code (Fagyal 29). By the end of the 21st century, attitudes toward suburban French youth language had become rather negative; what had once been considered an elitist secret code is now viewed as a “français mutilé” (mutilated French) and a threat to the integrity of the language and even of the nation (Fagyal 32;34).

Thibault’s (1997) article discusses, among others, Clermont and Cedergren’s 1985 study on the pronunciation of the /r/ in Montreal French. Until the 1950s, an apical /r/ was the traditional norm of the area, but Sankoff-Cedergren’s 1971 corpus of 120 recordings of native Montreal French speakers, when compared with interviews from the 1940s, showed an increase in the tendency to favor the uvular /r/ (Thibault 23). An examination of these corpora showed that the adolescents of the 1940s began the trend of this pronunciation and that their children’s generation continued the tendency, which was shown in the 1971 corpus, suggesting to the researchers that these changes were passed down via the first source of language acquisition: the family (Thibault 23). The
results of Clermont and Cedergren’s study suggests that the adolescents of the 1940s, if they did not instigate this linguistic change, at the very least played a key role in the diffusion of the uvular /r/, especially by passing it to their children (Thibault 23). Thibault's article also makes an important distinction between linguistic change and inter-generational differences. If a characteristic of youth language is carried into adulthood, it is most likely a linguistic change; however, if this trait fades as the individual becomes an adult, the variation is more likely to be an inter-generational difference that is only seen when the individual is younger (Thibault 24).

Unlike the findings of Fagyal’s (2010) study on linguistic attitudes towards youth language in the suburbs of Paris, which suggest a marginalization of youth language, Thibault's survey of studies seems to point to variation in youth language as a significant source of linguistic change in certain situations, such as those observed with the pronunciation of /r/ in Montreal in Sankoff-Cedergren’s study. These two observations on youth language present two opposing sides of linguistic attitudes towards adolescent vernacular, one being positive and the other negative. These conflicting views on youth language may be one reason that, according to Gadet (2007), linguists have recently become interested in studying it as its own sociolect. As previously discussed, Gadet presents other various reasons for the interest in youth language, including the influence of adolescents on consumerism; however, the linguistic variation and the attitudes towards that variation seen in Fagyal’s (2010) study also demonstrate compelling reasons for linguistic study of youth language, both in variation and in attitudes.
Butler and King (2008) refer to Schiffrin’s (1987) definition of a discourse marker: “sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk” (Butler and King 63). In this article, they discuss the discourse marker *mais dame*, which first appeared in France in the 19th century but whose usage has diminished except for in one variety of French spoken in Newfoundland on the Port-au-Port peninsula (Butler and King 63). They study the distribution and discourse functions of *mais dame*, both in early literary usage and contemporary vernacular usage (Butler and King 63). After describing the history of this discourse marker, Butler and King examine its usage in 19th century literature, using the Grand Robert, and in contemporary vernacular in Newfoundland, using data from the community of L’Anse-à-Canards. They found that varieties of French in which this discourse marker is not attested use other items for the same discursive effects, such as *bien oui, et pourtant, en fait*, etc. (Butler and King 80). Both the literary sources and the contemporary oral data showed *mais dame*’s functions as reinforcing a stance, denying a challenge to the stance, and returning to a prior concern (Butler and King 81). They also concluded that in Newfoundland French, *mais* and *mais dame* are both discrete discourse markers with similar but separate functions that cannot be used interchangeably (Butler and King 81). *Mais dame* is an archaic form that seems to be restricted to Newfoundland French and whose usage serves to increase discourse coherence (Butler and King 81).

Sankoff, Thibault, Nagy, Blondeau, Fonollosa, and Gagnon (1997) studied spontaneous speech production in young Anglophones living in Montreal in interviews conducted in French. They were particularly interested in discourse markers due to the fact that they are not taught in school, but are an indication of whether the speaker has
been socially integrated into the community of the L2; only L2 speakers with significant contact with native speakers will master the use of discourse markers (Sankoff et al. 193). Their study examined the rate of usage and the choice of markers, as well as the social factors that may have influenced these choices (Sankoff et al. 193-4). In this study, discourse markers are defined as having the following characteristics: 1) do not enter into the construction syntactically with other elements of the sentence; 2) are not crucial to the propositional meaning of the sentence; 3) are subject to semantic bleaching compared to their source forms; 4) undergo greater phonological reduction than their source forms; and 5) are articulated as part of the smoothly flowing speech production (Sankoff et al. 195, 197). The discourse markers found in this corpus were categorized into three types, dependent on their relationship to English markers: French markers with an English equivalent (comme, tu sais), French markers without an English equivalent (bon, là), and those without a one-to-one semantic equivalent in English, but with a common function (fait que) (Sankoff et al. 198-9). Comme is discussed as a discourse marker and an adverb meaning "approximately," similar to its English equivalent, like; this usage has been attested in Quebec French from over 60 years before the publication of this article (Sankoff et al. 205). The most frequent use of comme, however, was that of a desemanticized punctor, similar to like in English (Sankoff et al. 205). The results of this study showed that the speakers used discourse markers about three times more frequently in their L1 than in their L2 and that the least fluent speakers used them the least (Sankoff et al. 213). Those speakers with early exposure to the language outside of school were more like to use markers such as là, with no English equivalent (Sankoff et al. 214). In general, speakers who were exposed
to the L2 in early life in the form of social interaction with native speakers were most likely to use discourse markers competently and, therefore, considered more fluent (Sankoff et al. 214).

Gold and Tremblay (2006) assert that *eh* and *hein* are very similar in their discourse particle functions, but diverge in their function as identity markers; *eh* is part of the Canadian English dialect and the Canadian national identity, whereas *hein* has no identity marker properties for French Canadians (Gold and Tremblay 237). In their study, they found that *hein* in French is reported as more frequently used than *eh* in English and that francophone attitudes toward *hein* are more positive than Anglophone attitudes toward *eh* (Gold and Tremblay 248). They studied the use of these in ten contexts: opinion, fact, command, exclamation, question, request for repetition, fixed expression, insult, accusation, and narration (Gold and Tremblay 249). The study was based on surveys completed by French speakers (Université Laval) or English speakers (University of Toronto) who were born in Canada and under the age of 30; the survey gave sentences and asked if the respondent had heard it, if they use it themselves, and their attitude toward the usage (Gold and Tremblay 248).

