
Prosodic variation in French: self-repairs in conceptual distance and proximity

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This contribution investigates the conversational functions and prosodic forms of French self-repairs in conceptual distance and proximity (Koch & Oesterreicher 1985), relating to the questions of how register variation can be modeled and how it may lead to language change. While in paraphrases the relation between repairable and repair is semantic equivalence, semantic difference is established in corrections (Gülich & Kotschi 1996). The international structure of repairs is deaccented for paraphrases and overaccented for corrections (Morel & Danon-Boileau 1998). A total of 379 repairs from two sample corpora was coded for function (paraphrase, correction), register (distance, proximity) and prosodic structure (standard, de-, overaccentuation). 35% of proximity corrections are deaccented; only 23% are overaccented. Deaccentuation is significantly influenced by conceptual variation ($p < .001$), with proximity as the favoring factor. By contrast, functional variation does not have a significant effect ($p = .229$). To account for these results, a model of speaker-strategic routinization is proposed (Detges & Waltreit, to appear). Corrections are more disruptive than paraphrases with regard to continuous discourse flow and turn-maintaining, and these problems are specifically related to proximity. Speakers in proximity possibly encode corrections as paraphrases by violating conversational maxims. This type of variation may eventually lead to linguistic change, as has been shown for lexical elements which develop into discourse markers.

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