

***Bon ben enfin fin* in non-native speech: the case of Chinese L1 speakers in Paris**

Delin Deng^{1,*}

¹University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, 32611, USA

Résumé. Basé sur les données de 40 entretiens sociolinguistiques conduits en français avec des locuteurs chinois apprenant le français à Paris, l'article exploite comment des facteurs extralinguistiques influencent l'usage des marqueurs discursifs (MDs) *bon ben enfin fin* dans le discours non-natif du français. Les résultats montrent que seul le contact extracurriculaire avec les locuteurs natifs est statistiquement significatif pour les trois MDs parmi les quatre formes examinées. Cela prouve que le contact avec les locuteurs natifs facilite l'apprentissage des MDs dans une situation naturelle : le plus souvent on interagit avec les locuteurs natifs, le plus on utilise les MDs.

Abstract. *Bon ben enfin fin* in non-native speech: the case of Chinese L1 speakers in Paris. Based on the data collected from 40 sociolinguistic interviews conducted in French with Chinese L1 speakers in Paris, the current article exploited how some extralinguistic factors influence the use of discourse markers (DMs) *bon ben enfin fin* in the non-native speech of French. As a result, among five extralinguistic factors examined in the current research, only the extracurricular contact with native speakers of French was proven to be statistically significant to three out of the four DMs examined here. The only exception is *enfin*, which might be due to the small number of tokens available for analysis. It is proven that extracurricular contact with native speakers facilitates the acquisition of DMs in a natural setting: the more frequent this contact is, the more one would use the DMs.

1 INTRODUCTION

While discourse markers (DMs) in native speech have been well documented and studied, their use in non-native speech still needs to be completed. Most studies in SLA concerning the acquisition of the DMs are done on L2 students, who acquire the target language in a classroom setting. The choice of this group of speakers may mainly be due to the availability of the participants to the researchers. Nevertheless, we still know little about L2 users, who do not learn French in a traditional classroom setting, but in the natural setting through their contact with native speakers. As part of the target language community, the extralinguistic factors may also influence the use of DMs in non-native speech. Compared

* Corresponding author : ddeng@ufl.edu

to L2 students, whose learning environment is much more artificial, L2 users may provide data more suitable for analyzing the social impact on language use. Meanwhile, we should admit that since L2 users do not acquire the target language in a natural process as native speakers do, even though they may approach the native pattern, there will always be some discrepancies between the non-native and native patterns.

Therefore, by exploring the data collected from 40 semi-directed sociolinguistic interviews conducted in French with L2 speakers in Paris, this article aims to fill in the gap by proposing to use L2 users' data instead of L2 learners' data for the analysis of some functionally interchangeable DMs as well as how some extralinguistic factors influence the use of these functionally interchangeable DMs in non-native speech.

The structure of this article is as follows: First, the previous research on *bon ben enfin fin* in native speech will be reviewed. Second, the detailed information on the methodology, including the corpus, the participants, the tokens, and the extralinguistic factors to be examined in this article, will be presented. The statistical results concerning the general tendency and social impact will be analyzed and discussed following the methodology. In the end, a conclusion of the current work and potential implications in the future will be drawn.

2. PREVIOUS WORKS

Bon ben enfin could be viewed as among the most discussed DMs in native speech. Ample research has been done regarding their discursive functions, not only because they appeared relatively early in the evolution of the French language but also due to their frequent use in oral French. However, this seems not to be the case for *fin*. Even though we know it is the reductive form of the DM *enfin* and that the native speakers use it as DM, the major works on DMs seem to omit it for unknown reasons. Maybe it is because its discursive function fully overlaps that of *enfin*, and since *enfin* is already a well-studied DM, the researchers do not feel the necessity to invest extra effort into it. Nevertheless, since it derives from *enfin*, the co-existence of the two forms suggests some discursive difference between them, maybe in their frequency or in the contexts under which they are used. For the current work, we distinguish between these two forms.