Beaulieu et al. (2007) studied the use of *comme* in Quebec French as a marker of comparison and asserted that the approximation and exemplification usages of *comme* are not unique to Quebec French, but are attested in other languages, notably English and Chinese (Beaulieu et al. 27). They note that these new utilizations of *comme* represent a broadening of its original meaning to include a distancing quality (Beaulieu et al. 27). The corpus that they used includes literary examples, some oral speech samples from BDTS (Banque de données textuelles de Sherbrooke), and some
fabricated examples (Beaulieu et al. 27). The authors suspect that the non-standard use of *comme*, similar to that of *like* in English, developed as a result of the influence of English on the language (Beaulieu et al. 27). The article also discusses the metadiscursive function of *comme*; metalanguage meaning a part of the sentence that has no semantic bearing on what is being said, but rather explains something about the usage of the code or language in the sentence (Beaulieu et al. 33). It is important to note that the meaning of *comme* (exemplification, approximation, etc.) has no effect on the use of *comme* in a metadiscursive context (Beaulieu et al. 34). The article also addresses the discourse marker function of *comme*, using the examples of *comme on dit* and *comme qu’on dirait*, both of which add nothing, grammatically or semantically, to the sentence in which they take part (Beaulieu et al. 36). They note that Susanne Fleischman mentions a similarity between *genre* in hexagonal French, *comme* in Quebec French, and *like* in English; *genre* and *comme* have similar usages to *like* in English, including approximation, hedging, and indirect relating of discourse (Beaulieu et al. 37). The authors conclude that these new usages of *comme* in Quebec French discourse show a semantic shift of the term from the standard comparison meaning to multiple qualities that we can group under the general category of distancing (Beaulieu et al. 40). This semantic shift has been accompanied by a syntactic shift, which has transformed *comme* into a discourse marker and given it an additional metadiscursive function (Beaulieu et al. 40).

Forget (1989) studies the use of the particle *là* in Quebec French in its various usages, including as a discourse marker. She discusses how *là* has undergone a shift in function from deictic, an element of the sentence whose referential quality is
dependent upon the context of the statement, to discursive, where its primary purpose is to establish or maintain a connection with the listener (Forget 57-9). As proof of the non-systematic nature of là, Forget cites the fact that it can be inserted at almost any point in the statement (Forget 60). Forget analyzes là in terms of its primary usages: identification, detachment from the subject, and reinforcement of the action (Forget 63-6). She concludes that the particular usage of là in Quebec French shows that it is necessary to overlook the assumption of lexical meaninglessness in order to examine the semantic and pragmatic qualities that its use in discourse demonstrates; it is therefore important to recognize the connection between the discourse markers and the situation in which they are used (Forget 80).

Heisler (1996) examined the use of OK as a discourse marker in Montreal French using the Sankoff/Cedergren corpus of 1971 and the 1984 Montreal corpus, both corpora of sociolinguistic interviews in Montreal French (Heisler 293). The study describes three discourse functions that OK performs in the corpus - agreement marker, interactive marker, and structural marker - which all address interactional problems linked to the discourse produced (Heisler 293-294). Heisler defines the agreement marker function as marking an agreement with the preceding discourse and notes that, with this utterance, the speaker indicates that the exchange can be closed with regard to the preceding discourse and thus opens a new exchange, continuing the linear progression of the conversation (Heisler 295). An interactive marker is defined as establishing, maintaining, prolonging, or breaking the punctual relationship between the interlocutors (according to Vincent’s 1993 study); the purpose of this interactive marker is to link the interlocutor to the discourse of the speaker, favoring the communication
between the speakers and the linear progression of the conversation (Heisler 296). This function is also sub-divided into four sub-functions: attention getter, back-channel signal, command softener, and progression check (Heisler 296). As a structural marker, Heisler notes that OK marks one of two things: the onset of a structural problem in the discourse or the return to normal from the structural problem, which is determined by the level of discourse at which it occurs: the act, the move, or the exchange (Heisler 298). Heisler quotes Sinclair and Coulthard (1992) on the definition of these terms: “Moves are made up of acts, and moves themselves occupy places in the structure of exchanges” (Heisler 299). Heisler’s study first examined gender as a sociolinguistic factor and determined that men utter OK, in all three functions, more frequently than women (Heisler 302). Heisler offers the possible explanation that, according to Chambers (1995), women are more sensitive to the social significance of linguistic variables and OK is often thought of as an Americanism, not a standard French form (Heisler 303). He also suggests that women may experience fewer of the problems that the usage of OK addresses (Heisler 303-304). The study then analyzed social class as a factor, demonstrating that the middle class used OK in all three functions more frequently than the upper and working class (Heisler 304). The upper and middle class were close to equal in frequency for two of the functions, but the working class used the third function, the structural marker, much more frequently than the upper class (Heisler 304). Heisler found, however, that age was the most significant sociolinguistic factor in the frequency of OK usage as a discourse marker (Heisler 307). Younger speakers (aged 15-33) used OK as a discourse marker the most frequently, with 67% of tokens coming from this age group (Heisler 307). Heisler concludes that the influence of
English, from both the rest of Canada and the United States, in the form of journalism, the media, music, movies, etc. is the most obvious explanation for this change in the usage of OK; however, examining the use of OK in other languages, researchers may be able to more firmly conclude whether contact with English is the real cause of the increase in frequency of this usage of OK as a discourse marker (Heisler 310).

Tagliamonte and Hudson’s (1999) study uses a different theoretical approach to analyzing discourse markers: instead of isolating one marker and discussing its various functions, Tagliamonte and Hudson discuss one function of discourse markers found in their corpus and how certain markers found in the corpus fit into this function. The article examines the use of quotative constructions, which introduce reported speech, in the speech of British and Canadian youth (Tagliamonte and Hudson 147). They used two corpora, one collected in York, England in 1996 and the other collected in Ottawa, Canada in 1995, both of which consisted of recorded narratives of personal experiences by university students ranging in age from 18 to 28 (Tagliamonte and Hudson 154). Most of the quotatives found in their analysis of the corpora used one of four quotative constructions: say, go, think, and be like (Tagliamonte and Hudson 155). Their multivariate analysis of these data attempted to determine how certain factors, both linguistic (grammatical person and content of the quote) and social (sex of the speaker), influenced which quotative construction was used in each token (Tagliamonte and Hudson 159). Tagliamonte and Hudson’s data showed that, despite the geographic distance, the usage of be like by British and Canadian youth is following the same “functional trajectory” as it did in the United States; that is to say that it has come to be used in a similar fashion to other quotatives, but that the choice of quotative also varies
depending on individual narrative styles (Tagliamonte and Hudson 165; 168). This study is an example of a different theoretical approach than that used in studies such as Heisler’s (1996) and Sankoff et al.’s (1997): the authors studied one function, reported speech, and discussed the different forms used to achieve this function and which factors affected the speaker’s choice of form.

