Reflexivity and discourse-pragmatic variation and change.

This chapter takes a corpus linguistic approach to the investigation of reflexive, or metacommenting, expressions in French, primarily si tu veux/si vous voulez (STV/SVV). *STV and SVV form part of a range of frequently occurring reflexive devices which function to flag a speaker's hesitancy about a lexical choice, as we can see in the following example:*

> *le cierge à trois branches consist- était + euh + un p- un chose un + un pied* **si vous voulez** *+ dont + trois branches*
> *(CRFP)*
> *'the candle with three branches consist- was + er + a f – a thing a + foot* **if you like** *+ with + three branches'*

The chapter discusses the challenges associated with applying classic variationist approaches to discourse-pragmatic items, and presents the distributional frequencies and collocates of STV/SVV across time-dated corpora of spoken French. The chapter concludes by suggesting that an onomasiological approach offers some promise in the investigation of discourse-pragmatic variation and change and that corpus approaches can go some way to meet the challenge posed by the operationalisation of the 'envelope of variation' when studying pragmatic markers.

1. Introduction

Gadet (2003) highlights key features of ordinary everyday spoken French, focusing on the relationship between form and function, social factors and language change. Gadet's argument is illustrated with a wealth of case studies and examples drawn from corpora of spoken French. The present chapter hopes to contribute to debates in the field of social variation by focusing on a particular feature of the '*materiau variationnel*' tabulated by Gadet (2003 : 44), that of the '*fréquence des ponctuants ou appuis du discours',* with particular reference to the metacommenting expressions *si tu veux/si vous voulez.*

Classic variationist approaches in the Labovian tradition have generally focused on phonological variables, whereby two variants of a phonemic variable can be demonstrated to pattern in systematic ways in what has been termed 'orderly heterogeneity' (Weinreich, Labov and Herzog1968). One of the corner-stones of the approach is that phonological variables are free of semantic meaning. Some syntactic studies have been conducted drawing on this method and, more recently, scholars of discourse-pragmatic variation and change have been developing ways of applying variationist methods to the investigation of the use and evolution of what have been referred to variously as *ponctuants* (Vincent 1993), discourse markers (Schiffrin 1987)/*marqueurs discursifs* (Dostie and Pusch 2007) or pragmatic markers (Brinton 1996 ; Aijmer 2013 ; Beeching 2016). Two thorny issues facing sociolinguists wishing to apply variationist techniques to areas beyond phonology are the questions of semantic equivalence and what is referred to as the 'envelope of variation'. Let us consider each of these in turn.

With regard to semantic equivalence, and looking at syntactic variation, the question arises as to whether we can say, that, for example, the synthetic and periphrastic

future forms in French (Sankoff and Wagner 2006) are semantically equivalent. The same question can be posed, at the discourse level, about the semantic equivalence of the general extender forms *and that*, *and stuff, or something, and everything* (Cheshire 2007) or *et tout, et tout ça, ou un truc comme ça, ou quelque chose comme ça* (Secova 2014). How far can we stretch semantic equivalence and remain within the parameters of a variationist approach?

Turning to the 'envelope of variation', classic variationist methodologies which have generally been applied to phonological variables require the researcher to include every occurrence of the variable in the data and every context in which it *could* occur (charting where it is absent). This is crucial in identifying categorical, near categorical and variable contexts. An explicit account must be given of 'which contexts are *not* part of the variable context' (Tagliamonte 2006: 87).

Pragmatic markers (henceforth PMs) pose particular problems both in terms of semantic equivalence and in terms of the envelope of variation. PMs have been defined as not contributing to the propositional content of the utterance, of being not easily categorisable into a particular word-class, as being a characteristic of the spoken language and as being optional (Brinton 1996 : 33-35). PMs may not contribute to the propositional content of the utterance, but they are not bleached of all meaning and are not interchangeable. The persistence of the meaning of the personal pronouns 'I' and 'you', along with the core meaning in 'mean' and 'know', lead to pragmatic usages in which *I mean* and *you know* are far from interchangeable, the first being self- and the second other-oriented. Not only is their syntactic and semantic status somewhat opaque, but, with regard to the envelope of variation, the 'structural promiscuity' (Meyerhoff, Schleef & MacKenzie 2015: 20) of PMs precludes the establishment of a denominator, in other words it is impossible to do a calculation which shows how often a PM is used out of the number of times it could have been used. This is because PMs can occur at every point in a given utterance. In Beeching (2016 : 45), I remark that:

> As Aijmer (2002 : 256) shows for *actually*, most pragmatic markers are positionally highly flexible. *Actually* (not to mention *like, you know, sort of* and *I mean*) can occur at all the points at which there is an arrow in the utterance below:
>
> ↑ she ↑ is ↑ not ↑ as ↑ pretty ↑ as ↑ she ↑ might ↑ have ↑ been ↑

As there are so many potential slots for PMs to fill, the 'envelope of variation' approach is difficult to operationalise in studies of discourse-pragmatic variation and change. What is more, the 'context-sensitivity of discourse features' (Pichler 2010: 584) makes comparability across data-sets problematic.

Most studies of PMs up till now have taken a semasiological approach. Onomasiological studies which take a more classic variationist approach include, thus far, general extenders (Cheshire 2007), quotatives *go, say, be like* (Macaulay 2001; Buchstaller and D'Arcy 2009; D'Arcy 2012), and 'I don't know' in Berwick upon Tweed (*dunno, dono, I dinnae ken, I divn't knaa*) (Pichler 2013). In this chapter we will be exploring the extent to which the notion of semantic equivalence can be stretched to include other onomasiological areas with specific reference to

metacommenting in spoken hexagonal French, drawing on corpus data for *si tu veux/si vous voulez* and, to a lesser extent, for *quoi*. I will be arguing that a corpus approach which combines qualitative analysis and quantitative distributional frequency data is a viable way forward as a means of investigating discourse pragmatic variation and change.

