

Social Lives in Language –
Sociolinguistics and multilingual speech communities

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Volume 24

Social Lives in Language – Sociolinguistics and multilingual speech communities
Celebrating the work of Gillian Sankoff
Edited by Miriam Meyerhoff and Naomi Nagy

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Celebrating the work of Gillian Sankoff

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John Benjamins Publishing Company

Amsterdam / Philadelphia



™ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences – Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Social lives in language : sociolinguistics and multilingual speech communities
celebrating the work of Gillian Sankoff / edited by Miriam Meyerhoff and
Naomi Nagy.

p. cm. (IMPACT: Studies in Language and Society, ISSN 1385-7908 ; v. 24)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Sociolinguistics. I. Sankoff, Gillian. II. Meyerhoff, Miriam. III. Nagy, Naomi.

P40.S5447 2008

306.44--dc22

2008023402

ISBN 978 90 272 1863 6 (Hb; alk. paper)

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John Benjamins Publishing Co. · P.O. Box 36224 · 1020 ME Amsterdam · The Netherlands
John Benjamins North America · P.O. Box 27519 · Philadelphia PA 19118-0519 · USA

For Gillian, of course

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Acknowledgements

The production of a volume such as this is both a pleasure and a challenge. The challenges have been offset by the pleasures of working with the colleagues who have contributed chapters and those who provided advice as reviewers. We would like to thank Umberto Ansaldo, Hélène Blondeau, David Britain, Richard Cameron, Michelle Daveluy, Sylvie Dubois, Christine Dureau, Christine Mallinson, Corey Miller, Terry Nadasdi, Bill Reynolds, Joel Robbins, Kenny Smith, and James Walker for their thoughtful suggestions.

We'd also like to thank Bill Labov, Tom Morton, Brooke Ricker, David Sankoff, and Bambi Schieffelin for assistance with other aspects of production. At Benjamins, we would like to thank our editor Kees Vaes for his unstinting support and speedy assistance with technical matters and our series editor, Ana Deumert, who encouraged us to move forward with this project. Finally, our thanks to Andrew Beach, Sam Meyerhoff and Craig Diegel for their support and understanding while the book was in preparation.

Introduction

Social lives in language

Naomi Nagy and Miriam Meyerhoff

1. Why sociolinguistics cares about multilingual speech communities

It is axiomatic in sociolinguistics that language and society are intimately entwined. How people perceive the organisation of society, and their place within it, is realised in often subtle ways through language. The amazingly fine-grained stochastic variability in the surface form of a message may be indicative of socially salient differences among the participants, and how they understand the speech event they are part of. Speakers may present themselves in stances of authority, affection, nurturance and nonchalance, and their interlocutors may or may not agree with them, or may bring different assumptions, or their own presentations of self into the equation.

It is common that the set of linguistic resources speakers bring with them when they interact with other people include a range of languages. That is to say, most of the world is made up of multilingual individuals and most speech communities can be characterised as multilingual. Arguably, therefore, most sociolinguistics happens in contexts of language contact. Yet the sociolinguistics of language contact represents only a small fraction of sociolinguistic research (a point we explore further below).¹

In the field of language contact, many researchers are unaware of the principles underlying the methods used by most sociolinguists and the theoretical questions of concern to them. Of course, anthropologists, as opposed to linguists, are more likely to be interested in engaging with the social politics of language and ideologies of language, and these topics are immediately to the fore in multilingual communities. So, far from shying away from work in multilingual communities, anthropological linguists are likely to seek them out and embrace the challenges in them (see for example work by Niko Besnier, Peter Garrett, Jane Hill, Don Kulick, Miki Makihara).

1. This is not intended to minimise the considerable contributions to sociolinguistics made by researchers who *have* embraced multilingual speech communities as sites of investigation. We pay tribute especially to the work of Robert Bayley, Jack Chambers, Sylvie Dubois, Monica Heller, Lesley Milroy, Carol Myers-Scotton, Shana Poplack, Robin Queen, John Rickford and Ron and Suzie Scollon. But relatively few papers devoted to language contact are presented at major sociolinguistics conferences such as NWAV and the Sociolinguistics Symposia.

And yet, as the papers in this volume show, it is clear that there is an energetic and creative cohort of researchers working in multilingual contexts who nevertheless have been chipping away at fundamentally sociolinguistic questions in the fields of linguistics and anthropology. Not all of them are represented in this volume, by any means, but in gathering these papers together in one volume, we hope that readers will be able to gain a clearer focus on what kinds of questions and issues unite and separate those of us working primarily on data from monolingual speech communities and on data from multilingual speech communities.

The purpose of this introduction is to lay out a few of the major issues that have occurred to us, as editors, in drawing this volume together, and that have been shaping our perceptions about where we might go next. As the title will have already suggested to some readers, its function is also to recognise the importance of a 1980 collection of articles by Gillian Sankoff, which anticipated much of the ground being covered in the different chapters of this volume. In the introduction to her 1980 book, Sankoff challenged the assumption that social factors serve merely to provide a setting or context for language use, instead arguing that social and interactional considerations specific to the verbal exchange of a small number of co-present participants may be absolutely central in shaping the structure of language (1980: xviii). In the next two sections, we review general issues that will contextualise the work on sociolinguistics in multilingual speech communities. In the final section, we review the connections with Sankoff's earlier work, and explain the choice of title for the volume. We will suggest that it remains true today that "the most challenging problems in contemporary sociolinguistics involve putting together the two levels in the society-language relationship" (Sankoff 1980: xxii), but we will also suggest that the papers in the volume represent important and meaningful steps towards the goal Sankoff expressed so concisely more than a quarter of a century ago.