Although not specifically on the subject of discourse markers, Poplack and Levey’s (2010) article demonstrates that many studies claiming to show contact-induced grammatical change fail to prove either that the change has occurred and/or that it is caused by contact and not internal evolution of the language (Poplack and Levey 391). They explain that contact-based explanations of change are problematic because alternate explanations that are equally likely may be present and because it is often difficult to determine whether the change is community-wide or just idiosyncratic (Poplack and Levey 394). Variability, for example, can be confounded with change because it is a necessary condition of change, although it does not necessarily indicate it (Poplack and Levey 394). Poplack and Levey describe the following criteria for contact-induced change: 1) absent in a pre-contact or non-contact variety or, if present, not conditioned in the same way as in the source and 2) can also be shown to parallel, in a non-trivial way, the behavior of a counterpart construction in the source language (Poplack and Levey 398). They also specify that evidence of these criteria can only be obtained through systematic quantitative comparisons of the construction in question with a pre-contact or non-contact variety (Poplack and Levey 398). They present the case of stranded prepositions in Ottawa French (e.g. “Le gars que je sors avec…”) as an example, concluding that, although normally attributed to contact, this phenomenon
is actually unlikely to be a contact-induced change, due to the fact that the conditions leading to preposition stranding differ from those observed in English (Poplack and Levey 405). Their conclusion states that contact-induced change is “not an inevitable, not possibly even a common, outcome of language contact (Poplack and Levey 412)” and that it is especially important, given the recent advances in empirical linguistics, that we use these quantitative means to support claims of contact-induced change, rather than relying on anecdotal observations (Poplack and Levey 412).

These previous studies examined specific discourse markers in Canadian varieties of French, especially Quebec French, including their frequency and their various functions within the discourse. I will refer back to these observations when discussing the functions of the discourse markers that are being analyzed in the present study. As for criteria on determining which items are discourse markers, I will use the following working definition: a discourse marker is an item in an utterance that does not add to nor subtract from the meaning or grammaticality of the utterance. The meaning referred to in this definition refers to lexical meaning; that is, the discourse markers examined in this study may have a pragmatic function, but, in most cases, have not retained their lexical meaning. This definition does not include some of the criteria discussed in previous studies (such as semantic bleaching, discussed in Sankoff et al. 1997) because a broader working definition of the term will allow for a greater amount of data to be analyzed.

The last article discussed in this review (Poplack and Levey 2010) described an empirical methodology for determining whether a grammatical change could be attributed to a language contact situation. Although it seems that certain discourse
markers in Quebec French may be related to contact with English, due to seemingly analogous structures in English, we must be careful not to assume that this is the case without careful empirical analysis of the evidence. In order for a construction to be considered a contact-induced change, one must have access to comparable data in a pre-contact or non-contact variety of that language.

**Public and Political Discourse in Sociolinguistics**

Martel (2008) studied the argumentation strategies, and effectiveness thereof, of politicians in televised political debates during the Canadian federal election campaign of 2004. In order to study this, the researchers in Martel’s study gathered about thirty participants of different ages, genders, and political affiliations and asked them to evaluate the communicative performance of political party leaders during the “Débat des chefs,” which is the televised highlight of the federal election campaign (Martel 2). Martel discusses three aspects of the way in which the politicians conduct themselves during important media appearances: their media communication style, which depends on the type of media on which they are appearing; their professional identity, or public persona; and their personal identity (Martel 4-5). According to Martel, these three components of political discourse contribute greatly to the performance (or “counter-performance”) of the political party leaders (Martel 5). In the “Débat des chefs” of the Quebec provincial elections of 2003, the discourse analysis showed that only Jean Charest, the leader of the party that opposed the incumbent, conducted himself in keeping with his social, or political, identity by debating his opponents in the manner expected given the interactional context; the other party leaders sacrificed their professional identity and the combative nature of a debate in order to preserve a more sympathetic image of their personal identity (Martel 5).
Lewis’s (2005) study focuses on argumentation used in online political discussions on Internet forums in English and French. Her corpus consisted of posts by both native and non-native speakers on forums hosted by five periodicals (The Financial Times, The Guardian, Le Monde, Le Figaro, and Le Nouvel Observateur) on three political topics related to current affairs: European Union politics, Middle Eastern politics, and globalization (Lewis 2002). Lewis notes a surprising heterogeneity of the messages in length, language style, structure, and topic (Lewis 2008). The main components of the message structure that she discussed were: message openings, which often included discourse markers; and position statements, which can take the form of question and answer, concession and counterargument, or claim and evidence, among others (Lewis 2008-2009). She also discusses what she refers to as concessive structures as a way of linking the message opening with the position statement: the speaker reiterates his/her opponent’s idea, which is considered the concession aspect, but follows it with a contradicting idea (Lewis 2011). The two markers that she found to fulfill this concession function in her corpus were of course for English and bien sûr for French (Lewis 2012-2013).

**Conclusion**

This Chapter has given an overview of previous studies on age as a sociolinguistic factor and discourse markers as studied in pragmatics and sociolinguistics, as well as studies on political discourse in sociolinguistics. These studies will later be referred to during the discussion of the forms and functions of discourse markers examined in the present study. Chapter 3 will discuss the design of
the study presented, including the methodological framework, the corpus, and biographical background on the speakers examined in the study.
CHAPTER 3
STUDY DESIGN

The Methodological Framework

Two possible theoretical frameworks for analyzing discourse markers have been discussed: one analyzes the different possible functions of one or more discourse markers (as in the studies of Heisler 1996 and Sankoff et al. 1997, among others) while the other examines one function of discourse markers and which markers fall into that category (as in the previously discussed study of Tagliamonte and Hudson in 1999). The former is more common in linguistic studies of discourse markers, perhaps due to the possibility of these functions overlapping. The present study will use the second framework, analyzing each function and the markers used to fulfill those functions, specifically using the functions discussed in Heisler’s study on OK, which was adapted from Vincent’s (1993) model. Heisler’s model will be used in terms of the three main marker functions that he examines in his study; however, the sub-functions identified in our data will be different from those that Heisler used in his description of OK. These sub-functions will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 4.

The Data

The study used a corpus of spoken Quebec French gathered by the author from interviews involving one or more of the three young spokespeople for the main student groups: CLASSE, FECQ, and FEUQ. The corpus was built by the author using videos gathered from the internet in February and March of 2013. The links for the sources of the corpus can be found in Appendix A. This corpus enabled an analysis of young people who are in particularly leadership-oriented and often political roles. Examining their speech will therefore provide insight into the discourse of young speakers in a
political context. Biographical background information on the spokespeople whose discourse was examined in this study - Martine Desjardins (FEUQ), Léo Bureau-Blouin (FECQ), and Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois (CLASSE) – will now be discussed.

The Spokespeople

Léo Bureau-Blouin was born in Montreal, Quebec in December 1991 (Assemblée Nationale de Québec 2013). His father is a director for an exposition center and his mother works for an artistic group (Gervais 2012B). Although born in Montreal, he grew up in Saint-Hyacinthe and also attended cégep there (Lessard 2012). He earned a diplôme d’études collégiales in social sciences and administration at Cégep de Saint-Hyacinthe in 2010 (ANQ 2013). Bureau-Blouin attended law school at l’Université de Montréal, but began a political career before finishing the degree (Lessard 2012). After serving as the president of the Fédération étudiante collégiale du Québec (FECQ) from 2010 to 2012, he was elected as member of the Assemblée Nationale for Laval-des-Rapides during the general election of September 2012 (ANQ 2013). He is affiliated with the Parti québécois (ANQ 2013).

Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois was born in Montreal, Quebec in May 1990 (Gervais 2012A). His parents are from Thetford Mines, a town in the east of Quebec, and they met while they were both participating in the International Movement of Catholic Students (Gervais 2012B). He enrolled at the Université de Québec à Montréal (UQAM) in the fall of 2009 to begin working on a baccalaureate in History (Gervais 2012A). He was elected spokesperson of the Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante (ASSÉ), a group of which he had been a member since fall 2007, in April 2010 (Gervais 2012A). In fall 2011, he became the co-spokesperson of the Coalition large de l’Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante (CLASSE) (Gervais
CLASSE was a temporary coalition of the ASSÉ formed in December 2011 whose specific goal was to organize and carry out protests in the spring of 2013 (ASSÉ).

Marine Desjardins was 30 years old during the student strikes and was born in Montreal (Gervais 2012B). Her father works as an aeronautical technician and her mother is a retired hospital consultant (Gervais 2012B). She was elected president of the Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec (FEUQ) in 2011 and was re-elected to continue as president in 2012 (FEUQ). Before becoming president of the FEUQ, she was also involved the Association des étudiantes et étudiants en sciences de l’éducation (ADEESE) via its UQAM Chapter; she first served as graduate student representative in 2009 before becoming president of the ADEESE in 2010 (Gervais 2012B). Desjardins is a PhD student in educational sciences at UQAM and would like to teach at the university level, although she has not ruled out a career in politics (Gervais 2012B).

The Data Collection

This study was conducted empirically, using data collected from publicly available Internet sources. The tokens used were collected from seventeen interviews and press conferences with student group spokespeople Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois, Martine Desjardins, and Léo Bureau-Blouin. The videos were found using the Google search engine. All videos came from YouTube or TVA Nouvelles and their durations ranged from about six to thirteen minutes. Some interviews were split into multiple videos due to file size limitations imposed by the hosting site. Only occurrences uttered by the three spokespeople were transcribed, since the study focuses on their usage of the markers; therefore, markers used by journalists or other interviewees were not
counted. Occurrences of the selected discourse markers were extracted from each interview, transcribed in context into a Microsoft® Excel® spreadsheet, and coded for discourse marker form, speaker, discourse marker function, and, where applicable, sub-function. Generally, studies on discourse marker frequency discuss the number of each discourse marker used per 10,000 words (see Beeching 2007, among others). Since the videos examined in this corpus were not completely transcribed and only the tokens of discourse markers were transcribed, the number of total words is not available; therefore, the frequency of discourse markers in the corpus per 10,000 words cannot be determined. Since the data were gathered in this way, with only the discourse marker tokens being extracted from video recordings and the entirety of the videos not being transcribed, this study will not focus on frequency of discourse markers, but rather on the discourse marker forms and functions attested in the corpus.

Table 3-1, below, shows the discourse markers collected from the corpus by form (rows) and by speaker (columns). Totals for each form attested in the corpus are given as well as totals for each speaker. The grand total of discourse marker tokens extracted from the corpus was 165.

**Conclusion**

The information presented in Chapter 3 has outlined the methodology for the study. The study was performed empirically, with the tokens collected from seventeen videos of television interviews or conference lectures involving the three student group spokespeople. The data were classified based on speaker, form, function, and sub-function, where applicable. The discourse marker functions and sub-functions used in Vincent’s (1993) and Heisler’s (1996) studies were partially adopted for use in the present study; however, the methodological framework differs from that of Heisler, who
chose one discourse marker form and studied its various functions. Instead, this study analyzes each function attested in the corpus and the discourse marker forms that do or do not fulfill them. The discussion of the results will also focus on discourse marker form and function instead of on frequency.

Chapters 5 and 6 will analyze the data collected from two different perspectives. Chapter 5 will analyze the data in a quantitative manner, focusing on the discourse marker functions and the forms that are attested for each in the corpus. Chapter 6 will discuss the data more qualitatively and focus on variation between the three speakers and what impact their biographical backgrounds, discussed earlier in Chapter 3, may have on their speech.

Table 3-1. Discourse marker forms by speaker.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marker</th>
<th>GND</th>
<th>LBB</th>
<th>MD</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alors</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bon</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donc</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>61 (37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>En fait</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>27 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Là</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>29 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (&lt;1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puis</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 4
FUNCTIONS OF THE DISCOURSE MARKERS

Introduction: Form and Function

Chapter 4 will focus mainly on analyzing the functions of the discourse markers collected from the corpus, including which discourse marker forms do and do not fulfill each one. Most of the previous studies on discourse markers discussed in Chapter 2 examined both form and function of the discourse markers that they studied. In Butler and King’s (2008) study of *mais dame* in Newfoundland French, the main functions of the marker were reinforcing a stance, denying a challenge to that stance, and returning to a prior concern. Beaulieu et al. (2007) focused on *comme* as a marker of comparison but also discussed its approximation and exemplification uses, while Forget (1989) studied *là* and found its main function to be establishing and maintaining a connection with the listener. Tagliamonte and Hudson’s (1999) study differed from these in its analytical approach: the authors chose one function (reported speech) and examined various structures that fulfilled this function.

Regardless of how their analysis was structured, however, these previous studies on discourse markers discussed the relationship between form and function. Often, one marker is predominantly, although not completely, associated with one primary function, such as *mais dame* in Butler and King’s (2008) study and *là* in Forget’s (1989) study. In other cases, a function that is fulfilled by certain discourse markers cannot be fulfilled by others. For example, the marker *OK*, examined in Heisler’s (1996) study, could not logically fulfill the hesitation marker function discussed in Vincent’s (1993) study due to its inherent semantic properties. Therefore, although Heisler used Vincent’s model for his study, he did not include this function in his analysis, as the
marker he studied did not fulfill it. In the present study, examining the attested discourse markers according to both form and function will allow us to observe similar patterns where one or more forms are predominant in a function or one or more forms cannot (or does not, in this corpus) fulfill a certain function.

**Classification of Data**

Once the data were collected, the tokens were first coded according to function. Heisler’s (1996) study, as previously discussed in Chapter 2, used three functions to describe the usage of *OK* in Quebec French: agreement marker, interactive marker, and structural marker. Most markers taken from the corpus fell into the interactive marker category for function (162 of 165 total tokens), with only three tokens fulfilling the agreement marker function and no tokens fulfilling the structural marker function. It is not surprising that the interactive marker is dominant in this corpus, due to the nature of the discourse examined. Their discourse is largely persuasive; therefore, Heisler’s definition of the interactive marker as linking the listener to the speaker’s discourse fits well with the purpose of the spokespeople’s discourse in the context of the strikes.

For the purposes of the present study, Heisler’s three main functions were used to describe the data; however, since the vast majority of tokens fell into the interactive marker category, sub-functions of this function were identified in order to further analyze the data. The sub-functions of the interactive marker will be discussed below.