2. Metacommenting

Metacomments may be defined as linguistic items or behaviours which are used to comment on the act of speaking itself. They range from putting things in inverted commas or italics (in writing, or through intonation or paralinguistic actions) to lengthy verbal expressions such as 'if I can put it like that'. They often contain dicendi verbs such as 'so to speak'/*pour ainsi dire,* 'technically speaking'/*techniquement parlant,* 'how can I put it?'/*comment dirais-je?* but also include verbs of signifying such as 'I mean' /*je veux dire* and hedges such as 'sort of', 'kind of', 'like' in English and *finalement*[1], *genre, hein* or *quoi* in French. These hedging metacomments indicate the speaker's lack of confidence with respect to the exactness or adequacy of the expression employed. They operate at the speech act level, but can generally be deployed very flexibly with respect to the syntactic slots that they occupy.

The conditional expressions 'if you like', 'if you will', *si tu veux, si vous voulez* (henceforth *STT/SVV*) are unusual amongst metacommenting expressions in including the second person pronoun and verb of volition, engaging the hearer in the negotiation of meaning, and enjoining acceptance by the hearer of the less than adequate expression of the speaker's thought.

Metacommenting appears to be a ubiquitous and universal feature of spoken interaction. Blanche-Benveniste et al. (1991 : 17) remark that "Le 'dire' et le 'dit' sont étroitement imbriqués" and Lucy (1993 :11) points out that:

> Speech is permeated by reflexive activity as speakers remark on language, report utterances, index and describe aspects of the speech event… This reflexivity is so pervasive and essential that we can say that language is, by nature, fundamentally reflexive.

For the purposes of this chapter, I will be defining metacommenting as referring to those items which 'remark on language'. Of the other types of reflexivity mentioned by Lucy (1993), reporting utterances appears to be a rather different function, but indexing and describing aspects of the speech event might well fall under the general category of 'metacommenting'. What follows (Section 3) is a description of the syntactic positioning and social variation of *STV/SVV* in contemporary spoken French (as reflected in existing corpora of hexagonal spoken French). In Section 4, I will return to the methodological question concerning the viability of taking a(n adapted) classic variationist approach to the analysis of discourse-pragmatic variation and change. If[2] *STV/SVV* and *quoi* both serve a metacommenting function, can we

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[1] The hedging function of *finalement* is discussed in Beeching (2010).

[2] This is a big 'if'. Post-posed *quoi* serves a number of functions (discussed elsewhere, e.g. Beeching 2002: 179-198). An anonymous reviewer and also Liesbeth Degand (personal communication, May 2016) have questioned the use of *quoi* as a signal of speakers' lack of confidence with respect to the adequacy of their expression, in other words, a metacomment. When translating examples with *quoi*

describe them as sufficiently semantically equivalent to take a variationist approach? And, if so, what methodological challenges face us in doing so? Finally, in Sections 5 and 6, I will return to the historical evolution of *STV/SVV* and to debates concerning grammaticalisation and persistence.

3. *Si tu veux/si vous voulez* in contemporary spoken French

3.1 Methodology

All occurrences of *STV/SVV* were identified in the ESLO (1968), Beeching (1988), CRFP (2002) and CFPP (2011, and ongoing) corpora, some details of which are included below:

- ESLO (1968) Enquête Sociolinguistique d'Orléans
  http://bacharts.kuleuven.ac.be/elicop
  24 speakers, 303,357 words

- BC (1988) Beeching Corpus http://www.uwe.ac.uk/hlss/llas/iclru/corpus.pdf
  95 speakers, 154,357 words

- CRFP (2002) Corpus de Référence du Français Parlé . Available via a concordancer at http://sites.univ-provence.fr/delic/corpus/index.html
  82 speakers, 287,482 words

- CFPP 2000 (2011, ongoing) Corpus du Français Parlé Parisien
  http://cfpp2000.univ-paris3.fr
  30 speakers, 482,780 words

The total size of the combined corpora is 1,227,976 words.

First, canonical usages had to be distinguished from metacommenting usages. This was done manually, drawing on qualitative analysis backed up by a translational test described in section 3.2. Raw rates of occurrence of *STV/ SVV* were extracted from the data and these were normalised by dividing token rates by the word count for each corpus and multiplying by 10,000 to give a rate of usage per 10,000 words. This

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(Beeching 2002: 196), the closest English translations I could find for the sense of *quoi* in context included metacommenters such as *so to speak, as it were* or even *sort of* which we see in the example « chaque région a son a ses a ses désirs, quoi » ('each region has its has its has its aspirations, sort of'). The speaker is evidently searching for the right word in the context and finally finds it, but flags that it may not be quite the right word by adding *quoi*. (Post-posed *quoi* also serves as an end-marker and fills a rhythmic slot after a burst of emotion has ended). I am not a native speaker of French, so my interpretation of it as a metacommenting expression may not be justified. Chanet (2001 : 69), however, highlights the intersubjective nature of post-posed *quoi* which indicates, according to her, « le désir de voir sa propre parole entrer en résonance avec une possible parole de l'autre ». Fleury, Lefeuvre & Pires (2012 : 7-8), too, refer to the formulation issue in the following terms : « Selon nous (cf. Lefeuvre 2006 et Lefeuvre et al. 2011), *quoi* apparaît après un mot dont la formulation est problématique.... La recherche de la bonne expression peut se traduire par la présence d'un paradigme qui comporte plusieurs segments comme autant de formulations possibles ». It seems that *quoi* is used when speakers are searching for the right expression to use, are having problems formulating what they want to say and wish to appeal to their interlocutor – in other words, it is used in contexts similar to those in which one finds *STV/SVV*.
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allowed conclusions to be drawn about the progression, or regression, of the terms across time. Finally, commonly used concordancing tools available through programmes such as Wordsmith Tools or ANTCONC were drawn upon to identify patterns in the data. These included the collocate and cluster functions.

3.2 Qualitative analysis and quantitative overview: pragmatic/metacommenting usages far outweigh canonical usages

Canonical usages of *STV/SVV* are easily distinguishable from pragmatic/ metacommenting usages, as we can see in examples 1 and 2 below.