2. The curious monolingual bias of sociolinguistics

It is extremely unlikely that sociolinguistics students or fledgling researchers have ever been instructed to focus their attention on monolingual speech communities and to ignore multilingual speech communities. Nevertheless, after some forty years of sociolinguistics as a recognised sub-field of linguistic inquiry, the vast majority of sociolinguistic work focuses on monolingual communities. The iconic social dialect studies of the 1960s and 1970s, that is, New York City (Labov 1972), Norwich (Trudgill 1974), and Belfast (Milroy 1980), explicitly or implicitly excluded non-native speakers of English. While these studies have been much copied, it would be too simplistic to assume that it was their model alone which has led to the imbalance in the distribution of sociolinguistic research on multilingual and

monolingual communities. At the same time as the social dialectology of speech communities was being codified into an autonomous and respectable field of linguistic research, linguistic anthropologists continued their research into communities where this monolingual bias was not an issue. As this collection of papers shows, the connections between sociolinguistics and the study of multilingual communities continues to be maintained and nurtured in many cases by researchers whose academic “homes” are in anthropology departments.

There are important practical differences in researching the sociolinguistics of multilingual speech communities and speech communities that are monolingual (but polydialectal or polystylistic). In the field of language contact, it is common to distinguish between the outcomes of mutually intelligible varieties (*dialect levelling* and *koineisation*) and the outcomes of contact between mutually unintelligible varieties (*creolisation* and *externally-motivated change*). Whether there are, in fact, empirical differences between the processes underlying the outcomes of these different contexts of contact and change, and whether there are typologically distinct outcomes from them, remains an open question. However, it is important to recognise that many linguists share strong and honestly-held perceptions that language contact is indeed qualitatively different from dialect contact. This in turn feeds a perception that, until we have answered the questions about the similarities or differences between the underlying processes and eventual outcomes of dialect and language contact, it is prudent for linguists to keep the different contexts of contact apart.

We incline to a somewhat more *imprudent* approach. Like many of the contributors to this volume, we suspect that the study of multilingual speech communities offers insights into social and linguistic processes which are likely to be of broader relevance to sociolinguistics (see contributions by Schieffelin, Jourdan, Daveluy, Mesthrie, Meakins, Thibault and Sankoff for a focus on how the study of multilingual speech communities may shed light on social dynamics; Blondeau, Auger, Meyerhoff, Blondeau and Nagy, Labov and – especially – King for a focus on the broader linguistic insights offered by the study of multilingual speech communities).

We believe that the roots of these perceptions about the differences between the sociolinguistic study of monolingual and multilingual speech communities lie in linguists’ conceptions about what the most appropriate linguistic questions are to ask, and what constitutes valid answers to them. In the next section, we will consider some of these empirical and theoretical divergences.

3. Questions asked and questions answered

Fields of academic inquiry are defined by the kinds of questions they consider meaningful and by what kinds of answers they admit as meaningful to their

questions. The kinds of questions that define sociolinguistics have been shaped by how sociolinguistics conceptualises itself in relation to other sub-fields of linguistics and to sister disciplines such as anthropology and sociology.

3.1 Historical linguistics and sociolinguistics

The study of language variation, for example, is tied closely to the study of language change. Perhaps because of this connection to historical linguistics, sociolinguists have willingly embraced a distinction (common in historical linguistics) between changes that are motivated by language internal factors (those particular to the structure of a language itself) and external factors (factors introduced to a language through contact with other languages). The distinction between internal and external factors here is potentially confusing, since in more recent sociolinguistic work (Labov 1994, 2001), the denotation of *external* factors has shifted slightly so that in sociolinguistics, it now refers specifically to the social factors influencing synchronic variation and change (and these may have nothing to do with language contact).

Nevertheless, both the sociolinguistic and historical linguistics uses of *external* factors do have something important in common. Underlyingly, both hold that:

- i. it is possible to isolate structural factors internal to a given language's system as the object of study, and
- ii. a focus on internal factors in variation and change somehow provides a more pristine example of linguistic research (see also discussion in Meyerhoff 2006).
In fact, the very labels of the terms suggest that the *internal* factors are more central, while *external* ones are peripheral.

However, among historical linguists who take language contact seriously, both these underlying assumptions are increasingly being questioned. For example, Thomason (2001), Matras (in press) and most of the participants at the 2007 Paris workshop on language contact (Leglise and Chamoreau forthcoming) are inclined to treat the internal/external distinction as otiose. This presents a welcome opportunity: without forfeiting the well-established relationship between sociolinguists' study of synchronic variation and historical linguists' study of diachronic change, the dialogue between socio- and historical linguistics can be extended productively to incorporate multilingual speech communities (Chambers 2003 proposes a typology for dealing with different kinds of multilingual speech communities in variationist sociolinguistics). Some of the quantitative papers in this volume make a direct contribution to establishing both sound methods and sound generalisations that facilitate this continued dialogue.

3.2 The sociolinguistic variable and multilingual/contact linguistics

Within the field of sociolinguistics, too, we find conventions that militate against the study of variation in multilingual speech communities. Specifically, the notion of the sociolinguistic variable itself. As all variationists know, the quantitative analysis of variation requires the researcher to first identify variants that are semantically (or, some would argue, functionally) equivalent, and then explore the (linguistic or social) constraints on the distribution of those variants. The requirement for equivalence may be rather hard to satisfy when you are analysing variation that involves speakers' alternations and selections of variants across different languages. The envelope of variation for a particular variable is often framed in terms of the context: what words or lexical categories immediately precede or follow the element in question. Clearly, it is more difficult to establish a valid description of the envelope of variation in these terms when more than one language is at play.

Various scholars have attempted to address this problem, either from a specifically variationist perspective or from a more general perspective on what happens when speakers have different linguistic systems in play at the same time. The problem is noted in Weinreich (1966, especially chapter 3), and is the central concern of Myers-Scotton's Matrix Language Frame model (1993a, 1993b) of language contact and bilingualism; Mahootian (2006) provides a useful summary of different approaches to formalising the linguistic relationship between multilingual speakers' repertoires. Meechan and Poplack (1995) explore the potential for linguists to work "up" from the specific details of variation itself, instead of "down" from theory-internal presumptions about language structure. In some cases, it may be possible for the variation to describe the points of contact between systems. Cumulatively, it is possible that such work might in the end go beyond descriptive adequacy and offer principled generalisations about language contact and variation (cf. King, this volume).