**Agreement Marker**

Heisler (1996) defines the agreement marker as indicating that the speaker agrees with a previous statement and is indicating a change in the topic or direction of the discussion, thus furthering the linear progression of the conversation (Heisler 295). Therefore, a token was coded as an agreement marker if it indicated that the speaker
was agreeing with the previous statement and moving the conversation in another
direction or to another topic entirely, as in example (1).

(1) **ben** la loi va s’appliquer mais je pense que (MD; 5/23/12; interview on
news (LCN))

In example (1), the marker *ben* indicates that the speaker acknowledges the
previous point that the law will apply in this case and is moving the conversation along
to a different, although related, point. The discourse markers found to fulfill the
agreement marker function in this corpus were *ben*, *bon*, and *OK*. Other markers not
attested in this function category, such as *en fait*, would not logically be able to fulfill this
function. The term *en fait*, for example, for which the English equivalent is *in fact*, has a
contradictory sense that would generally not allow it to be used in this context.

Interestingly, the only instance of *OK*, the marker studied by Heisler, found in the
corpus fulfilled this function. This token is shown in example (2).

(2) **OK** mais écoute il fait des très bons films (GND; 2/26/12; *Tout le
monde en parle*)

In this utterance, the speaker is conceding the point made by the speaker to
whom he is responding and moving the conversation along in a different direction. It is
significant to note that this utterance was not a part of the interview about the strikes,
but rather a digression from the political discourse that comprises the majority of the
corpus. This may explain why the agreement marker is almost absent from the corpus;
due to the political and often heated nature of the debate, there is not much need for a
discourse marker that acts to concede a point or agree with the previous statement.

Interactive Marker

The interactive marker establishes, maintains, prolongs, or breaks the punctual
relationship between the interlocutors (Vincent 1993) and its main purpose is to link the
interlocutor to the discourse of the speaker and promote communication between
speakers and the linear progression of the discourse (Heisler 296). Except for the three
agreement marker tokens, all tokens were coded as interactive markers, as there were
no instances of structural markers in the corpus. The sub-functions used to classify the
interactive marker tokens were progression marker (Heisler 1996), filler (similar to
Vincent’s segmentation marker), causation marker and contradiction marker (both types
of progression marker), and command softener (Heisler 1996).

**Progression Marker**

The progression marker sub-function used in the present study was adapted
from Heisler’s (1996) progression function, which was one of the interactive marker sub-
functions examined in his study. The progression marker tokens serve the purpose of
indicating a transition between arguments that the speaker is asserting, as seen in
example (3).

(3) *donc* aujourd’hui on propose concrètement (LBB; 4/11/12; news
interview; LCN)

In example (2), the marker *donc* is used to connect the speaker’s last statement
to the next one and to indicate to the listener that he is transitioning to another point.
The progression marker is therefore similar to the agreement marker in marking the
transition to the next topic, but differs from it due to a lack of agreement with the
previous statement. In other words, the progression marker simply shows progression
to the next statement and does not indicate agreement with the previous one. The
progression marker may also serve to prepare the listener for the next point that the
speaker makes, as in examples (4) and (5).

(4) euh *donc* hors de la question de finance publique (GND; 7/31/12;
conference at the Center for Research on Globalization)
(5) **puis** on voit aussi une transition de gouvernement (MD; 3/30/12; interview on LCN news)

The markers *donc* and *puis* represent the majority of the tokens with the progression marker sub-function, with 55 (63%) and 21 (24%) tokens (respectively) fulfilling this sub-function. Progression marker is also the most frequent sub-function for both *donc* and *puis*: 90% of tokens of *donc* are progression markers and 95% of tokens of *puis* are progression markers. Other discourse markers that were found to function as progression markers in the corpus were *alors* (4 tokens), *bon* (1 token), and *là* (6 tokens). Again, the marker *en fait* would not be a logical marker for the progression marker category due to its contradictory semantic properties.

The low number of instances of *alors* (fours tokens) in the corpus also coincides with one of the main findings discussed in Thibault and Daveluy’s (1989) study. Thibault and Daveluy found an increased number of tokens of *alors* used by older speakers when compared with a lower frequency of *alors* in the same speakers at a younger age. Therefore, the low number of tokens of the marker found in this corpus suggests a similar decrease in the usage of *alors*. It cannot be determined from this result, however, whether this marker is decreasing in usage in the general population. It is also important to note that this marker was only uttered by one of the speakers studied and that his usage of the marker is quite possibly an effect of intra-individual variation rather than a generational difference, as was seen in Thibault and Daveluy (1989).

That the progression marker was the most widely used by all three speakers on the corpus should not come as a surprise, given that the student spokespeople’s discourse is largely political in nature; that is, the purposes of their discourse is argumentative rather than narrative. The progression marker is used to form a liaison
between the arguments that the speaker is making and ties into the main function of the interactive marker, which is to link the listener to the speaker’s discourse.

**Filler or Hesitation Marker**

The filler function was adapted from the hesitation marker function examined in Vincent’s (1993) study. The function is referred to in this study as filler to avoid the implication that these markers indicate a decrease in the speaker’s rate of speech at the moment when it was uttered. Instead, these tokens indicate breaks in the progression of the speaker’s discourse that are not accompanied by hesitations. These pauses generally came at the beginning of a sentence or when the speaker first started answering a question. Some, however, were used to place emphasis on a particular part of the discourse, as shown in example (6).

(6) ces entreprises de bénéficier **en fait** d’une recherche (MD; 10/30/12; lecture at SPEP conference)

The marker *en fait* in example (6) is clearly not marking the progression of the discourse to the next statement, since it is inserted in the middle of an idea, but is instead adding emphasis to the word *bénéficier* and drawing attention to the speaker’s main point. The marker does not, however, always follow the word to which it adds emphasis; it can also precede the emphasized word, as seen in example (7).

(7) et qu’il faut **donc** refinancer les universités (GND; 7/31/12; conference lecture at the Center for Research on Globalization)

In example (7), the marker *donc* precedes the word to which it is drawing attention: *refinancer*. When the listener hears this marker interrupting the normal syntax of the utterance, his/her attention is drawn to what the speaker says next, thus reinforcing his argument.
Tokens of là, ben, and en fait comprise the majority of the discourse markers in the corpus that fulfill the filler function, with 22 (39%), 16 (28%), and 11 (19%) tokens respectively. Ben is used almost exclusively as a filler, with only one token fulfilling the agreement marker function. Là also functions mainly as a filler, with 22 out of 27 tokens (81%) fulfilling this function. The marker OK would not logically be fit into the filler category due to its semantic properties as an agreement marker. Puis is also unlikely to fulfill this function, as it generally marks a transition to the next point in an argumentative discourse or to the next event in a narrative discourse.