Canonical usages of *STT/SVV* present as classic conditional sentences, with a protasis (the conditional *STV/SVV* element) and an apodosis (the consequence of the conditional clause). In (1), the speaker sets up a hypothetical situation in which a tramp asks the speaker for money to buy bread, and the speaker replies that, if the tramp wishes, he will go with him to buy some bread (but not a litre of wine).

(1)   non c'est vrai que + la misère on côtoie la misère sans s'y arrêter + voilà et
        quand il y en a un qui vous demande une pièce ça c'est vrai + moi quand on
        me demande une pièce pour acheter du pain je dis ben écoutez **si vous voulez**
        je vais aller avec vous chercher le pain + c'est pas pour aller acheter un litre de
        vin quand même + hein je vais pas les aider à plonger un peu plus...
        (CRFP)
        'No, it's true that + poverty you meet it all the time + and when there's
        someone who asks for a coin it's true + when someone asks me for a coin to
        buy some bread I say well listen **if you want (/if you like)** I'll go with you to
        get some bread + it's not to go and buy a litre of wine PM + you know ? I'm
        not going to help them go a bit further down the drain'
        (CRFP)

In these circumstances, *STV/SVV* can be translated with 'if you want' or 'if you like'.

By contrast, in PM usages, as we can see in example (2), there is no apodosis and *STV/SVV* cannot be translated 'if you want', but only 'if you like'.

(2)   L1   on faisait aussi ce qu'on appelait le cierge à trois branches pour Pâques
                + le cierge à trois   branches   consist- était + euh + un p- un
                chose un + un pied **si vous voulez** + dont + trois   branches + hein
        L2   d'accord
        (CRFP)
        'L1   we also used to make what we called the candle with three branches
        for Easter + the candle with three branches consist- was + er + a f – a thing a +
        foot **if you like (*?if you want)** +   with + three branches you see
        L2   OK'

Table 1 displays the raw numbers of occurrences of *STV/SVV* in the four corpora and the percentage of PM/metacommenting usages.

Table 1: Raw numbers of canonical and PM usages of *STV/SVV* in the four spoken corpora

Corpus	STV			SVV		
	Canonical	PM	PM usage as percentage of total	Canonical	PM	PM usage as percentage of total
ESLO	3	0	0%	12	193	94%
BC	1	7	86%	7	85	92%
CRFP	8	37	82%	10	41	80%
CFPP	1	19	95%	9	103	92%

Table 1 does not reveal the rates of usage of *STV/SVV* per 10,000 words and thus does not permit comparison of these rates of usage across the different corpora, dated 1968, 1988, 2002 and 2011. We can, however, note that *SVV* is much more often used than *STV* in the ESLO and BC corpora, with higher rates of *STV* in the CRFP. By contrast, in the most recent corpus, the CFPP, the rates of *SVV* are much higher than *STV*. One might have expected a shift from the *vous* to the *tu* form of address, as time progresses. The nature of the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee dictates the selection of personal pronoun. The interviewers in the ESLO, BC and CFPP corpora were not personally acquainted with the interviewees, whereas the recordings for the CRFP were made by younger MA students who engaged in interviews with their peers or family and friends. What the table reveals is the surprisingly high rate of PM-usages, ranging from 80-95%, outweighing to a formidable degree the canonical usages. Table 2 shows rates of usage across the four corpora which allows us to gauge the extent to which *STV/SVV* has spread or contracted across the 40-year period from 1968 to 2011.

Table 2: Raw number and rates of occurrence of *STV/SVV* in the four corpora per 10,000 words

Corpus	Date	Words	N - STV	R- STV	N- SVV	R - SVV	N – STV and SVV	R – STV and SVV
ESLO	1968	303,357	3	**0.1**	205	**6.76**	208	**6.86**
BC	1988	154,357	8	**0.52**	92	**5.96**	100	**6.47**
CRFP	2002	287,482	45	**1.57**	51	**1.77**	96	**3.33**
CFPP	2011	482,780	20	**0.41**	112	**2.32**	132	**2.73**

Table 2 displays rates of occurrence of *STV/SVV* overall, with the combined rate of both forms in the right-hand column. It is striking that rates have decreased in a stepwise fashion over the 40-year period from 6.86 to 2.73 per 10,000 words. As remarked in relation to Table 1, rates of *STV* are higher in proportion to *SVV* in the CRFP than in the more recent CFPP corpus, but rates overall for these 21st century corpora have fallen by over 50% by comparison with the ESLO and BC Corpora.

3.3 Position and main functions of *STV/SVV*

In her detailed study of the syntax and semantics of *STV/SVV* in both written and spoken corpora of French, Schnedecker (2016 : 63) highlights three main functions, drawing on both discourse and positional criteria. She distinguishes two main positions, either constituent-final or utterance-initial, and suggests that *STV/SVV* are used:

a) in a dialogal sequence, where the form or the content of the proposition are being negotiated;
b) in a process of lexical searching or approximation;
c) in an interactional perspective, to manage either the speaker or the hearer's face in either strongly egocentric or heterocentric situations.

Schnedecker does not quantify these different uses across the different corpora and suggests that her corpus was too small to permit generalisations to be made. She also highlights the fact that, in order to clarify the stages of the pragmaticalisation process undergone by *STV/SVV*, a detailed diachronic study is required. In Beeching 2007a, in a study looking at the co-variation of *bon, c'est-à-dire, enfin, hein, quand même, quoi* and *si vous voulez,* I proposed (2007a: 83) that *SVV* occupied a half-way point between *quoi* and *hein,* allowing the speaker to invoke some kind of mismatch between what was said and how it was said and at the same time to establish a consensuality between the speakers through the use of the personal pronoun *vous* (*'you'*). *SVV* was found to be used more in the 1968 Orléans Corpus than in the 1988 BC and rates dipped again in the 2002 CRFP Corpus. It was also used more by older than by younger speakers in the CRFP and co-varied with *quand même, hein* and *bon* (in other words, speakers with higher rates of one of these markers also had higher rates of *SVV*) but not with *c'est-à-dire*, *enfin* or *quoi.* The *SVV, quand même, hein* and *bon* group were labelled 'normal' or 'neutral', with *c'est-à-dire* being classed as 'traditional' and *enfin, quoi* and *bon*[3] as 'modern'. It seemed that similar hedging and metacommenting functions were being fulfilled by different markers across time and across generations. The 2007a study did not include *STV* which it was suggested might reasonably be said to be replacing *SVV* in the more recent corpora. The present study adds to these previous works on *STV/SVV* both by including *STV* and observing developments in diachrony (albeit with a relatively shallow time-depth from 1968 to 2011).

