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J'imagine as deverbal discourse marker in spoken French
Position in turns and interactions

Stefan Schneider (Graz)

http://www.stefan-schneider.at

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1. Introduction

- Part of ongoing research concerning the pragmatic evolution of French *imaginer*
- Deverbal discourse marker *j'imagine*
- First person present indicative singular
- Reduced speaker commitment (mitigation)
- Oral and written French (Schneider 2007, 2020a, 2020b)

1. Introduction

- Medieval borrowing from Latin *imaginari* and/or *imaginare*
- In the 13th century, its prevailing meaning is 'form a mental picture'
- The conventionalization of the 'suppose' meaning favors the appearance of the deverbal discourse marker *j'imagine* in the 18th century:

(1)   la variété des objets et l'abondance des idées qui n'ont jamais, *j'imagine*, passé par aucune tête que la mienne. (1774, Denis Diderot, *Lettres à Sophie Volland*, *Frantext*) '[...] that never, I imagine, passed through a mind [...]'

1. Introduction

- Diachronic evolution studied by Schneider (2020a, 2020b)
- Contemporary French: remarks on *j'imagine* in Schneider (2007) and Gosselin (2014)
- Detailed analyses of its use in contemporary spoken French are lacking:
-- Use in turns and interactions?
-- Intermediate or (initial or final) periphery?
--- Kaltenböck (2013), Beeching & Detges (2014), Haselow (2015), Degand & Crible (2021):
---- Discourse markers are in peripheral position
---- Division of labor between initial and final periphery
---- Communicative tasks/phases in ongoing speech production (Haselow 2017)

1. Introduction

- Data of present analysis:
-- *Discours sur la ville. Corpus de français parlé parisien des années 2000 (CFPP2000)*
-- Collection of 54 interviews recorded in Paris in 2005-2012
-- Transcripts and recordings are publicly accessible
-- 3976 minutes ≈ 66,2 hours
-- 885624 words

1. Introduction

- Research questions:
-- 1. Use in a corpus of contemporary spoken French?
-- 2. Position and function in turns and interactions?
-- 3. Positional asymmetry?

2. Occurrences of *imaginer*

- 143 occurrences of *imaginer*:
-- 69.2 % (n = 99) are in the first person present indicative singular (= *j'imagine*)
-- 36.6 % (n = 52) are discourse markers
- Frequency in the *CFPP2000*:
-- *Imaginer*: 0.016 % (≈ one occurrence every 28 minutes or 6200 words)
-- Discourse marker: 0.005 %
-- Schneider (2007, 2013): 0.001 %

2. Occurrences of *imaginer*

- Positional distribution of the discourse marker
- Potentially, all positions are possible, but there are clear preferences
- Three main positions:
-- 1. Preclausal
-- 2. Postverbal
-- 3. Postclausal

3. Preclausal position

- With extraposition
- 2 occurrences:

(2)   Spk3:   et pour votre fille *j'imagine* ça n'se pose même
                 plus ? (07-05)
                 '[...] for your daughter, I imagine, that's not [...]'

3. Preclausal position

- Without extraposition
- 2 occurrences:

(3)   Spk3:   [...] + liées à un durcissement là-bas + je s- mais
                 j'imagine je il faudrait suivre ça (11-03)
                 '[...] but, I imagine, it is necessary to [...]'

- Both occurrences are turn-intermediate

3. Preclausal position

- Intensive debate (Thompson & Mulac 1991a, 1991b; Schneider 2007; Kaltenböck, Heine & Kuteva 2015; Newmeyer 2015):
-- Hypotactic construction or paratactic construction?
-- Complementizer deletion or not?
-- Discourse marker or not?
- Rare, but not impossible in spoken French (Dostie 2004; Andersen 2007; Schneider 2007; Avanzi 2012)

3. Preclausal position

- Syndetic construction with *j'imagine que* more frequent
- 25 occurrences
- Turn-initial (5 occurrences) and turn-intermediate (20 occurrences
- Also with extraposition:

(4)   Spk1:   une sur les animaux + euh à Saint-Ouen
                 j'imagine qu'il y a des chiens (SO-02)
                 '[...] in Saint-Quen, I imagine that there are dogs'

4. Postverbal position

- Intermediate position
- Between verb and noun phrase or prepositional phrase
- 3 occurrences:

(5)   Spk1:   ça dépend *j'imagine* des quartiers hein (07-03)
                'this depends, I imagine, on the districts'

- Inside the noun phrase
- 2 occurrences:

(6)   Spk1:   vous avez donc eu une scolarité *j'imagine* de bon élève (MO-01)
                'you thus had an education, I imagine, as model student'

5. Postclausal position

- Final
- 35 occurrences
- 29 turn-final, 6 turn-intermediate:

(7)   Spk1:   non mais bon vous connaissez quand même tout
              Paris *j'imagine* (11-04)
              '[...] you know anyway all of Paris, I imagine'

5. Postclausal position

- Between main clause and other element (attribute, etc.)
- 7 occurrences:

(8) Spk1: à l'école + ça a commencé à s'mélanger:::
     j'imagine par le biais des enfants + + + (11-02)
     '[...] began to mix, I imagine, through the children'

(9) Spk1: [...] + on n' traîne pas dans la rue *j'imagine*
     quand on est une petite fille euh + [...] (07-06)
     '[...] in the street, I imagine, when one is [...]'

6. Other positions and phenomena

- Preverbal position
- 1 occurrence:

(10)   Spk1:   et alors les les professeurs *j'imagine* sont dans
                 votre cas si vous êtes insultée (12-03)
                 '[...] the teachers, I imagine, are in your case [...]'

- Potentially, all positions are possible

6. Other positions and phenomena

- Imperative form as deverbal discourse marker
- 1 occurrence:

(11)   Spk3:   [...] quand on a des amies moi j'vois des amies
imaginons beaucoup plus riches quand elles vont
manger au restaurant l' midi + [...] (11-04)
'[...] friends, let's imagine, much richer [...]'

6. Other positions and phenomena

- Backchanneling
- 14 occurrences:

(12)   Spk2:   et y a toute une forêt autour c'est super
                      '[...] that's great'
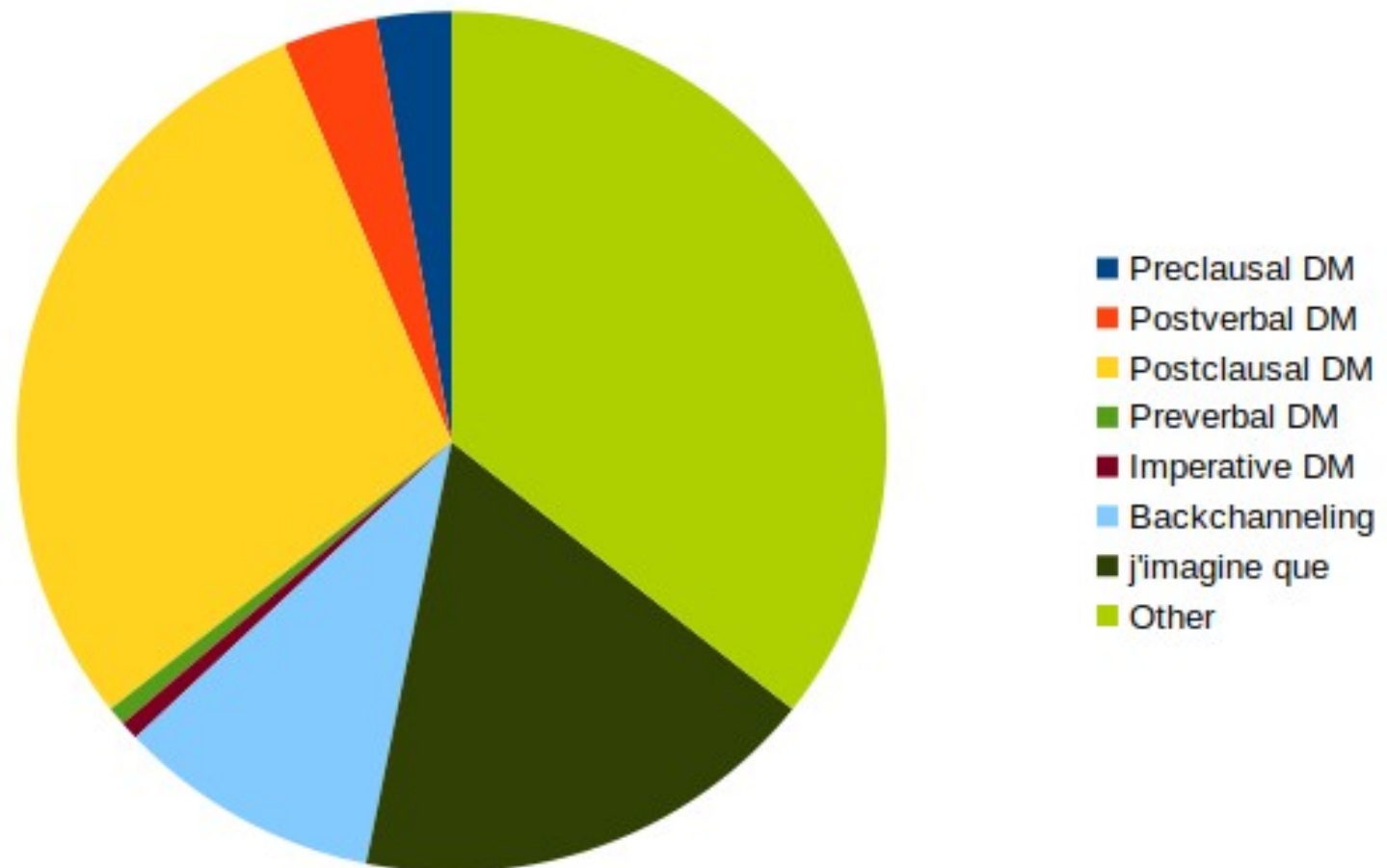   Spk1 Spk2:   (1) ah ouais ah ouais *j'imagine* (2) des bons
                      souvenirs on avait on avait fait euh
                      (1) 'yes, yes, I imagine' (2) 'pleasant
                      memories [...]'
       Spk2:   ouais on avait bien bien travaillé (SO-03)
                      'yes, we did work well'

- Frequently combined with *oui* or *ouais* 'yes'
- Discourse marker or autonomous utterance?

7. Conclusion

- Use in a corpus of contemporary spoken French:

Legend:
- ■ Preclausal DM
- ■ Postverbal DM
- ■ Postclausal DM
- ■ Preverbal DM
- ■ Imperative DM
- ■ Backchanneling
- ■ j'imagine que
- ■ Other

7. Conclusion

-   Position and function in turns and interactions:

--   Turn-initial:

---   Discourse marker never occurs in this position

---   Only 5 occurrences of turn-initial *j'imagine que*

--   Turn-intermediate: 44.3 % of discourse marker occurrences

--   Turn-final: 55.7 % of discourse marker occurrences

--   Turn-final: frequently in assertions seeking confirmation from the interlocutor (transcripts contain question marks in some occurrences)

--   Backchanneling function in interactions

7. Conclusion

-   Positional asymmetry:

--   Prevalence of clause/turn-intermediate and clause/turn-
        final positions

--   Haselow (2017):

---   Initial: foreshadow an opinion (*I mean*, *I think*)

---   Intermediate: imply shared understanding (*you know*),
            indicate reformulation (*I mean*)

---   Final: reflect back, provide last interpretative cue (*I
            believe*)

7. Conclusion

--   Division of labour:

---   Clause/turn-intermediate: narrow scope:

(6)   Spk1:   vous avez donc eu une scolarité *j'imagine* de bon
         élève (MO-01)
         'you thus had an education, I imagine, as model
         student'

---   Clause/turn-final: wide scope:

(7)   Spk1:   non mais bon vous connaissez quand même tout
         Paris *j'imagine* (11-04)
         '[...] you know anyway all of Paris, I imagine'

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