It is also possible that the problem of defining variables and their variants in multilingual speech communities might prove to be a will o' the wisp. Because the problem is itself an artefact of theory-internal assumptions in sociolinguistics, alternative approaches to studying how multilingual speakers manage their linguistic resources may render it obsolete. Some researchers on multilingualism and language contact consider the "two/three/four languages" model inherent to most if not all of the approaches reviewed above to be fundamentally misguided (e.g., Gafaranga 2007, Matras *in press*).

In this respect, the work exploring variation in second language (L2) speakers bridges the divide between rather different conceptions of the nature of language, and the methods associated with variationist research have provided opportunities,

not just disadvantages. Sociolinguists tend to adopt a “difference” rather than “deficit” approach when comparing speaker behaviour in first and second language varieties. Many variationists look at L2 speakers as having a system, rather than being in the process of acquiring one.

We also note that even if we find satisfactory ways to address the problem of defining the variable in multilingual speech communities, other challenges present themselves. An attempt to fully explore the sociolinguistics of language contact then needs to engage with other questions: What model(s) of contact should we assume? What are the practical implications of those models in constraining or defining our data collection and our analysis? These questions take us beyond the focus of this particular volume (though Makihara & Schieffelin 2007; Ansaldo et al. 2007, Leglise & Chamoreau forthcoming and Deumert & Durrleman 2006 offer commentary on these questions from anthropological, typological and creolistic viewpoints respectively).

3.3 Practical monolingualism

The last two sections have considered the possibility that the focus on monolingual communities in sociolinguistics may, to some extent, be an artefact of our methods, some of which in turn stem from the research questions we are trying to answer.

However, there is one basic practical limitation to analysis of variation across codes and in situations of contact which must also be considered: it requires researchers themselves to have competency in multiple languages.

We are all aware of the prevalence of monolingualism in the US, where many sociolinguists train. The overall devaluation of the study of foreign languages in the current US educational system has seen even graduate programs in linguistics decrease their requirements for proficiency in multiple languages, thus diminishing the basic ability to conduct research in multilingual communities. It is true that many of us have conducted fieldwork in communities where we did not know some or all of the languages before our inquiry began (a number of the authors in the present volume can be said to be following the successful example of Gillian Sankoff in this respect, too). However, we are not confident that such an approach would be possible for researchers with no prior experience in learning second (third, fourth ...) languages.

Furthermore, sociolinguistically interesting situations of multilingualism often involve contact and alternation between internationally dominant languages and socially subordinate ones. Socially subordinate languages aren't usually the ones researchers have the opportunity to study at school or university. So even where academic traditions still include a sufficient component of foreign language

study, the kinds of the languages available for study may be mismatched to the needs of the field.

It is much harder to offer solutions or resolutions to this practical issue than it is to any of the more abstract theoretical issues reviewed above. It is, in all likelihood, a far greater stumbling block to the kind of vital sociolinguistics of multilingual speech communities that we have tried to sketch. Solutions to these problems will have to start long before graduate school, if they are to have a practical impact on the field. Increasingly, linguists are aware of and participating actively in outreach and educational work – they undertake workshops in elementary or high schools (primary or secondary) and craft enticing and rewarding introductory university courses (cf. Adger et al. 2007; Denham & Lobeck 2007; Hazen 2008; Reaser & Adger 2007, Reaser & Wolfram 2005). These are good places to introduce the sociolinguistic dynamics of multilingual speech communities, particularly as the lived world of children in most major cities today is a multilingual speech community. In addition, more practical consultancy work (e.g. advising parents bringing up bi-/multilingual children and exposing common misconceptions about multilingualism) may also encourage new generations of sociolinguistics researchers who take language learning for granted and who have grown up thinking about the sometimes difficult social and linguistic questions that living in a multilingual speech community raises.

In the next section, we examine the extent of this research bias in favour of monolingualism, and provide quantitative evidence in support of our claim that research on multilingual speech communities makes up only a small subset of the work done in the field.

4. The monolingual bias in quantitative perspective

The dearth of sociolinguistic work in multilingual communities is easily illustrated by examining publication trends. For this purpose, we surveyed two leading sociolinguistic journals, *Language Variation and Change* (LVC) and *Journal of Sociolinguistics* (JSL), including a sample of articles running through the course of the publication history of each. Articles were sorted into those that examined only one language versus those that examined more than one language.² The data for

2. Some articles that examine more than one language are still focusing on monolingual speakers, or at least speakers who are represented monolingually as far as the research collection is concerned. That is, an article may look at how speakers of language A use a certain construction and then at how speakers of language B use a related construction, and will be classified as multilingual in our tally. This method therefore overestimates the rate of occurrence of articles that truly conduct sociolinguistic analysis of multilingual systems.

LVC was gathered by sampling issue two of each volume from 1989 (volume 1) to 2007 (volume 19), for a total of 96 articles in 19 issues. *JSL* was counted exhaustively – all articles published from 1997 (volume 1, issue 1) to 2008 (volume 12, issue 1) were surveyed, for a total of 194 articles.

We see two things. First, the overall rate of publication of multilingual studies is surprisingly low compared to the number of multilingual people and communities on this planet, estimated conservatively at over 50% (Tucker 1999). Overall, 11% of the articles published in *LVC* engage in analysis of more than one language and 28% published in *JSL* do so. These ratios are statistically quite distinct from the 50% (or more) of the world's population which is multilingual.³ Another way to look at it is that each article in *LVC* examines an average of 1.2 languages, on average, while *JSL* averages 1.5. Given that most individuals live in a community where it is common to use more than one language for one's communicative needs and identity construction, this is oddly at variance with the real world.

Given the regional base of *LVC* in the USA and Canada and the base of *JSL* in the UK and the Pacific, the discrepancy between the journals is perhaps unsurprising. English reigns demographically supreme in the US and Canada. However, we might expect that *JSL*, a journal based in the multilingual zones of the Pacific and Europe, would have more multilingual articles than it in fact does. It seems reasonable to suppose that the hegemony of English in both the Pacific and Europe has had some impact on research trends represented in this journal.

The second, and more worrisome, trend is that there is no sign of improvement in this pattern. Figure 1 illustrates the percentage of multilingual articles published each year in the two journals. The dotted lines are linear trend lines showing the overall decline in annual rate.