 In the data investigated, *STV/SVV* most often **follow** an expression which the speaker flags as being in some way inadequate, as illustrated in example 3:

(3) et je pense que voilà la qualité des profs que j'avais là-bas était peut-être assez moyenne un peu heu bon un peu classique un peu heu bon + souvenirs de gens un peu moralisateurs un peu gnangnan gnan **si vous voulez** j'ai pas vraiment heu…
(CFPP)

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[3] The vigilant reader will have noted that *bon* features in both the 'normal'/'neutral' and the 'modern' groups. This is not an error – when a factor analysis was conducted, *bon* emerged in both of these groups. Speakers who had high rates of *SVV, quand même* and *hein* had high rates of *bon* – but so also did speakers who had high rates of *enfin* and *quoi. Bon* is favoured by both groups.

'and I think that PM/you know the quality of the teachers that I had there was perhaps rather middling a bit er well a bit old-fashioned a bit er well + shades of people who are a bit moralising a bit boring[4] **if you like** I haven't really er…'

The speaker initiates a search path for the right expression to describe the teachers at her school, which she describes as:

…moyenne…classique…gens moralisateurs… gnangnan gnan ***SVV***

The term *gnangnan* might be considered to be face-threatening as well as not entirely the term the speaker is looking for and adding *SVV* mitigates the face-threat while at the same time hinting at the inadequacy of the term selected and enjoining the joint construction of the listener in arriving at a meaning. *SVV* thus accompanies a succession of repairs, or synonyms in the way that *quoi* does, and is post-posed in a similar way.

Hölker (1985 : 50) formulated the syntax of *quoi* where there is repeated reference in X_1, X_2 and X_3, punctuated by *quoi* and often accompanied by *enfin*, in the following way:

$$\{ X_1 + (X_2) \}$$
$$+ X_3 + \text{"quoi"}$$
$$\{(X_1) + (X_2) \}$$

Repetitions with *quoi* can take different forms:
1. repetitions of words;
2. a contextually similar expression;
3. explicit contextual inference;
4. an expression which has a contextual reference to something which the speaker has already mentioned in X_1 or X_2.

According to Hölker there are two main functions of *quoi:*
- self-correction (*Korrekturmarker*)
- terminating function (*Schlussmarker*)

My own investigations of *quoi* (Beeching 2002, 2007b) have led me to include a hedging function, one which flags inadequacies of expression or over-exaggerated claims which speakers wish to distance themselves from and mitigate.

By comparison with *quoi, STV/SVV* punctuates repeated reference, suggests inadequacy of expression but also, because of the second person pronoun *T/V*, makes an appeal to the addressee to accept the formulation or be understanding of the

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[4] *Gnangnan* (sometimes written *gnagnan*) is tricky to translate – 'silly' and 'drippy' are suggested in dictionaries and I've seen the suggestion 'cheesy' (which would fit music) – perhaps 'old-school' would be appropriate here, but that does not capture the slightly derogatory feel and connotation of 'dippiness' in *gnagnan*.

speaker's inability to find exactly the right word. *STV/SVV* can have a terminating function but it also often appears in the centre field.

Unlike *quoi*, *STV/SVV* does not always come at the end of the search-path for a suitable lexical item, as we can see in example (4).

(4)   L2   + et ils mettaient + un un manche à balai **si tu veux** sur le les deux bords de l'escalier + et là ils attrapent le canard + mettent la tête je sais pas * un bout de planche un truc comme ça + il met le canard dessus et hop + un grand coup pour lui couper la tête tu vois
(CRFP)
'+ and they put + a a broom handle **if you like** on the the two sides of the stair + and there they catch the duck + put the head I don't know a piece of plank a thing like that + they put the duck on it and bam + a great blow to cut his head off you see'

Once again, as in example (3), there are repeated co-references to a referent, in this case, a piece of wood which is suspended over the stair-way. This time, however, the co-references come after the initial formulation and *STV* 'broom handle *STV…* a piece of plank, a thing like that'.

More rarely *STV/SVV* **precedes** the expression it qualifies. It can have variable scope. As we shall see in Section 3.4, it often follows adverbs *donc* ('so', 'therefore') or conjunctions *parce que* ('because'), *mais (*'but'), *et* ('and'*), ou* ('or'). And it can have scope over the clause, not just a nominal or verbal group. Example 5 illustrates this usage.

(5) j'ai mes grands-parents donc qui habitaient en région parisienne qui nous ont laissé leur maison donc **si vous voulez** pour nous c'est une maison de campagne mais à la limite bon moi j'ai pas l' temps d'y aller enfin mon mari est très pris vous imaginez
(CRPP)
'so there's my grand-parents who live just outside Paris who left us their house so **if you like** for us it's a house in the country but only just I mean I haven't the time to go there well my husband is very busy as you can imagine'

STV/SVV resembles *quoi* in flagging a potential inadequacy, but the inclusion of the *T/V* pronoun and verb of volition invites the listener to enter into the speaker's world and asks for their permission to use a term which may not be entirely accurate. In this case, the speaker goes on to explain why *maison de campagne* cannot be considered to be the right way to consider her grand-parents' house, as she and her husband never have time to go there. *STV/SVV* is also positionally more flexible than *quoi* which is always final, and can vary its *T/V* form according to addressee.

*STV/SVV o*ften collocates with *un petit peu* which strengthens its mitigatory and heteroglossic qualities, as we can see in example 6.

