

The variable use of expressions of necessity in the spoken French of FSL university students.

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This study investigates the variable use of expressions of necessity in the spoken French of university FSL students, and examines the influence of linguistic and extra-linguistic previously found to have an impact on the use of such expressions by L1 speakers of French (Thibault 1991, Poplack 1992).

The corpus for this study was collected among 61 university undergraduate students via Labovian interviews conducted by a native speaker of French. Extra-linguistic factors considered in the analysis include the students' year of study, language of education, language use patterns at home, first language, length of stay in a Francophone environment, sex, and level of education of the students' parents. The L1 benchmark data come from a corpus of 6 francophone university students collected in 2008.

Our results show that, in contrast to the L1 speakers, the FSL students favor the more formal variant *devoir* followed by an infinitive (*je dois partir* 'I have to leave') over *falloir* and when they use this verb they use it very rarely with an infinitive complement. Prolonged classroom or extra-curricular exposure to French tends to favor greater use of *falloir* by the more advanced learners. However, surprisingly the advanced FSL students use irregular suppletive verbs in the subjunctive after *falloir que* more often than do L1 speakers who favor regular verbs

Taken together with findings from our previous research on the same FSL learners, the findings from the present study results show that although the most advanced students acquire a wider repertoire of sociolinguistic variants, they are only partially successful in their acquisition of a more stylistically appropriate range of variants in spoken French. In the present study this translates into an overuse of the formal variant *devoir* and in the preference for irregular verbs in the subjunctive with *falloir* over regular ones.

References

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