Causation Marker

The causation marker was not discussed in Heisler’s (1996) study, but is a subset of the progression marker used in his study. Like the progression marker, it functions to show a connection between the two statements but unlike the progression marker, it indicates a cause and effect relationship between the two statements or ideas, as in example (8).

(8) et c’est pour ça donc que j’ai décidé (GND; 11/2/12; interview on street with multiple journalists)

In example (8), the marker donc shows a direct relationship between the first statement, which is the cause (“c’est pour ça”) and the second statement, which is the effect (“j’ai décidé”). This was the only token in the corpus found to be a non-ambiguous causation marker; for ambiguous cases where it was unclear whether there was a cause and effect relationship, the tokens were categorized as progression markers. It is also interesting to note that the only token of this marker shows similar syntactical properties to those seen in the filler sub-function; the marker is inserted right before the relative pronoun que and therefore breaks up the syntactical progression of the sentence.
**Contradiction Marker**

The contradiction marker, similar to progression and agreement markers, shows a connection between two statements. Like the causation marker, it is a subset of the progression marker used in Heisler’s (1996) study. It is the opposite of the agreement marker, however, as it functions to contradict a previous statement that was either made by another speaker or repeated by the present speaker for the purposes of refutation. In this corpus, the contradicted statement was usually an idea stated in the journalist’s question to the speaker or a statement from an opposing side repeated by the journalist to elicit the speaker’s reaction, as in example (9).

(9) *en fait* il faut comprendre que le problème là (MD; 3/30/12; news interview; LCN network)

In example (9), the marker *en fait* is used at the beginning of the speaker’s response to the question in order to address a misconception on the part of the journalist or the audience and to indicate that she is correcting that misconception. The discourse marker *en fait* dominates the contradiction marker sub-function, with all 16 tokens being occurrences of this marker; this is not surprising since the phrase is the equivalent of the English terms “in fact” or “actually.” The frequency of *en fait* is distributed between the filler (11 tokens or 41%) and contradiction (16 tokens or 59%) functions. As with the causation marker function, ambiguous cases where it was unclear whether the relationship between two statements was a contradictory one, the token was classified in the progression marker category.

The contradiction marker function is similar to that of the progression marker in that it links two statements either made by or responded to by the speaker; however, these two functions differ in that the progression marker indicates a positive link
between the two statements, meaning that he/she believes them both to be true, whereas the contradiction marker indicates a negative link between the two. In other words, the speaker believes only one of the statements linked together to be true (usually the second one, or the counterargument).

**Command Softener**

The command softener function was also discussed in Heisler’s (1996) study on OK as a sub-function of the interactive marker. The command softener is added to a command as a means of dampening the harshness of the command, as in example (7).

(10) puis un ami m’a dit là “arrête de charrier là” (LBB; 6/6/12; Penelope McQuade (talk show); Radio Canada)

Example (10), which is the only instance of this sub-function found in the corpus, is used as part of a quotation, so it is important to note that this example does not represent a marker that the speaker used in a spontaneous manner. It is nevertheless significant to note the amount of markers used in this utterance, as there is also a filler marker (là) right before the quotation and a progression marker (puis) at the beginning of the statement. Also, it is possible that this marker is not a part of the quoted speech and was, rather, added by the speaker. We transcribed the utterance in this way because we believe the marker to be part of the quotation; however, since the tokens were extracted from a corpus of oral speech, it is impossible to know for sure whether the bolded là in example (10) should be inside or outside the quotation.

**Discourse Marker Usage**

In Table 3-1, the raw numbers for discourse marker function according to speaker are shown, with percentages in parentheses. Table 5-1 shows the raw
numbers for each discourse marker form according to the speaker, with percentages in parentheses. A detailed analysis of the inter-individual variation seen in these tables will be provided in Chapter 5.

As seen in Table 5-1, Nadeau-Dubois was the only speaker who used the marker *alors* and also used *puis* significantly more frequently than the others, although his most used marker was *donc*. Bureau-Blouin also used *donc* more than the other seven markers, but also uttered *bon* relatively frequently; in fact, he uttered this marker more frequently than the other two speakers did. By far, Desjardins’ most used markers were *donc* and *en fait*. She uttered these markers more than the other two speakers and was responsible for 21 of the 27 tokens (78%) of *en fait*. Desjardins also demonstrated fairly frequent use of *ben* and *là*, but attested the lowest frequency of *puis* of the three speakers.

Table 4-1, below, shows the raw numbers for discourse marker form relative frequency according to function category, with the percentages in parentheses. *D onc* is mostly used as a progression marker, with a significant number of tokens of *puis* also fulfilling this function. *Puis* is almost exclusively used as a progression marker, with only one token fulfilling the filler function. The marker *ben* is almost exclusively used as a filler, as is *là*; these two markers are the most frequent in the corpus for the filler function, with *en fait* having a significant number of tokens in this category as well. The use of *en fait* is split between the filler and contradiction marker functions, with 11 and 17 tokens in each category, respectively. All four tokens of *alors* in the corpus are used as progression markers, while *bon*’s four tokens are split between the filler (2 tokens), agreement marker (1 token), and progression marker (1 token) functions. The three
agreement marker tokens are comprised of one token each of *ben, bon,* and *OK.* This token of *OK* is the only instance of this marker attested in the corpus.

**Discourse Marker Forms Absent from the Corpus:** The markers *comme,* *genre,* and *(ça) fait que,* which were previously discussed in Chapter 2, were not attested at all in this corpus, despite their presence in previous studies on discourse markers in Quebec French (see Beaulieu et al. 2007 and Sankoff et al. 1997). One possible explanation for the absence of these markers is that they are more frequent in vernacular speech or lower registers, whereas the corpus for this study was taken from journalistic interviews, in which one would expect a more formal or higher register. These markers, especially *comme* and *genre,* also tend to be used more in narrative discourse or reported speech (as in the spontaneous speech corpus studied by Sankoff et al. 1997) than in argumentative or political discourse, which was the focus of the present study. Also, since this corpus was relatively small with only 165 tokens in 17 sources, it is possible that these markers may have been found with a larger and more varied number of corpus sources.