(6) et puis maintenant eh ben euh je m'occupe toujours de mes petites filles[5] + je m'occupe d'autres personnes âgées + excusez-moi mais c'est comme ça {rire} et puis de de beaucoup de cop- de camarades de mes petites filles + alors c'est + c'est un petit peu **si vous voulez** mes petites filles mamie tu sais j'ai une telle elle sait pas où aller tu /peux, veux/ pas gna gna gna bon +
(CRFP)
'and now well er I still look after my grand-daughters + I look after other elderly people + sorry but that's the way it is {laughter} and then lots of of mate- of friends of my grand-daughters + so it's + it's a little bit **if you like/kind of** my daughters Mummy you know there's so and so she doesn't know where to go can't/won't you bla bla bla + you know'

The speaker describes how she likes to look after people, both young and elderly, and her laughter indicates a rueful acceptance of her better nature. She wants to give a typical example of how her willingness to help people is drawn upon. She prefaces a quote from her daughters with *SVV* and then has recourse to direct speech to provide a vivid narrative of the way that they call on her to help someone out.

STV/SVV often collocates with other 'fumbles', pauses, hesitation markers, repetitions and so forth, including *euh,* as in example 7.

(7) ensuite euh + euh les les Aloxe-Corton + avec euh les fameux euh Corton + /qu', qui/ étaient les les + les et également euh les Corton-Charlemagne + qui sont un des rares + euh vins blancs + euh qui est issu euh + **si vous voulez** euh + qui est juste à la limite de la Côte de Nuits mais qui est sur la Côte de Beaune
(CRFP)
'Next er + er the the Aloxe-Corton + with er the famous er Corton + who were the the + the and also er the Corton-Charlemagne + which are one of the rare + er white wines + er which has come out of er + **if you like** er + which is just on the border of Côte de Nuits but which is on the Côte de Beaune'
(CRFP)

3.4 Frequent collocations and patterns of usage

One way of investigating frequent usages of a particular linguistic item is to use the 'collocate' function included in concordancing software, such as Wordsmith Tools or ANTCONC. When this is applied to *STV/SVV*, restricting the horizon to two words to the left (L2 and L1) and two to the right (R1 and R2), we arrive at the analysis displayed in Table 4, which shows the most frequent collocations at the top of the list, hierarchically down to the least frequent collocations at the bottom.

Table 4: Frequent collocations and patterns of usage of *STV/SVV*

L2	L1	Centre	R1	R2
1. DE	EUH	SI VOUS	EUH	EST

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[5] Petites-filles ('grand-daughters') is usually written with a hyphen – in this case, the expression could mean 'small daughters' or the transcriber may have omitted the hyphen in error. The context makes 'grand-daughter' more likely so I have opted for 'grand-daughter' in the translation of this example.

<pre>
                    VOULEZ
2. LES   ENFIN   JE   JE
3. ET   DONC   OUI   OUI
4. L   MAIS   C'EST   ET
5. LA   ET   MAIS   EN
6. PLUS   OUI   ON   LA
7. PAS   PAS   LE   Y
8. UN   QUE   QUI   LE
9. OUI   LÀ   LA   C'EST
10. LE   ÇA   C   QUE
11. C'EST   ALORS   LES   ÊTRE
12. PARCE   QUOI   DE   ON
</pre>

3.4.1 *Enfin si vous voulez*

The most frequent collocate immediately to the right and left of *STV/SVV* is, in both positions, the hesitation marker *euh.* This confirms the psycholinguistic role of *STV/SVV* as a pause-filler, lubricating the flow of conversation while the speaker considers how to phrase the upcoming utterance. This pause-filling role is also reflected in the use of *enfin*, which is second in frequency, appearing to the left of *STV/SVV. Enfin* is typically a repair marker in spontaneous spoken French, equivalent to 'I mean'*,* and, as we have said, also frequently collocates with *quoi.* In each of the examples from concordance lines given below, *enfin* initiates a repair, often involving syntactic disruption as the utterance unfolds, and *SVV* serves the functions we have seen in previous examples, flagging potential inadequacy of the previous or upcoming term or utterance, and mitigating potential face-threat. *STV/SVV* can be retrospective, occurring at the end of the syntactic unit and tone group, as in examples (8) – (9), but it is more often prospective, as in examples (10)-(13):

(8)   des langues anciennes **enfin si vous voulez** ou des langues qui ne servent à rien
        (ESLO)
        'ancient languages **I mean if you like** or languages which aren't good for anything'
(9)   que que ce soit mal conjugué **enfin si vous voulez** . oui d' accord
        (ESLO)
        'whether it's badly conjugated **I mean if you like**. Yes O.K'.
(10)   euh je pense que oui . **enfin si vous voulez** actuellement c' est assez confus
        (ESLO)
        'er I think so. **I mean if you like** nowadays it's quite confused'
(11)   à partir de quelle classe ? ben comme ça en général **enfin si vous voulez** quel est quel est le rôle de l' école
        (ESLO)
        'from what class ? like that in general **I mean if you like** what is what is the role of the school ?'
(12)   qui est la personne parmi vos connaissances qui parle le mieux ? **enfin si vous voulez** la pr(ofession) la la profession de la personne ?
        (ESLO)

11

'who is the person amongst your acquaintances who speaks the best ? **I mean if you like** the pr(ofession) the the profession of the person ?'

(13)   actuellement énormément **enfin si vous voulez** la nouvelle génération des ophtalmologistes
(ESLO)
'nowadays large numbers **I mean if you like** the new generation of ophthalmologists'

In all these examples *enfin* serves to flag the repair, while *SVV* serves to mitigate the terms used in the attempt to best capture what it is the speaker is trying to express.

3.4.2 *donc, mais, et, parce que, alors* and *si vous voulez*

Going down the frequency list in Table 4, directly before *si vous voulez*, we find a number of conjunctions and adverbs such as *donc, mais, et, parce que* and *alors*. Speakers can hold the floor by uttering conjunctions or adverbial connectors – it shows they have more to add – but can regroup to formulate the upcoming message by inserting *si vous voulez*. In examples (14) and (15) *donc* and *alors* serve this purpose, connecting one clause or utterance to the next while *si vous voulez* hedges the upcoming clause.