Because some parts of the world are more plurilinguistic than others, we also looked at the distribution of where the data for these published articles were collected.

3. $\chi^2 = 34$, $p < .001$. This chi-square calculation compares our observation of the number of articles about monolingual versus multilingual communities (combining our tallies for *LVC* and *JSL*) to an expectation of a fifty-fifty split, representing conservative estimates of how much of the world's population is bilingual:

	Monolingual	Multilingual	Total
observed	213	77	290
expected	145	145	290

(If we instead compared our observation of the monolingual/multilingual ratio within these publications to an estimate of three billion out of six billion for the actual population of the world, the significance level would be far higher.) These statistics were calculated using Preacher's (2001) chi-square calculator.

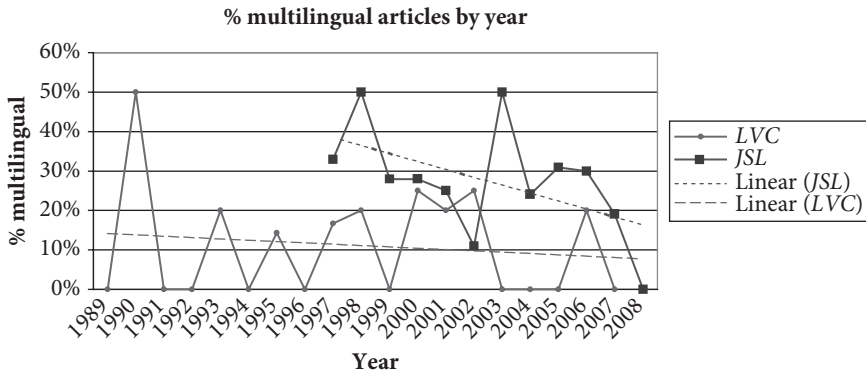


Figure 1. Percentage of multilingual articles by year in two sociolinguistics journals.

Not surprisingly, a large fraction of them report on linguistic situations in the United States, which is known for having a predominantly monolingual population. Both journals publish far fewer articles reporting from regions of greater multilingualism, such as Africa and Oceania. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate these trends for the two journals respectively.

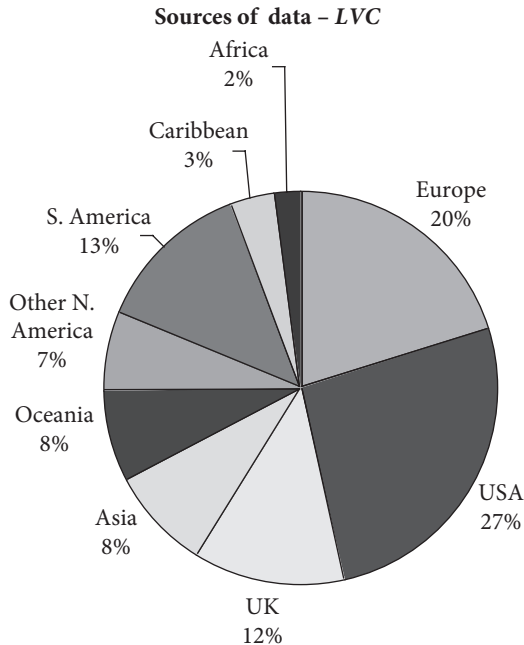


Figure 2. Place of residence of speakers analyzed in 96 *Language Variation and Change* articles.

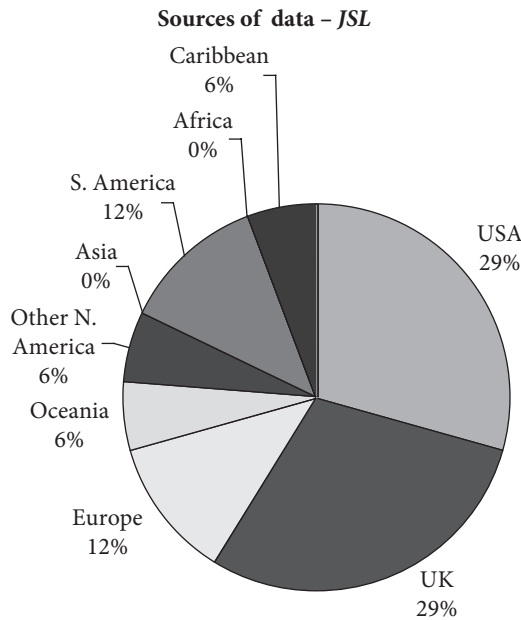


Figure 3. Place of residence of speakers analyzed in 194 *Journal of Sociolinguistics* articles.

These trends provide a further motivation for linguists to increase our efforts to make our research findings accessible to the public. Realistically, a change to the trend documented above is only likely to occur when there has been a change in attitudes and policies regarding the learning of second (and third ...) languages in the US and UK, which dominate these publications. Such changes in attitudes are more likely to prepare researchers for work on home-grown contexts of multilingualism, but also in the common, but commonly ignored, language contact situations that involve lesser-known languages.

By extension, these tallies also support the need for an increase in sociolinguistic work on multilingual speech communities – most of the world's people do use a repertoire of more than one language to meet the full range of their communicative needs. To consider single languages in isolation in scholarly work when they don't exist that way in their social lives is to reify idealisations about the discreteness of language systems and the norm of monolingualism (see related discussion in Ansaldo forthcoming). As the figures above indicate, an expansion of research into more multilingual parts of the world could do much to overcome this. The papers collected in this volume hint at the richness of the data and the rewarding generalisations to be gained from such work. They also pay tribute to the innovative path cut out by Gillian Sankoff, the anthropologist and linguist who had the foresight to identify this richness, and outline its potential for linguistics in her 1980 book, *The Social Life of Language*.