**Conclusion**

Chapter 4 discussed the results of the study in terms of the forms and functions of discourse markers attested in the corpus. The functions used most in the corpus were the progression marker and filler functions, while the discourse marker forms used most were *donc, en fait, là,* and *puis.* The absence of the markers *comme,* *genre,* and *(ça) fait que* was also discussed. The discussion in Chapter 5 will focus on individual variation between the speakers studied in the corpus.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marker</th>
<th>Agreement</th>
<th>Filler</th>
<th>Progress</th>
<th>Causation</th>
<th>Contradiction</th>
<th>Soften</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bon</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>Donc</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>En fait</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Là</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Puis</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3 (2%)</td>
<td>57 (35%)</td>
<td>87 (53%)</td>
<td>1 (&lt;1%)</td>
<td>16 (10%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 5
INTER-INDIVIDUAL VARIATION

Chapter Introduction

In Chapter 4, we presented the data and discussed the results according to the discourse markers and their functions as attested in the corpus. The discussion in Chapter 5 will focus on the trends noted in each individual speaker’s usage of the markers, according to both form and function. Due to the fact that this study concentrates only on the speech of three specific speakers, general linguistic tendencies of certain groups according to social factors cannot be accurately assessed; however, differences between the individual speakers will be discussed. It is also important to note that, although the number of discourse markers used by each speaker relative to the other two will be mentioned, the discussion will focus mostly on the relative frequency of forms and functions used by each speaker. This is due to the nature of the corpus used in this study; as the corpus was collected from online oral sources for which transcriptions were not available, frequency of the discourse markers per 10,000 words cannot be accurately assessed. The discussion will therefore concentrate on the speaker’s tendencies of discourse marker form and function usage rather than on how many markers total were used by each speaker. Table 5-1 (below) shows the distribution of discourse marker functions by speaker.

Speakers

Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois

Of the 165 tokens of discourse markers in the corpus, Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois uttered more than a third (37%) of them, which was approximately the same amount as Martine Desjardins; however, his usage does differ from hers in both marker form and
function. In terms of function, Nadeau-Dubois’ discourse marker usage was also quite varied. He utilized five out of the six functions studied at least once, but he used the progression marker function most (36 out of 61 total tokens). His other markers fulfilled the functions of agreement marker (2 tokens), filler (16 tokens), causation marker (one token), and contradiction marker (5 tokens). Clearly, Nadeau-Dubois’ discourse marker usage according to function is quite diverse, although the amount of tokens for each function used is not necessarily very high, except in the case of the progression marker.

In terms of form, Nadeau-Dubois used donc, là, and puis most frequently and, while he used alors only four times, he was the only one of the three speakers to use that particular marker in the corpus. He also uttered the only instance of OK found in the corpus. Nadeau-Dubois used the markers ben and en fait, however, much less frequently than the other two speakers. It is also interesting to note that Nadeau-Dubois was the only one of the three speakers to use all eight forms of discourse marker attested in the corpus at least once.

Overall, Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois displayed the most diversity in both form and function of discourse markers of the three speakers examined in this study. Although some forms and functions were used more than others, his speech displays a significant variety of markers that differs from the usage of the other two speakers.

Léo Bureau-Blouin

Léo Bureau-Blouin displayed both the most restricted usage of markers in terms of functions and the lowest amount of marker tokens of the three speakers. His speech accounts for less than a quarter (24%) of the total discourse marker tokens in the corpus and he used only three out of the six functions, one of which contained only one token, which was an instance of reported speech. The two discourse marker functions
that Bureau-Blouin utilized in tokens that represented spontaneous production were progression marker and filler. The tokens were almost exactly evenly split between the two categories, with 18 tokens in the filler category and 21 tokens in the progression marker category.

Bureau-Blouin used the marker donc most frequently of the eight forms attested. He did not use the forms alors or OK at all and used en fait only once in the corpus. Ben was his second-most frequently used marker and he uttered over half the tokens of this marker (9 tokens out of 17). Overall, Bureau-Blouin’s marker usage in the corpus was much less varied than the other two speakers’ in both form and function; however, he did use the marker ben more than the other two speakers and this difference was especially noticeable when compared to Nadeau-Dubois, who used the marker only twice in the corpus.

The differences in Bureau-Blouin’s speech when compared with the other two speakers’ could be at least partially due to a regional difference, as he grew up in a different area (Saint-Hyacinthe) than the other two speakers, who were both raised in Montreal. A comparison study with other speakers from this region could provide more insight into whether the tendencies observed in this study are typical of the Saint-Hyacinthe region.

Martine Desjardins

As previously mentioned, Martine Desjardins used about as many discourse markers in the corpus as Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois did. In terms of function, Desjardins’ marker usage, however, was more evenly distributed among the filler and progression marker categories (23 and 29 tokens, respectively) and she used the contradiction marker function over twice as frequently (11 tokens) as did Nadeau-Dubois (only 5
tokens). The only other function she used in the corpus was one token of the agreement marker.

Like the other two speakers, Desjardins used the marker *doncé* most in the corpus, with 26 tokens of that marker; however, her other most used form, *en fait*, was used relatively little by the other two. Desjardins’ speech accounted for 21 of the 27 tokens of this marker in the corpus, whereas Nadeau-Dubois used the form five times and Bureau-Blouin used it only once. About half of the tokens of *en fait* used by Desjardins (11 tokens) were in the contradiction marker category, while the others were in the filler category. In contrast, Nadeau-Dubois’ tokens of *en fait* were all in the contradiction marker category. Her increased usage of the form *en fait* correlates with the high frequency of the contradiction marker in her speech, since *en fait* was the only marker attested in the contradiction marker category. Desjardins also used *ben, là*, and *puis*, but to a lesser extent than the other speakers. Overall, the majority of Desjardins’ discourse marker usage was concentrated in two functions (filler and progression marker) and two forms (*donc* and *en fait*).

Desjardins’ demographic profile is a bit different from the other two speakers’ partially because, although she is also a student, she is a graduate student and is about ten years older than Bureau-Blouin and Nadeau-Dubois. Although age grouping for what is considered youth language can vary based on the study, 30 years old is generally no longer considered to be in the category for youth language, which usually focuses on adolescents to speakers in their early 20s.
Conclusion

Chapter 5 has discussed observations on differences in discourse marker usage between the individual speakers whose speech was examined in this study. Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois showed a more varied usage of both forms and functions, including the use of two discourse marker forms that were only uttered by him in the whole corpus. Léo Bureau-Blouin, however, displayed a more restricted usage of discourse markers in terms of function, using only three of the six functions attested in the corpus. Chapter 6 will summarize the thesis as a whole and provide the general conclusions drawn from the observations made in this study. Limitations of the study and possibilities for future studies will also be discussed.

Table 5-1. Discourse marker function by speaker.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Agreement</th>
<th>Filler</th>
<th>Progress</th>
<th>Causation</th>
<th>Contradiction</th>
<th>Soften</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GND</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>61    (37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBB</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40    (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MD</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>64    (39%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 6
DISCUSSION AND GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The primary goal of this study was to observe a higher register of discourse within youth language, which would be expected when young speakers are involved in leadership roles in their communities and engage in political discourse with other members of the community. It was hypothesized that the young speakers whose speech was studied would use a more formal level of discourse than is generally associated with youth language, as they are acting in more professional roles and want to be taken seriously. This study focused on the usage of discourse markers in order to make these observations because this was a simple way to empirically examine the speakers’ discourse by analyzing the forms and functions of the markers that they used. Discourse markers are also unique in that they are not taught in schools or grammar books and the development of their usage in a speaker’s discourse is dependent on the speaker’s interaction with friends, family, and the community. For this reason, discourse marker usage will vary between individuals based on several different social factors.