(14)   j'adore prendre mon temps + **donc + si vous voulez** Troyes c'est sympa comme ville +
(CRFP)
'I love taking my time + **so + if you like** Troyes it's nice as a town +'

(15)   ah oui . **alors si vous voulez** il choisissent des des villes comme ça euh euh mettons Charentes
(ESLO)
'ah yes . **so if you like** they choose towns like that er er for example Charentes'

3.4.3 *Si vous voulez qui*

SVV is also frequently followed by *qui*, once again at the junction after a noun phrase which is called into question and then further elaborated in the relative clause which follows. This is illustrated in examples (16)-(24).

(16)   c' est c' est la personne **si vous voulez qui** est responsable
(ESLO)
'it's it's the person **if you like who** is responsible'

(17)   de la fonction publique **si vous voulez qui** l' a amené à Orléans
(ESLO)
'...the public function **if you like which** led him to Orléans'

(18)   dans le milieu qu' on appelle indépendant **si vous voulez qui** est un monde assez étendu
(ESLO)
'...in the milieu that people call independent **if you like which** is quite a broad field'

(19)   doses de + de S.O.2 + ce soufre **si vous voulez qui** faisait mal à la tête
(CRFP)

'treatments with of S.O.2 + this sulphur **if you like which** gave people headaches'

(20)   uh les petites villes comme ça **si vous voulez qui** ne sont pas tellement grandes
(BC)
'...small towns like that **if you like which** aren't very big'

(21)   il y a CFDT qui est un syndicat **si vous voulez qui** regroupe des gens très à gauche
(BC)
'...the CFDT which is a union **if you like which** brings together people from the far left'

(22)   c'était un un + un choc **si vous voulez qui** qui m'a fait dire bon c'est c'était voilà
(CFPP)
it was a a + a shock **if you like which** which made me say well that's that was it'

(23)   elle c'est une entreprise (mm) **si vous voulez qui** a des logements HLM
(CFPP)
' it is a business (um) **if you like which** has social housing'

(24)   + alors le problème **si vous voulez qui** se pose à Paris
(CFPP)
'+ so the problem **if you like which** presents itself in Paris'

SVV/STV lubricates the connection between a noun, adjective or a NP and the ensuing relative clause. It might thus be considered to have a text-managing as well as an interpersonal appeal function, and can be retro- or pro-active suggesting that the term chosen before, or the relative clause coming up, is inexact in some way.

3.4.4 *si vous voulez de*
A final common collocate of *SVV* is *de,* which again occurs at clausal boundaries where constituants are followed by *de* functioning as a preposition or partitive article. This is illustrated in examples (25)-(29).

(25)   il est fondamental **si vous voulez de** connaître parfaitement une une langue de
(ESLO)
'it is essential **if you like to** know a language perfectly'

(26)   donc euh je m'occupe **si vous voulez de** coordonner un petit peu tous les services pour que le travail
(BC)
'so er I occupy myself **if you like with** coordinating a little bit all the services so that the work...'

(27)   tout ceci fait partie de mon activité et enfin **si vous voulez de** l'irrigation .
(ESLO)
'all this forms part of my activities and well **if you like** irrigation'

(28)   non euh y a beaucoup plus de détails **si vous voulez de** plus petits morceaux dans le cheval
(ESLO)
'no er they are many more details **if you like** more little bits in the horse'

(29)   lettres de de personnalités **si vous voulez de** personnes ... vous avez des lettres de personnalités très connues

(ESLO)
'letters from personalities **if you like from** people... you have letters from very well-known personalities'.

Given the multifunctionality and frequency of *de*, it is perhaps unsurprising that it should collocate with other words and expressions, including *SVV*. Two main types of usage are common. Firstly, between adjectives and verbs which are followed by *de* and the infinitive, for example *fondamental de* and *s'occuper de* in examples (25) and (26). Secondly, between repetitions of NPs which either include the partitive article, as we see in examples (27) and (28) *de mon activité SVV de l'irrigation, de details SVV de plus petits morceaux* or of the prepositional usage of *de* 'from' in example (29) : *lettres de personnalités SVV de personnes*[6].

3.4.5 Summary; the syntax of *STV/SVV*
Wordsmith Tools Collocates, Patterns and Clusters can give some indications concerning the syntactic flexibility of *STV/SVV* which occur around NPs and at clause boundaries either before or after a conjunction or relative pronoun. These syntactic patterns are summarised in Table 5.

Table 5: Syntactic patterns of *STV/SVV*

Tone-group final:
…. X   *STV/SVV*.

More central usages at clause boundaries:

Il y a le/la/l'	X	*STV/SVV*	c'est Y
C'est un			qui
On a eu un/une			NP

X	*STV/SVV*	complement
j'ai besoin		au/avec/de/pour/sur
tout est prétexte		
une alerte		

|				
X	(conjunction)	*STV/SVV*	Y	
X		*STV/SVV*	(conjunction)	Y

3.5   *STV/SVV* and *quoi*

In Section 3.3, the overlapping metacommenting and reformulating functions of *STV/SVV* and *quoi* were highlighted. *Quoi* is a great deal more restricted syntactically,

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[6] An anonymous reviewer points out that, in contexts with *qui* and *de, SVV* 's'insère de manière libre dans une construction syntaxique dont le complément est introduit par « de »,/la proposition introduite par « qui », un peu à la manière de marqueurs parenthétiques verbaux (du type *tu sais, disons,* etc.). This raises a number of interesting points, such as (i) the extent to which the spoken language, which is essentially linear, paratactic rather than hypotactic, can be considered to contain parentheticals and (ii) the extent to which verbal expressions have become grammaticalised such that they are integrated in the syntagmatic chain in a manner which is more similar to adverbials than verb constructions. If they are grammaticalised, they are potentially syntactically integrated – but they remain optional/non-propositional.

as it occurs mainly utterance-finally, and can mark the end of a word-search. Beeching (2007b) demonstrated the way in which *quoi* has increased threefold in the 40 years between the Orléans Corpus and the CRFP and how it spread from being an almost exclusively working class male marker in 1968 to being in ubiquitous use across both males and females and different educational backgrounds in 2002.