2.1 Bon

Barnes (1995) viewed *bon* as a “coherence-building device”, claiming that the English particle *well* is its closest equivalent. *Bon* could be interchangeable with *ben* and *enfin* when used as hesitation particles or pause fillers, in which case it precedes a self-repair or a reformulation. In other words, it marks the point of discontinuity. She suggested that *bon* is rarely found alone at the head of a speaker's turn. When appearing at the beginning of the turn, it is often in collocation with *alors*.

Beeching (2009) indicated that *bon* in contemporary spoken French functions either as a “closing-marker” or as a “hesitation marker”. In her study, she found that in a very large number of examples, “*bon* does indeed play a structuring or textual role, marking a stopping or staging point in the unfolding tale”. It expresses some kind of reservation on the part of the speaker. She considered this to be the hedging function of *bon*, even though this hedging use has become less marginal in recent years. By taking Wheeler's notions of “lower-status” varieties (1994), she suggested that *bon* could assume the “role of politeness marker, suggesting solidarity and creating a sense of intimacy”. She also believed that *bon* is more used by younger speakers and reflects age-grading rather than semantic change even though the real-time data suggested the contrary.

Crible (2018) provided four categories of discursive functions for all DMs: sequential, rhetorical, ideational, and inter-personal functions. For each category, there are some sub-

categories of functions. Table 1 presents the discursive functions of *bon* according to her classification.

Table 1. Discourse functions of *bon* in native speech

sequential	rhetorical	ideational	interpersonal
opening boundary punctuation topic-shifting topic-resuming closing boundary quoting	specification opposition conclusion reformulation emphasis	/	agreeing fac-saving

As shown in Table 1, we notice that in native speech, *bon* could fulfill many different discursive functions except for the ideational functions, such as consequential or concessional functions.

2.2 Ben

As mentioned earlier, *ben* is the reductive form of the adverb *bien*. Waltereit (2007) suggested that the reduction of *bien* to *ben* may not be a diachronic phenomenon due to pragmatization. *Ben* existed as a variant of *bien* as early as the 16th century. Its first use as a DM could date back to the 18th century. *Ben* seems to be a dialectal variant of *bien* whose function as DM survived while its adverbial function became obsolete.

Luzzati (1982) viewed *ben* as a consecutive marker introducing the second element of a binary structure based on causal relations. Barnes (1995) believed it to have the same function in English suggested by Schiffrin (1985) to mark the beginning of the reported speech. Barnes (1995) argued that it corresponds very closely to the principal functions of the English *well*. She considered *ben* to be a response marker that enhances the coherence of the speech and could be interchangeable with *bon* in many cases. According to her, *ben* has two main uses: dialogical and monologic use.

Table 2 presents the discursive functions of *ben* according to Crible (2018)'s classification.

Table 2. Discursive functions of *ben* in native speech

sequential	rhetorical	ideational	interpersonal
opening boundary punctuation topic-shifting topic-resuming quoting	specification opposition conclusion reformulation emphasis approximation comment	consequence concession	agreeing face-saving disagreeing

We could see from Table 2 that *ben* covers almost the same function as *bon* when used as a DM. Unlike *bon*, *ben* also fulfills the ideational function (consequence and concession), and in its interpersonal use, it could express the disagreeing.

2.3 Enfin

The difference between the original use of *enfin* and its discursive use is relatively evident. Cadiot (1985) suggested that *enfin* terminates the preceding segment by signaling that its continuation is either unnecessary or inappropriate. Waltereit (2007) believed that the function of *enfin* involves “a notion of communicative inadequacy” and occurs at “points of discontinuity or junctures in the discourse”.

Beeching (2001) perceived *enfin* as a “repair mechanism”. It introduces a correction, either by “making the meaning of the preceding utterance more precise or mitigating the force of what is said”. This correction could either be a self-correction or a correction to the points of view of others.

Hansen (2005) indicated that the use of *enfin* as a DM could date back to the late 16th century, after which *enfin* underwent a gradual process of semantic and pragmatic extension till the 20th century. She suggested three “prototypical” meanings for *enfin* in contemporary French: the temporal meaning, a non-truth-conditional synthesizing meaning, and a repairing meaning.