5. A highly social life in language: Gillian Sankoff's contribution to the sociolinguistics of multilingual speech communities

The papers in this collection exemplify Gillian Sankoff's influence in the field of linguistics. As has already been made clear, the focus in this volume is the sociolinguistic analysis of multilingual communities and situations. The collected papers demonstrate the continued relevance of the issues and priorities Sankoff identified for the study of language in society in 1980. Each of them illustrates her efforts to cross many boundaries that others consider(ed) sacrosanct in her search for the best understanding of how we use language. She looks across divisions between languages, between different levels of linguistics, and between first and second language users. In 1980, she observed that "many linguists still find it difficult to see how ... the "social world" is relevant to the internal structure of language" (Sankoff 1980: xix). Today, in large part due to the work of Sankoff and her colleagues, far fewer linguists would be described that way and the roles of individual experience and social context are more likely to be part of the central focus in linguistic research. In other words, people are finding many ways of "putting together the two levels in the society-language relationship" (*ibid.*: xxii); an array of these approaches are collected in this book.

While Sankoff's research has had implications for linguistic study all over the world, her own research has been principally situated in two sites: Papua New Guinea (specifically Morobe Province) and Montreal. Her important contributions to the study of language in society in both locations are reflected in this volume, where the majority of the articles focus on communities in the Pacific Islands and French-speaking Canada. However, geographically, the articles collected here circumnavigate the globe, with ports of call in North America (Blondeau, Blondeau & Nagy, Daveluy, King, Labov and Thibault), Oceania (Jourdan, Meakins, Meyerhoff, D. Sankoff, Schieffelin), Africa (Mesthrie), and Europe (Auger & Villeneuve and Labov). This collection begins to redress the geographic imbalance of the major journal articles described above, as illustrated in Figure 4. We include Figure 4 in order to illustrate Gillian Sankoff's influence. This collection of studies of multilingual communities by her students and colleagues, not surprisingly, shows a much higher rate of representation of Oceanic and "Other North American" (in this case, Canadian) communities.

That Sankoff's work continues to influence colleagues and former students working in this atypical distribution of localities is a tribute to her unusual ability to maintain traditions of work in two very different places: Montreal, giving rise to a large body of work examining the many different ways that French and English interact in Canada, and Oceania, where work explores the interaction between Oceanic languages, regional lingua francas and the colonial languages of English and French.

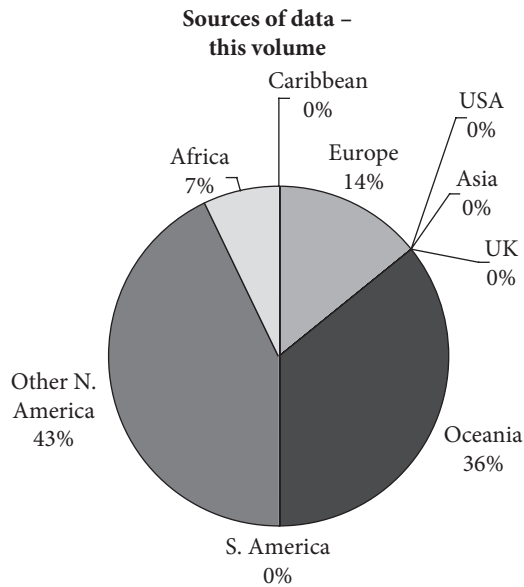


Figure 4. Place of residence of speakers analysed in this volume.

Sankoff's training was originally in anthropology and her Ph.D. at McGill University was supervised by Richard Salisbury, himself a renowned researcher in Papua New Guinea. As a graduate student, she was immersed in the friendly and close-knit atmosphere of McGill's Sociology and Anthropology department, but her own hard work, scientific curiosity, courage and intelligence propelled her to considerable early achievements. A turning point, which Sankoff herself has acknowledged over the years, was attending the Linguistic Society of America's 1964 Summer Institute in Bloomington, Indiana. There, she was able to build on both the descriptive linguistics training she had acquired at McGill and her excellent social sciences background. Sankoff's career ever since has been characterised by a duality of rigour and creativity: she has focused on locally relevant social facts as the basis for linguistic analysis, and she has grounded sociolinguistic generalisations in the complexities of empirical linguistic facts. Friends of Sankoff's at the time she was a student say that with hindsight it is clear that by the mid-sixties, she had had her first important insights into the ways in which linguistics and the social sciences could be studied to their mutual benefit. In the first years of her appointment at the Université de Montréal (c. 1969–1974), there was close collaboration between Sankoff and Henrietta Cedergren, Suzanne Laberge, Diane Vincent, Pierrette Thibault, David Sankoff and others. In terms of the development of the field, as well as of the individuals themselves, this was a remarkably intense period.

It saw the invention of (computer) corpus-based sociolinguistics, and (among other things) a deepening and sophistication in how researchers understood the relationship between language and the social order, and between language (as a system) and real time change, whether in communities or individuals. Sankoff was thinking sociolinguistics long before she (and most other people) had heard the word.

It is probably not a coincidence that this interest in both social and linguistic insights saw light in research on multilingual speech communities. Sankoff's work has demonstrated the wealth of speaker-centred and hearer-centred sociolinguistic data that is offered by the taken-for-granted exchanges of everyday life. Her contributions to research on contact linguistics have strengthened the connections between social anthropologists and linguists working on grammaticalisation and language change.

In this volume, several chapters explore contact between speakers of different language varieties. Some focus on creolised or mixed languages (Jourdan, Meakins, Meyerhoff, D. Sankoff, Schieffelin, Mesthrie), some on variation between and among first and second language users (Blondeau & Nagy, Daveluy), and some focus on variation between local and standard varieties (Auger & Villeneuve, Thibault). Appropriately, given Sankoff's contribution to our understanding of the subtle ways in which substrate, lexifier and cognitive universals interact in the formation and development of contact languages, the role of the substrate in a variety of contact situations is central to a number of the chapters (Labov, King, Meakins, Meyerhoff, Schieffelin). This unusual collection therefore constitutes an innovation in sociolinguistic research publications, as such topics are normally relegated to separate venues.

Similarly, following other paths that Sankoff blazed, chapters in this volume explore and explicitly draw together dimensions of language that are often relegated to the distinct domains of phonology, morphology, syntax, and pragmatics. Sankoff's synthesis of diverse linguistic and social factors in the analysis of variation is developed and thoughtfully explored in several chapters. These accept the need to simultaneously consider several, if not all, of the levels which are traditionally considered distinct. This is most explicitly explored in Meyerhoff's chapter but is also apparent in the consideration of factors from a number of different domains in the papers by Auger & Villeneuve, Blondeau, Blondeau & Nagy, and King.