Figure 1 suggests that, though *STV* to some extent replaced *SVV* in the CRFP, rates of *STV/SVV* overall have decreased, as usage of *quoi* has expanded. *STV* does not appear at all in the Orléans Corpus, begins to appear in the BC Corpus and equals rates of *SVV* in the CRFP. The data for the CFPP in 2011 appear to undermine arguments to do with the progression of *quoi* and reduction of *SVV* which had been traced in earlier work. The rate of *quoi* is lower in the later, CFPP than in the earlier CRFP. These findings support Pichler's (2010 : 584) caveat concerning the comparability of corpus data.

Figure 1: Rates of *STV /SVV* and *quoi* in the four corpora
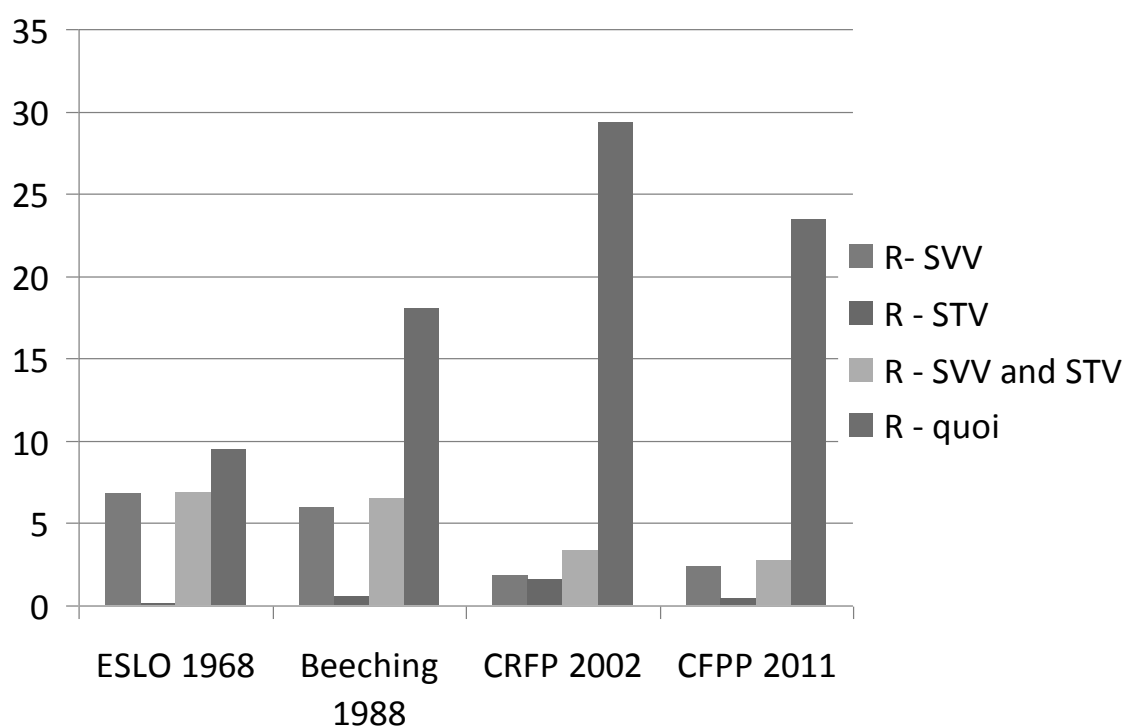
The data from the CFPP (2011), as I have said, cast some doubt on what looked like a very clear case of diachronic change across the earlier three corpora. Data collection for the CFPP was later and we must look to stylistic factors to account for the apparent anomalies in Figure 1. The more formal tenor of the conversations in the CFPP (and possibly also the higher overall age of the participants) is reflected in higher rates of *SVV* and lower rates of *STV* and *quoi* than in the CRFP. Nonetheless, if we compare the rates for the ESLO, BC and CFPP corpora, which are similar in terms of formality (interviewers and interviewees are relative strangers), there is strong evidence to support the regression of *STV/SVV* and progression of *quoi* in contemporary spoken French, which is even more evident in the CRFP with its larger

proportion of younger speakers and more informal tenor. It is important to point out[7] that there is no necessity to posit a causal relation between the progression of *quoi* and regression of *STV/SVV*, in other words, it is not necessarily the case that *quoi* has risen in frequency because *STV/SVV* has decreased in frequency – or vice versa. All we can say is that speakers in the early 21st. century are far more likely to use *quoi* than they are to use *STV/SVV* to indicate that they are not entirely happy with the way they have expressed what they wanted to say. There may be very strong sociolinguistic reasons for this (the shifting indexicality of *quoi* from a primarily male, working class, marker, to one which is increasingly female and middle class, and of *STV/SVV* from a generally accepted locution to one which is associated with a particular, perhaps more elderly, female, refined, demographic, an indexicality which is shunned by younger speakers). The 'ecology of terms' argument whereby speakers/ the language system avoids synonymous expressions is very often difficult to sustain in the face of empirical evidence. There are numerous examples of hedging expressions (e.g. *sort of, kind of, like, genre, comme*) which co-exist in a language, and whose (sociolinguistic and stylistic) variations are of keen interest to scholars of discourse-pragmatic variation and change. It may take decades or centuries for one variant to push out another – and it may never do so.

> 4. Methodological issues in studies of discourse-pragmatic variation and change

In Section 1, two problematic issues facing those who wish to take a classic variationist model to the investigation of discourse-pragmatic variation were raised, namely the question of semantic equivalence and the envelope of variation.

On the question of semantic equivalence, it has been argued through this chapter that, although *STV/SVV* and *quoi* are not semantically equivalent, they serve a similar metacommenting function in some contexts – and can, on that basis, be considered to be in variable distribution with each other. It has further been argued that a corpus approach, which reveals patterns of usage, can be a useful tool in analysing the ways in which *STV/SVV* and *quoi* are in complementary distribution in synchrony and in diachrony. While *quoi* occurs almost exclusively in tone group final positions, *STV/SVV* occurs in more central positions before and after conjunctions and adverbs. Time-dated corpora reveal that *quoi* is gaining ground in terms of frequency while *STV/SVV* are losing ground. Interestingly, too, though *STV/SVV* are semantically identical, they are socio-stylistically non-identical, and rates of *quoi*-usage correlate more highly with *STV* than with *SVV*.