Table 3 presents the discursive functions of *enfin* according to Crible (2018)’s classification:

Table 3. Discursive functions of *enfin* in native speech

sequential	rhetorical	ideational	interpersonal
punctuation topic-shifting topic-resuming closing boundary enumeration	specification opposition conclusion motivation reformulation emphasis approximation comment	concession	ellipsis face-saving disagreeing

As shown in Table 3, the discursive function of *enfin* overlaps that of *bon* and *ben* in many categories. This functional similarity makes the three DMs quasi-interchangeable in most cases.

2.4 Fin

As mentioned earlier, the use of *fin* as a DM is a relatively recent phenomenon, and few studies on DMs analyzed its discursive functions. It appeared neither on the list of Chanet (2004) of DMs in native speech nor the more recent work of Crible (2018) on DMs. Since *fin* is the short form of *enfin*, it could be seen as pragmatization considering the phonological erosion. As DM, its functions should not vary too much from the *enfin* presented above in Table 3. However, it might differ from *enfin* in other ways. We will get back to this point later in this article.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Corpus

The datasets that we used in the current study were extracted from the oral interaction corpus of 40 semi-guided conversations conducted in French with L2 speakers of French in Paris between 2014 and 2017, counting a total of 30 hours of recording.

The length of each interview varies from 30 minutes to 1 hour 30 minutes depending on the talkativeness of the interviewee. All 40 interviews were conducted by the same interviewer so that the interviewer's influence over the interviewee's performance was minimized. A set of questions was prepared before the interview. However, these questions were used merely as support so that the interviewees could freely talk about their experiences. All interviews were entirely recorded and transcribed by using Praat (Boersma and Weenink, 2021). Since the speakers in our corpus are all non-native speakers of French, there might be some grammatical errors in their oral production. For the transcription, these errors were not corrected. All interviews were transcribed as produced. All interviewees are anonymized in our study by being referred only by name initials.

3.2 Participants

The 40 participants are all Chinese L1 and French L2 speakers. They were all born in mainland China and only came to France after puberty. All of them resided in Paris, France at the time of the interview. As mentioned earlier, these speakers are not L2 learners in a classroom setting but the actual L2 users living in Paris. These speakers were recruited via the interviewer and interviewees' social networks. Their participation in the interviews is entirely voluntary.

These speakers, 23 women and 17 men are all between 20 and 55 years old. The time that they spent in the community differs significantly. Some speakers have lived in Paris for more than ten years. Others might recently arrive in Paris. Accordingly, their linguistic competence also varies. The following table presents the detailed information on each speaker in our corpus:

Table 4. Detailed information on 40 speakers in the corpus

Speakers	Gender	Length of interview	Duration of stay in Paris	Age	Profession
CGY	M	24mn02s	1-3	25	salesperson
SF	M	34mn24s		27	tourist guide
WXY	M	28mn11s		25	student
LBY	M	23mn14s		35	restaurant owner
WHD	M	29mn36s		35	artist
ZW	M	36mn50s		25	student
DRT	F	27mn42s		25	student
FXN	F	30mn20s		26	student
LCY	F	29mn32s		24	student
YQ	F	36mn06s		25	student
ZXY	F	43mn39s		26	waitress
LZF	F	33mn10s		23	student
WY	F	36mn23s		27	student
ZMY	F	26mn33s		26	student
LMJ	F	1h12mn30s		26	student
RZ	F	1h11mn39s		28	employee
WYT	F	1h16mn31s	28	intern	
GLL	M	33mn03s	4-6	29	restaurant owner

ZBL	M	55mn59s		27	student
SFJ	M	47mn36s		22	student
DX	F	27mn34s		23	student
LYY	F	35mn37s		23	student
GJ	F	27mn25s		24	employee
XSS	F	33mn51s		28	employee
HQ	F	1h34mn46s		27	free lancer
XXY	F	1h07mn05s		30	student
ZDZ	F	1h14mn56s		23	student
JL	F	43mn24s		23	student
LSB	M	29mn10s	7-9	28	employee
Y	M	27mn32s		26	restaurant owner
LYQ	M	37mn59s		25	storekeeper
JWH	M	1h19mn51s		27	employee
SWQ	M	39mn10s		30	researcher
JCH	M	32mn39s		28	employee
YDZY	F	33mn25s		25	restaurant owner
LN	M	53mn38s	>10	36	entrepreneur
MWL	M	24mn37s		35	teacher
LK	F	32mn55s		33	engineer
YW	F	1h17mn33s		51	housewife
ZSY	F	57mn15s		30	student