The title of this volume pays tribute to the importance of Sankoff's 1980 work, *The Social Life of Language*, and several of the themes explored in that monograph are echoed in this collection. We have chosen this as a means to organise the book into sections.

The first section consists of five chapters (Daveluy, Jourdan, Meakins, Mesthrie, Schieffelin) which are more or less concerned with language ideologies or attitudes towards language. These chapters challenge the assumption that social factors

serve merely to provide a setting or context for language usage (cf. Sankoff 1980: xviii). They focus on how people in different kinds of communities understand the place of language in their lives and how people use language in talking about the social world (*ibid.*: xix).

The second section is made up of three chapters which bridge the first and third sections. The work in these chapters (King, D. Sankoff, Thibault) examines sociolinguistic issues both from top-down and bottom-up perspectives, intertwining macro- and micro-linguistic approaches. These chapters illustrate how particular aspects of particular social systems, resulting from particular historical forces, have shaped particular languages (*ibid.*: xx).

The third and final section collects papers that work within a micro-sociolinguistic, quantitative paradigm (Auger & Villeneuve, Blondeau, Blondeau & Nagy, Labov, Meyerhoff). These papers illustrate the variationist approach, in which performance is treated as a sample of the forms that could be generated by grammatical rules. The authors of these chapters share with Sankoff (1980: xviii) the conviction that this approach better matches linguistic reality than a linguist's or speaker's intuitions can, and that by examining language in its natural context of use we may better understand its structure.

We are proud to be able to include works by colleagues at the Université de Montréal, including one of Gillian's first students (Pierrette Thibault), members of her more recent research teams (Hélène Blondeau, Michelle Daveluy, Naomi Nagy), an observer of her anthropological fieldwork in New Guineau (David Sankoff), a fellow contributor to quantitative studies (William Labov), researchers exploring the sociolinguistics of non-western cultures (Christine Jourdan, Felicity Meakins, Raj Mesthrie, Miriam Meyerhoff, and Bambi Schieffelin), all work that presupposes fluency in a typologically and geographically diverse range of languages. This collection marks her enduring influence in the field, bringing together scholars who conduct ethnographic and linguistic work in both western and non-western societies, scholars who combine quantitative and qualitative approaches, and scholars who share her commitment to demonstrating that the behaviour of the world's multilingual speakers should be as much a part of linguistic theory and practice as their more closely-scrutinised monolingual cousins.

Far from being a retrospective, the publication of this volume is an opportunity to consider and be inspired by the new directions in which Sankoff's research agenda continues to take the field. The chapters in this volume also stand as a tribute to Sankoff's on-going leadership in the field of sociolinguistics, especially the ground-breaking work she continues to undertake on the acquisition of variation, variation and stability across the lifespan, and theorising the relationship between variation in the group and the individual (Sankoff 2004, 2005, 2006; Sankoff & Wagner 2006; Sankoff & Blondeau 2007). She is an acknowledged expert on all these topics, currently much in demand for the clarity with which she presents

the complex data that underpins her sociolinguistic insights, as well as for her skills in demonstrating the relevance of individual and group patterns of variation to language acquisition, cognitive linguistics, formal linguistics, and – of course – anthropology and sociolinguistics. It is perhaps appropriate to close by highlighting the fact that her most recent research illustrates that, as speakers, we continue to develop our repertoire throughout our lives, as she has shown that we may do as linguists.

Gillian, tankyu tumas blong yu soemoat rod long ol gudgudfala wok ya long yumi mifala evriwan.

Gillian, merci pour ton exemplaire formidable de comment choisir quoi étudier et comment y achever.

Gillian, thanks for providing such a splendid example of what to study and how to go about it doing it.

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Photos of Gillian



Photo 1. Gillian Sankoff and Dambi Sanik, visitor from Papua New Guinea, with a decorative stone axe, in 1968.

Photo courtesy of David Sankoff. Source: Staff Photo by Pete Brosseau, *The Montreal Star*, February 21, 1969.



Photo 2. Gillian Sankoff in 2008.

(Photo by Bill Labov.)

Biographies of contributors and email addresses

Julie Auger is Associate Professor of linguistics and French linguistics at Indiana University. After meeting Gillian at a conference in Québec City, she decided to leave the comfort of her home town to pursue a Ph.D. at the University of Pennsylvania. Her dissertation on subject doubling in Québec French, written under Gillian's supervision, allowed her to discover Picard, a regional language of France which bears striking similarities to Québec French but also contains many different and intriguing features. Given the precarious situation of Picard and the lack of attention it received (and is still receiving) among linguists, Julie decided to conduct fieldwork in Vimeu, France and focus a significant part of her research efforts on the phonological and morphosyntactic structure of Picard. Like Gillian, she maintains a strong interest in the structure of Québec French and continues to investigate various features of her native variety.

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Hélène Blondeau is Assistant Professor of French and Linguistics at the University of Florida. In the mid-nineties, she was involved in a research project led by Gillian Sankoff and Pierrette Thibault on the linguistic repertoire of bilingual Anglophones in Montreal. After completing her own longitudinal research on pronominal variation in Montreal French, she spent the 1999–2000 academic year as a Visiting Scholar in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Pennsylvania where she benefited from Gillian's supervision for her postdoctoral research. In this context, she had the chance to embark with Gillian on the longitudinal study of R in Montreal French trying to understand linguistic behavior over the course of the lifespan. She is currently investigating the language practices of the francophone community of Quebecers in Florida, a community that has been neglected in the large body of research devoted to the situation of French in North America.

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Michelle Daveluy is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Alberta. Trained in Montréal, she had the good fortune to be under the influence of Gillian Sankoff early on in her career. As a graduate student, she relocated and re-interviewed many

of the Montrealers originally met in 1971, for the Sankoff-Cedergren corpus. The year Gillian Sankoff served as assessor for her Ph.D. thesis on French spoken by both Franco- and Anglo-Montrealers, she co-edited a thematic issue of the journal *Culture* (XIV-2) on language variation in Montreal. When she was looking for a textbook to use for her first academic position in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Gillian came up with the suggestion that made teaching challenging enough to be stimulating for her students as well as for herself. Gillian remains an inspiration to her, in particular when tackling aspects of language dynamics that are less often studied, including among multilingual Inuit of the circumpolar world.