It was also argued that the notion of an envelope of variation is extremely difficult to operationalise in the investigation of discourse-pragmatic variation and change due to the structural promiscuity of PMs, which can often appear almost anywhere in the clause. What the detailed investigation of *STV/SVV* and *quoi* has revealed, however, is both that the items are variable in their promiscuity (*quoi* is less promiscuous than *STV/SVV* as it is positioned almost exclusively tone-group finally) and that this does not appear to prevent them from being in competition from a diachronic perspective. In other words, despite being more highly constrained syntactically, the frequency of

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[7] My thanks go to an anonymous reviewer who highlighted the fact that there is no causal link between these developments, an impression given perhaps by the way the data are presented.

quoi is increasing as that of *STV/SVV* decreases. This argues the case for sociolinguistic, rather than syntactic, motivations for language change, as we might expect an item which is more flexible syntactically to be easier to implement and thus to spread.

    5.   Language change: the pragmaticalisation of *STV/SVV* and rise of *quoi*
There has been considerable debate in the literature over the evolutionary process which culminates in a PM, and whether this is a case of grammaticalisation, pragmaticalisation, lexicalisation or idiomaticization (see Brinton and Traugott 2005, for further discussion of this issue). Waltereit (2006) argues that, out of Lehmann's (1985) six parameters of grammaticalisation: integrity (attrition), paradigmaticization, obligatorification, condensation, coalescence and fixation, markers comply only with attrition. *STV/SVV* does not even comply with attrition.

Table 1 revealed that between 80 and 95% of the occurrences of *STV/SVV* in the four corpora investigated are pragmatic marking usages, that is, they are divorced from a construction with a protasis and an apodosis and are untranslatable by 'if you want'. This indicates that *STV/SVV* have lost some of their grammatical and semantic qualities at the same time as they have become pragmatically enriched. In some respects they are fixed forms – they have lexicalised or idiomaticised as metacommenters. They have not coalesced and are far from ossified, however, as speakers vary the *T/V* forms in relation to their addressee(s). What is more, the verb of volition continues to be strongly felt as an appeal to the addressee to 'like' the lexical item, or locution, which has been selected by the speaker. Waltereit (2006 : 76) suggests that:

> The special features of DMs are not direct traces of their diachronic ancestors. They are traces of the strategic use speakers made of these ancestors to attain an effect related to discourse structure.

The case of *STV/SVV* suggests that the changes are not absolute but are, rather, on a continuum and that *STV/SVV* is at the least semantically bleached end of the spectrum. The relationship between the canonical forms and the strategic use which is made of them to attain the desired effect, in this case, a metacommenting effect, is transparent. Speakers have no difficulty in attributing a metacommenting function to *STV/SVV* and, at the same time, retaining the canonical sense of *si tu veux/si vous voulez* in situations where they have a protasis and apodosis.

The next question is why the shift from *STV/SVV* to *quoi*? Lehmann (1985 : 316) suggests that:

> To the degree that language activity is truly creative, it is no exaggeration to say that languages change because speakers want to change them. This does not mean, of course, that they intend to restructure the linguistic system. It does mean, however, that they do not want to express themselves the way they did yesterday, and in particular not the same way as somebody else did yesterday….. There is much change just for the sake of change.

This notion is reflected in the groupings made of the terms correlated in Beeching (2007a). The *SVV, quand même, hein* and *bon* group was labelled 'normal' or

'neutral', *c'est-à-dire* was classed as 'traditional', while *enfin, quoi* and *bon* were classified as 'modern'.

Lehmann (1985 : 317) concludes by pointing to the need to find out 'what the universal tasks are that human beings constantly fulfill in language activity. They will provide the invariant both for synchronic variation and for diachronic change.' The ubiquity of reflexive expressions in spontaneous spoken forms of the language suggest that these are indeed one of the universal tasks that human beings fulfil. The spread of *quoi* and the emergence of *genre* as a novel metacommenter for a new generation of speakers in the 1990s (not to mention *comme* in Canadian French) suggests that the process of renewal and 'change just for the sake of change' is constantly ongoing.

6. Conclusion

Gadet (2003) set the agenda for thoroughgoing studies of variation and change in contemporary spoken French. This chapter contributes to current debates in the development of variationist methodologies which can be applied to discourse-pragmatic variation and change. Data-sets for metacommenting *STV/SVV* and, to a lesser extent, *quoi,* were drawn upon, by way of a case study. The findings suggest that an onomasiological approach, taking as its point of departure the universal tasks that human beings constantly fulfil in language activity, may be a viable one. This contrasts with the semasiological approach which has traditionally been taken to the study of PMs and aligns future studies with more classically variationist approaches.

PMs, however, do not lend themselves to a method which respects the 'envelope of variation' commonly invoked in phonological and some syntactic studies. It has been argued that a corpus linguistic approach, focussing on distributional frequencies, is an operationalisable alternative. Spoken corpora, particularly a succession of time-dated spoken corpora, such as the ESLO (1968), BC (1988), CRFP (2002) and CFPP (2011) corpora, together with the exploitation of a range of corpus tools, can shed considerable light on variation and change, highlighting patterns of usage, and both synchronic and diachronic variation. The alternation between *STV* and *SVV* (and *T/V* rates more generally) has demonstrated itself, too, as a useful diagnostic tool to gauge the relative formality of speaker/hearer relationships in a corpus, enhancing researchers' ability to take account of the 'context-sensitivity of discourse features' (Pichler 2010: 584), and thus the degree to which corpora can be said to be comparable.

The application of variationist methods in the field of discourse-pragmatic variation and change is a relatively new departure. Considerable future work is required to identify the functional areas which might be said to constitute the universal tasks fulfilled by PMs in social interaction and in differentiating and quantifying the (socio)linguistic contexts in which they occur; it is suggested that taking a corpus approach to metacommenting expressions may be a promising place to start.

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