We should, however, point out that all 40 speakers received 500 hours' intensive French language instruction before coming to Paris as part of the requirement for a visa. Hence, upon their arrival in Paris, they are at about the same level regarding their linguistic competence. However, after their arrival, some chose to take additional language courses either in their universities or in the city hall.

3.3 Tokens

According to Ch Janet (2004), *bon* is the 4th most used DM in French native speech with a frequency of 1 occurrence every 1 minute 18 seconds, supposing one speaks continuously 24 hours a day and seven days a week. According to the traditional grammatical category, *bon* could function either as an adjective (ex. le *bon* français) or an adverb (ex. *bon* enfin bref). When used as a DM, *bon* functions exclusively as an adverb. However, the adverb *bon* could be an interjection as in *ah bon* or a DM as in *bon enfin bref*. For our analysis, only the adverb DM *bon* was extracted and analyzed. The adjective and interjection *bon* are therefore excluded from our analysis.

Ben, a short form of *bien*, is the 9th most frequent DM in native speech with a frequency of 1 occurrence every 1 minute 59 seconds. (Ch Janet, 2004) *Ben* functions adverbially and is used as a DM in all contexts. Therefore, all tokens of *ben* are taken into consideration.

The adverb *enfin* could have two different functions, either as temporal markers to indicate the order when used together with *d'abord*, *et puis*, etc., or as a DM when used separately or combined with other DMs. It is the 11th most frequently used discourse marker in native speech (Ch Janet, 2004), with a frequency of 1 occurrence every 2 minutes 5

seconds. Only the DM *enfin* was analyzed, and the temporal marker *enfin* was excluded from the calculation.

Fin was not on Chanet's list. It could either be used as a noun or as a DM. Only tokens of DM *fin* were included in our calculation, and the noun *fin* was excluded. Meanwhile, if this is a new emerging form, we should expect to see age-grading effect on the use of this DM in native speech associated more with youth speech. Considering the relatively young age of the speakers in our corpus, *fin* should be the favored form if it competes against other forms.

A final verification of all coded tokens was done by inspecting the spectrogram in Praat to ensure the coding for all four forms is precise.

3.4 Extralinguistic factors

As shown in many other studies, extralinguistic factors are statistically significant to the oral production of DMs. (See, for example, Sankoff et al. 1997) In this study, five extralinguistic factors that might affect the production of *bon ben enfin fin* were examined to see how the extralinguistic factors influence the use of these four DMs in non-native speech.

Firstly, as shown in a previous study on non-native speech, male and female speakers have different preferences for certain functionally interchangeable DMs. For example, non-native male speakers were reported to use more *voilà* while females prefer *oui*. (Author, 2017) Even though the gender effect was not found in a native speech concerning these four DMs, we still wanted to see if gender impacts the choice of any of these four DMs in non-native speech.

Secondly, the age factor will be tested. The participants are divided into three age groups: 20-30 years old, 30-40 years old, and 40-50 years old. In previous research, *bon* was reported to be age-grading (Beeching, 2009). We expect to see if there is any similar effect on non-native speech.

Thirdly, we will also examine the professional status. Some participants are still university students, while others have already joined the workforce for some time. This difference in their social status would provide them with different contact with native speakers. We divided our participants into two groups: professionals and students. Students may have access to a more formal register as they spend more time in the academic environment, while the professionals may have access to a less formal register through their work and social activities. Since DMs appear more in an informal register, we hypothesize that the professionals would use them more than the students' group.

Fourthly, like all acquisition, the mastery of DMs requires a certain time spent in the target community. The length of stay seems to be a relevant factor for non-native speakers. We divided our participants into three groups according to their sojourn time in Paris: 1-3 years, 4-6 years, and more than 7 years (7 years included). We hypothesize that the longer one stays in the target country, the more possible that one would use more DMs.