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Christine Jourdan is Professor of Anthropology at Concordia University in Montreal. Her first contact with pidgins and creoles was in Gillian Sankoff's undergraduate class on the Pacific at the Université de Montréal. She went on to write a Ph.D. at the Australian National University in Canberra on the creolization of Solomon Islands Pijin that was centrally inspired by Gillian's work on Tok Pisin in New Guinea. Playing with issues of cultural creolization, multilingualism, the development of urban identities in the Solomon Islands, Jourdan has written on language policy, language and nationalism, language and self, in addition to writing a dictionary of Pijin and a book on the sociolinguistic history of Pijin. Recently she has been working on the linguistic life course and on language ideology among urban middle-class Solomon Islanders.

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Ruth King is Professor of Linguistics and Women's Studies at York University, Toronto, Canada. When she was a student, the first non-textbook linguistics book she bought was Gillian's *The Social Life of Language*. She was inspired by the depth and breadth of Gillian's research contributions and by the fact that another Anglophone had specialized in the study of Canadian French. King has spent a lot of her career working on the grammatical structure of Atlantic Canada Acadian French and related varieties, research which attempts to integrate formal linguistics and sociolinguistics. She also works on general issues around language change, including the process by which language contact leads to linguistic change. In addition, she has a longstanding interest in the relationship between language and social identity, particularly in the field of language and gender studies. Gillian's encouragement and support since their first meeting at NWAV in 1993 has been enormous.

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Bill Labov lays claim to be the other half of Gillian Sankoff. He is the other one of two Professors in the Sociolinguistics Program at the University of Pennsylvania where they have jointly taught many courses since 1977. He has been married to the said Gillian Sankoff since 1993. They jointly inhabit a house in Center City, Philadelphia, where they have raised with great delight and success two children, Alice Goffman and Rebecca Labov. Labov has benefited immensely from Sankoff's carefully constructed study of the Montreal French community and her expertise on far-flung societies, embracing pidgins, creoles, and other contact situations. In his own work, he frequently draws from her current research into language change across the lifespan. He admires but cannot approach her native-like command of many tongues.

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Felicity Meakins is a postdoctoral fellow with the University of Manchester, working with Gurindji and Bilinarra people on a DOBES (Documentation of Endangered Languages program funded by the Volkswagen Foundation) project in northern Australia. Her main research interests lie in contact languages, particularly Gurindji Kriol, a north Australian mixed language. In 2007 she finished a Ph.D. dissertation on the change in the form and function of case-marking in this mixed language, basing her work heavily in variationist methodology, with a language contact twist influenced by Gillian Sankoff's work on Tok Pisin.

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Miriam Meyerhoff is Professor of Sociolinguistics at the University of Edinburgh. In 1994, she embarked on the study of Bislama in Vanuatu after a throw-away question from Gillian Sankoff ("Have you ever considered doing fieldwork on this?") and since then she has written papers and one book on syntactic variation, reduplication and gendered speech acts in Bislama. More recently she has worked on the sociolinguistic situation of another creole, spoken in Bequia (St Vincent and the Grenadines). Gillian's more recent work on the stability of individual speakers' linguistic systems has played a key role in understanding the sociolinguistic patterns of Bequians who have gone away and then come back to their home community.

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Rajend Mesthrie has been working on language contact and variation in the South African context since the 1980s. An Educational Opportunities Scholarship from South Africa took him on pilgrimage to Philadelphia for the fall semester of 1989. Here he received guidance from a number of scholars including Sherry Ash,

Bill Labov and – above all – Gillian Sankoff, who read and commented helpfully on his post-doctoral work on South African Indian English and Fanakalo. He has since been informally adopted as an honorary alumnus of the department without actually having graduated there. Rajend heads the Linguistics Section at the University of Cape Town, is serving a second term as President of the Linguistic Society of Southern Africa and holds a National Research Foundation chair in ‘Migration, language and social change.’ Amongst his publications are the edited volume *Language in South Africa* (CUP 2002).

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Naomi Nagy worked with Gillian in two capacities while a graduate student. She collected and analyzed data from bilingual Anglophones in Montreal, a primary motivation for attending the University of Pennsylvania (1990–1996). Gillian also encouraged and supervised her dissertation, assuring her that it would be possible to apply the methods learned from the (Philadelphia) Project on Change and Variation in a new and non-English context. The context was research on Faetar, a contact language spoken in two small villages in southern Italy (and Etobicoke, ON, *inter alia*) that contains elements of Italian and Francoprovençal. Naomi was the head of the Linguistics Program at the University of New Hampshire from 1997 to 2008 and is now Assistant Professor at the University of Toronto. Her work on both of the above topics continues and is regularly influenced by new findings reported by Gillian. She hopes that Toronto will provide a fertile venue for continued work in a plurilinguistic context.

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David Sankoff accompanied Gillian on her Ph.D. fieldwork in New Guinea, part of which, the lexicostatistics of Morobe District, led to his own Ph.D. research in mathematics. Then, in the early 1970s, he and his collaborator Henrietta Cedergren, working on variation in Panamanian Spanish, joined forces with Gillian to launch the Montreal French project, including the first computerized sociolinguistic corpus. During this time he also wrote the first of the programs for the analysis of variable rules, which eventually became GoldVarb. Aside from his work on phonological and syntactic variation, he has been interested in formal models of bilingual speech modes, quantitative aspects of discourse analysis and the epistemology of sociolinguistics. With Bill Labov and Tony Kroch, he was a founder of the journal *Language Variation and Change*, which he ran from its Université de Montréal office for 20 years. Starting with NWAVE 8, he played a key role in the survival and growth of this conference during a critical period. He is currently

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Bambi B. Schieffelin is Collegiate Professor and Professor of Anthropology at New York University. She first met Gillian at the LSA Institute in Ann Arbor in 1973, and was her colleague at the University of Pennsylvania from 1980–1986, where conversations about language contact and change, and life in general were often mixed. Her initial work on language socialization in Bosavi, Papua New Guinea did not include Tok Pisin, as it was not part of the everyday verbal repertoire of the community. Once Tok Pisin was introduced through Christian missionization, she began to track its impact on the Bosavi language through translation practices over several decades, consulting with Gillian on Tok Pisin issues. Her trilingual Kaluli-Tok Pisin-English dictionary recognized the potential for multilingualism in Bosavi. Always wishing there was more Creole language in her life, she also carried out research on Haitian focusing on language ideology and *kréyòl* orthography, as well as on code-switching in New York Haitian families. She is currently completing a book on the impact of Christianity and Tok Pisin on the cultural and linguistic lives of Bosavi people.