The corpus from this study was gathered from journalistic interviews and conference lectures, all of which were in the context of public political discourse, featuring three relatively young speakers: Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois (21), Léo Bureau-Blouin (20), and Martine Desjardins (30). The discourse marker tokens were extracted only from the three subjects’ speech and coded for speaker, marker form, function, and sub-function. The most prominent functions in the corpus were filler and progression marker, while agreement marker, causation marker, and command softener were only seen in a few tokens each. The most common forms were donc, en fait, là, and puis, with only a handful of tokens each of alors, ben, bon, and OK. As well as analyzing the
form and function of the discourse marker tokens, we also discussed, in Chapter 5, the intra-individual variation observed among the subjects. Nadeau-Dubois seemed to have the most diverse usage of the different functions, using all but one of the six functions, while Bureau-Blouin used only three out of the six functions, only two of which represented spontaneous speech, as the command softener token was reported speech. Desjardins' speech accounted for over half of the contradiction marker tokens, while Bureau-Blouin did not use this function at all. Desjardin’s usage of discourse markers was also more evenly distributed between her two most-used functions, filler and progression marker, than that of Nadeau-Dubois and Bureau-Blouin. It is interesting the note that, in the general election of September 2012, Bureau-Blouin was elected as a member of the Assemblée Nationale and has therefore begun a career in politics at a very young age.

The main distinction made between youth language and political discourse in French in the previous studies discussed was the formality of the language; that is, youth language is considered a less formal vernacular form, whereas political discourse would be more formal and closer to standard French. In an informal context, which is often associated with youth language, we would also expect, in the case of discourse markers, a higher frequency of forms or constructions either borrowed from other languages or with an equivalent form in another language, such as *comme* or *tu sais*, as discussed in Sankoff et al. (1997). *OK*, as a form that is usually thought of as an Anglicism and not a standard French form (Heisler 1996), would be expected to have a high frequency as well among young speakers, as Heisler found in his study on the marker (Heisler 307). As previously discussed, there are no instances of *comme, genre,*
or (ça) fait que attested in this corpus and only one instance of the marker OK, which was part of a dialogue that was unrelated to the strikes and in the context of a somewhat less formal interview on a talk show.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Poplack and Levey (2010) describe the need for concrete evidence of effects of language contact. Although Heisler (1996) described OK as an Anglicism and not a standard French discourse marker form and Sankoff et al. (1997) discussed the similarities of the usages of comme and genre in French to those of like in English, the single instance of OK found in this corpus is obviously not sufficient evidence to warrant a discussion of contact-induced effects. Contact was therefore not discussed as a factor of discourse marker usage in this study.

The absence or extremely low frequency (in the case of OK) of these more informal discourse markers suggests that the speech of the three student spokespeople studied is more representative of a more formal political discourse rather than of less formal youth language. The tendencies displayed by these young speakers to use more traditional forms of French discourse markers suggest that, when faced with a situation where their discourse is more closely watched by the public and where they are playing an important political role, young speakers will make an effort to self-monitor and use more standard forms of the language, in contrast with the borrowing, verlanization, truncation, slang, and other lexical modifications that are often associated with the vernacular of youth language.

Limitations of the study and possible future directions: Although this study presents some pertinent observations on the subject of youth language discourse, its relatively small scope unfortunately makes it difficult to draw significant and definitive
conclusions from its results. As only three speakers’ speech was examined, the study could only make observations on the differences between the speakers rather than discuss larger generalized tendencies of youth speakers. Although the results do suggest a tendency to omit less formal discourse markers such as comme, genre, or (ça) fait que, a larger sampling of young speakers would be needed to draw truly definitive conclusions from these observations. Similarly, access to these speakers’ speech in a more informal setting, such as a sociolinguistic interview or a similar recording of spontaneous speech, could provide results from a different register with which to compare the results of the present study. Unfortunately, the data gathering for this study was limited to Internet sources and adding a corpus of spontaneous informal speech from the speakers was not possible. Future studies, however, could broaden the scope of the corpus by gathering more informal and spontaneous speech from the speakers or include the speech of more young speakers in political roles in order to provide a larger sampling of the population.

Additionally, future studies on this subject could focus on one observation in particular made in this corpus that was not discussed in the results, specifically that the tone of the interview and friendliness of the interviewer seemed to significantly affect the amount of markers that Bureau-Blouin used. For example, in one of the videos in the corpus, taken from a show called Franchement Martineau, the host, Richard Martineau, was very argumentative and combative towards Bureau-Blouin while discussing the situation of the strikes. During this video, Bureau-Blouin attested only two tokens of discourse markers, both the form donc and both in the progression marker category. Conversely, in a video of similar length from the talk show Pénélope McQuade, the host
was more affable and Bureau-Blouin used a wider variety of markers and functions. In this interview, he used the filler, progression marker, and command softener functions. This interview was also different because part of it focused on his personal life and asked him about his childhood; therefore, this part of the video demonstrated narrative rather than political discourse. Although potentially significant, this observation was not explicitly discussed in the results, since the trend was only seen in these two sources with this speaker and therefore cannot be compared with reactions of other speakers to these different tones or moods. Future studies could analyze more sources in which the journalist is either friendly or combative and determine whether the journalist’s attitude toward the interviewee has an effect on the discourse marker usage of the speaker.

Despite these limitations, the current study has nevertheless provided some important insight into the usage of discourse markers by young speakers in the specific context of political discourse. The prominence of the interactive marker function, which accounted for all but two tokens in the corpus, confirms the importance of the link between the speaker and the listener(s) in the context of political discourse. The low number of instances of the marker *alors* also coincides with the tendency noted in Thibault and Daveluy’s (1989) study, in which the authors concluded that the frequency of *alors* increases with the age of the speaker (Thibault and Daveluy 44). Finally, the absence of the markers *comme*, *genre*, and *(ça) fait que*, which tend to be used in less formal contexts, suggests that in the context of these interviews, the young speakers used a more formal register. The observations made based on the results of this study therefore show a more formal register that is used by young speakers in leadership roles in the context of public political discourse.
APPENDIX
CORPUS SOURCES

1. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qlVTZmiZTXQ
2. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_aufCDG5oE4
3. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oYkI2qF1tc8
4. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulFQtM-Jb5w
5. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uAoxKP_f7NU
8. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efeAKPnEc4Q
10. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bCIkllodmEc
11. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDCfJrBIrsY
12. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1UdpGB6pQ
15. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZlY0IWjby4
17. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=abrRw8imm-o
LIST OF REFERENCES


Beeching, Kate. 2007. La co-variance des marqueurs discursifs *bon, c’est-à-dire, enfin,  


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

The author obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in French and Francophone studies from Earlham College in 2007. She then spent a few years working before beginning the Master of Arts program in French and Francophone Studies, with a specialization in French linguistics, at the University of Florida in 2011. Her research interests include sociolinguistics, syntax, and psycholinguistics, especially child language acquisition.