At last, as DMs are not taught explicitly in language classroom settings, their acquisition could only be fulfilled by extracurricular contact with native speakers of French. Therefore, extracurricular contact could be an influential factor. The participants are divided into three groups depending on their self-reported contact frequency with native speakers during the interview: rare, occasional, and frequent. Our hypothesis for this factor is that the more frequent this contact is, the more one would use DMs.

4. RESULTS

Before presenting the statistical results, the general tendency of *bon ben enfin fin* in a non-native speech in our corpus compared to the native use from the already existed native oral corpus will be discussed.

4.1 General tendency

As shown in Figure I, over 30 hours of recording, 567 occurrences of *fin*, 349 occurrences of *ben*, 239 occurrences of *bon*, and 16 occurrences of *enfin* were produced by the 40 non-native speakers in our corpus. To provide a better idea of comparing the frequency of these four forms in non-native speech and native speech, we use the frequency and ranking presented in Chanet's study (2004) as a reference for native speech. Since she calculated the frequency by time, even though this might not be the most ideal way to look at frequency, we also calculated the frequency in non-native speech to be comparable to Chanet's results. The following table shows the ranking and frequency of these four forms in native and non-native speech. However, since the DM *fin* was not included in Chanet's list, we do not have enough information for comparison for this DM.

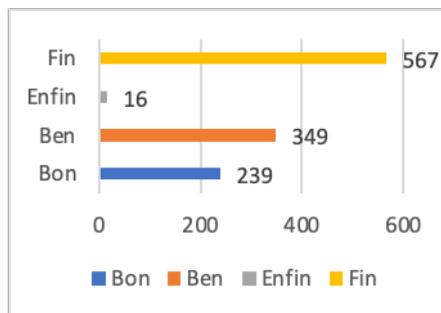


Figure I. Occurrences of *bon ben enfin fin* in non-native corpus

As shown in Table 5, the frequency of *bon ben enfin* in the native speech was much higher than that in a non-native speech in our corpus. The non-native speakers use these four DMs at a different frequency than native speakers. Even though these four DMs might be functionally interchangeable for most cases, the *fin* is the preferred form by our non-native speakers, while *enfin* is largely disfavored.

Table 2. Ranking and frequency of *bon ben enfin fin* in native speech (Chanet, 2004) and non-native speech (our corpus)

Discourse Marker	Native Speech (Chanet, 2004)		Non-native Speech (our corpus)	
	Ranking	Frequency	Ranking	Frequency
<i>bon</i>	4 th	1m18s	21 st	7m12s
<i>ben</i>	9 th	1m59s	15 th	4m58s
<i>enfin</i>	11 th	2m5s	43 rd	1h49m
<i>fin</i>	/	/	8 th	3m04s

4.2 *Bon ben enfin fin* in non-native speech

To better understand how our non-native speakers use these four DMs, the following are some examples extracted from our corpus. Since we could not illustrate all aforementioned discursive functions for all four DMs, only one example for each discourse marker will be presented and discussed in this section.

Ex. 1 : non ça va parce que *fin* c'est pas si loin puis ça porte orthographe c'est encore le français XXX modernes les gens utilisent quand même les mêmes noms vocabulaire *enfin* à peu près le même (FSJ-2015)

As shown in Example 1, the interviewee was talking about the orthograph in old French and modern French. *Enfin* was used to mitigate between the segment “les mêmes noms vocabulaire” and the segment “à peu près le même”. This is a typical example of one of the functions mentioned by Beeching (2001) to “mitigate the force of what was said”. The force was degraded by using “à peu près” in the second segment, and the DM *enfin* precedes a self-correction/self-repair. We could see that the interviewee did want to keep a certain reservation. This might also be viewed as a face-saving situation since decreasing the force prevents the interviewer from opposing what was said.