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Pierrette Thibault found Gillian Sankoff at the Université de Montréal in 1972, and through her, she discovered Weinreich, Labov and Herzog (1968), which set her on a quest for language change as a dynamic social process. Gillian supervised her Ph.D. thesis, and after Gillian left for Philadelphia, she was hired to replace her. She carried on the sociolinguistic research project on Montreal French, with the help of Diane Vincent and David Sankoff. A new corpus was constituted in 1984, a panel study with some of the same speakers interviewed in 1971 by Gillian and her associates David Sankoff and Henrietta J. Cedergren. Both Thibault and Sankoff have kept working on those two corpora and in the early nineties, they decided to look into L2 Quebec French. Thus, the project on Anglo-Montrealers speaking French started. It has allowed both Gillian and Pierrette to engage new students (Nagy and Blondeau, among others) on the study of languages in contact. They still work together and Pierrette Thibault has research plans for both of them after they retire.

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Anne-José Villeneuve is a Ph.D. candidate in French Linguistics at Indiana University. A Montréal native, she first became familiar with Gillian's work during

her undergraduate studies at the Université de Montréal. Since then, she has had the chance to meet Gillian at various conferences after being introduced by Julie Auger, Anne-José's thesis advisor and one of Gillian's former graduate students. Anne-José's research focuses on sociolinguistic variation in the spoken French of Vimeu, an area of northwestern France where the regional Oïl language, Picard, still enjoys relative vitality, alongside French.

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PART I

Language Ideology

From the speakers, what can we learn about the language?

Language, mobility and (in)security

A Journey through Francophone Canada

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The proposed journey focuses on localised groups of French speakers in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Québec and Alberta but also on transient workers that go back and forth to their workplace and military families who are relocated at regular intervals within the country. Linkages between language, mobility and (in)security are assessed through the analysis of linguistic variables that illustrate the enactment of local norms of interaction among mobile Canadian French speakers. Continuities among groups that may superficially appear, and are often theorised, as disconnected become prominent. I ultimately suggest that Francophone Canada is best grasped as a set of multilingual speech communities rather than as a unidimensionally conceived series of groups sharing the exclusive commonality of speaking French.

Keywords: Francophone Canada; speech communities; language ideology; language rights; language policy; mobile speakers; military personnel; T/V address forms

1. Introduction

The sociolinguistic variationist approach is appealing to assess the diversity of Francophone Canada, in particular in terms of its systematic data collection procedures permitting statistical analysis of linguistic behavior. However, megacorpora (e.g., Thibault et al. 1990, the Nova-Scotia (Flikeid) and Ottawa (Poplack) corpora, etc.) tend to emphasize similarities and differences in various ways of speaking French across the country while the contexts of the linguistic situations that are accounted for remain underexamined. The journey proposed here starts with clearly localised groups of French speakers in several provinces in Canada, namely (from the east to the west) Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Québec and Alberta. Well-documented linguistic variables (*tu* and *vous* to address a single speaker (e.g., Brown & Gilman 1960; Thibault 1991; Vincent 2001), *juste* and *seulement* (e.g., Thibault & Daveluy 1989; Nadasdi & Keppie 2004) illustrate the enactment of local norms of interaction in spoken French.

Then the journey broadens its focus to include less often studied categories of French speakers that are nonetheless highly relevant to a thorough representation of contemporary Francophone Canada. Two very mobile groups of French Canadians are specifically discussed: transient workers that go back and forth to their workplace (Daveluy 2007a) and military families who are relocated at regular intervals (Daveluy in press). The overall picture which is obtained in the process is far from exhaustive but it becomes possible to discuss sociolinguistic dimensions of French Canada that are not usually taken into account.

To assess the French language dynamics in Canada, even incompletely and partially, it is useful to shift perspective from a micro-analysis of communities (Daveluy 2005) to processes delimiting relationships among groups of speakers (Irvine & Gal 2000). Such a shift entails linking linguistic variables with language claims made by speakers (Woolard 1998) in order to unravel continuities among groups that may superficially appear, and are often theorised, as disconnected. I ultimately propose that Francophone Canada is best grasped as a set of multilingual speech communities rather than as a unidimensionally conceived series of groups sharing the exclusive commonality of speaking French. Language and (in)security (Daveluy 2007a) emerge as an overarching theme for all groups considered.

2. Language variation and norms of interaction

Salient linguistic variables are of limited interest for the analysis of the unconscious use of socially meaningful forms of speech, but they are very useful in terms of interaction. They are particularly efficient to assess exchanges between speakers who definitely share a language without necessarily belonging to a single linguistic community, which is the case of Francophones living in various parts of Canada. Highly salient variables (by which I mean variables with relatively high levels of social awareness) provide concrete evidence of the existence of inescapable norms of interaction that tend to remain intangible until challenged. Reactions to the use of such variables point to moments of negotiation in the course of otherwise unmarked conversation between speakers of a given language.

The relatively low frequency of salient variables explains their absence in quantitative analyses of linguistic behavior. Too few occurrences are produced to warrant statistical treatment of tokens of speech that otherwise play a non-negligible role in communication. Indeed, the productivity of salient linguistic variables is ensured by the stylistic effect they convey. Sankoff and Vincent (1980) clearly demonstrated this is how negation works in French spoken in Montréal. The particle *ne* is so rarely uttered that it is tempting to declare its disappearance a done deal, and its absence a typical feature of spoken French in Québec. However,