Ex. 2 : c'est *fin* pour toutes les tous les étudiants en langue donc on a pas de maths on a pas de fin on a pas on a pas de autres choses du coup on est obligé de choisir une langue étrangère (JWH-2015)

Here, the interviewee talks about the course options provided by her university. There are two *fin* in Example 2. The first *fin* is used to reformulate what was initiated in the previous utterance. It could indeed, under this circumstance, be seen as a repair mechanism as proposed by Beeching (2001). The speaker might have some difficulties finding the proper way of putting together the description, as after *fin* the speaker also reformulated once by changing from “toutes les” to “tous les”. For the second *fin*, we could see that the speaker staggers over the same utterance “on a pas”. *Fin* fulfills the function of reformulation. The speaker tried to look for the correct term to complete his exemplification but only finished it with a more general term, “autres choses”.

Ex. 3 : ça c'est sûr et en en même temps je crois je suis un peu *ben* je suis très sensible de de la langue (YW-2015)

In Example 3, we see *ben* also fulfills the function of self-correction. It mitigates the force of what was said, as in the two previous examples. We could notice that before *ben*, the speaker used “un peu” and after *ben*, she corrected it to “très”. She is not satisfied with the force of the utterance preceding *ben*.

Ex. 4 : donc c'est à dire des fois des je sais pas des mots par exemple en arabe ou je sais pas moi en espagnol par exemple *bon* y a des mots qui se mélangent on arrive à se comprendre mais on sait qu'ils parlent moins moins (MWL-2014)

In Example 4, *bon* fulfills the topic-resuming function. The speaker mentioned at the very beginning that there are some words, and then he tried to provide some concrete examples in Arabic and Spanish. Nevertheless, he could not think of an example and therefore returned to the general term that he used at the beginning “des mots”. By using *bon* to resume the previous topic, the speaker also saved his face by not giving any potentially bad example.

As shown by these four examples, we could see that all four DMs have the same discursive functions. If we substitute one with another, the meaning of the utterance will not be changed. The four DMs are indeed functionally interchangeable. It also shows that our non-native speakers could vary among these four DMs. However, since all four forms have both discursive and non-discursive use, it is still important to know what proportion these four forms would be used as DMs in native and non-native speech.

Therefore, from a statistical point of view, we compare the distribution of the discursive and non-discursive use in native and non-native speech. For *ben* and *fin*, we explore the corpus CFPP2000 (<http://cfpp2000.univ-paris3.fr/>), which is an online oral French corpus. For *bon* and *enfin*, since Ch Janet has already discussed them in her article (2004), we just used her results as a reference.

Table 3. *Bon ben enfin fin* in native and non-native speech

DM	Native Speech				Non-native Speech			
	Discursive use		Non-discursive use		Discursive use		Non-discursive use	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<i>bon</i>	1824	86.54%	284	13.46%	97	40.59%	142	59.41%
<i>ben</i>	1077	100%	0	NA	349	100%	0	NA
<i>enfin</i>	1109	98.06%	22	1.94%	14	87.5%	2	12.5%
<i>fin</i>	2	6.12%	96	93.88%	528	93.12%	39	6.88%

As shown in Table 6, the non-native speakers approach the native pattern only for their use of *ben*: both groups use it exclusively as DMs in all four corpora concerned here. The use of the other three DMs in non-native speech differs from the native pattern in different ways. For *bon*, the native speakers use it mainly as a DM, while the non-native speakers use it more for its original non-discursive function. The use of *enfin* in non-native speech might be the closest to the native pattern amongst these three DMs. Both native and non-native speakers use it much more as DMs rather than in its original non-discursive use. The most surprising one would be *fin*. While the native speakers mainly use it in its original non-discursive function and rarely as a DM, the non-native speakers show the reversed pattern. It seems that the non-native speakers overgeneralize this DM in their speech. By far, we could see that even though the non-native speakers do acquire the discursive use of these four DMs, they are far from approaching the native pattern in their use: they either overgeneralize the forms or underuse them. Unlike the native speakers, the non-native speakers seem to rely heavily on certain forms, even though these forms do have some functionally interchangeable forms available.

What is more, by taking a closer look at our data, only two speakers used *enfin*. *Enfin* was not found in most of the speakers' speech in our corpus. The two speakers who used *enfin* also used a wider variety of other DMs in their oral production compared to other speakers. It is still unknown why *enfin* is almost avoided by non-native speakers in our

corpus while it is favored mainly in native speech. It could be interesting to be explored with more data in future works.

4.3 Extralinguistic factors

4.3.1 Gender

As shown in Table 7, *bon* is slightly preferred by female speakers while *ben enfin fin* were much more preferred by male speakers. The difference between the two gender groups is more significant with *ben enfin fin* than with *bon*. Even though the gender difference was not reported in native speech, in our corpus, female speakers and male speakers have different preferences on their choice of these four DMs. However, the P-value indicates that this difference did not reach the statistically significant level.

Table 4. Distribution of *bon ben enfin fin* in two gender groups

Gender	<i>Bon</i>	Avg.	<i>Ben</i>	Avg.	<i>Enfin</i>	Avg.	<i>Fin</i>	Avg.
F	145	6.304	126	5.478	2	0.087	212	9.217
M	94	5.529	223	13.12	14	0.824	355	20.88
P-value	.2389		.0968		.4562		.4286	

4.3.2 Age

As presented earlier, *bon* was reported to reflect age-grading that an increase in the use of *bon* was observed among the younger speakers (Beeching, 2009). Therefore, we also wanted to see if these four DMs manifest the same pattern in non-native speech.

Table 5. Distribution of *bon ben enfin fin* in three age groups

Age	<i>Bon</i>	Avg.	<i>Ben</i>	Avg.	<i>Enfin</i>	Avg.	<i>Fin</i>	Avg.
20-30	167	6.185	171	6.333	15	0.556	404	14.96
30-40	62	5.167	100	8.333	0	0	160	13.33
40-50	10	10	78	78	1	1	3	3
P-value	.2877		.3821		.4960		.3446	

Table 8 indicates that there is no age-grading effect in the use of *bon* in that the youngest group use, in fact, less *bon* than the oldest group, which is contrary to what was observed in native speech. However, the 40-50 years old group seems to largely prefer *ben* with a significant increase in their use of *ben* compared to the other two groups. For *enfin*,

since the total number of occurrences in our corpus is very limited, the difference between groups is not obvious. Meanwhile, *fin* appears to be favored by the younger speakers, though the difference between the youngest and the oldest group was not as drastic as *ben*. As the use of *fin* as a DM is relatively recent, the observed pattern might be viewed as potential proof of age-grading. However, more data will be needed to draw any concise conclusion.

4.3.3 Professional status

For the professional status, we only divided our speakers into two groups: those who are still students and those who have already started their careers after graduation.

As shown in Table 9, the professionals prefer *bon ben* and *fin* while the students' group uses more *enfin*. The statistical result reveals that the professional status is statistically significant to *bon*. If *bon* is viewed as a "politeness marker," as suggested by Beeching (2009), then the observed pattern might be explained. As one starts to work, the surrounding environment becomes more complex than the academic environment in school. The need to deal with different situations in real life more appropriately seems to grow, and the resort to the use of some politeness markers such as *bon* might help in a face-saving situation. As argued by Beeching (2009: 9), by assuming the role of a politeness marker, *bon*, "associated with informal contexts", suggests "solidarity" and creates "a sense of intimacy". The difference between the two groups in their different access to vernacular French can also be observed by the average frequency of these four forms: professionals use *bon*, *ben* and *fin* more than students, while students largely favor the only form used in formal register, *enfin*. Since in academic environment, the register is more formal than other environments, this explains well why we see students group adhere to the only formal form, while the professionals group favor more the informal form.

Table 6. Distribution of *bon ben enfin fin* in two professional groups

Professional status	<i>Bon</i>	Avg.	<i>Ben</i>	Avg.	<i>Enfin</i>	Avg.	<i>Fin</i>	Avg.
Professionals	153	8.5	268	14.89	1	0.056	340	18.89
Students	86	3.909	81	3.682	15	0.682	227	10.32
P-value	.0375		.1949		.4247		.4364	

4.3.4 Length of stay

As the acquisition of DMs requires some time spent in the target community, it seems that a longer stay might facilitate more use of the DMs. For this factor, we divided our speakers into three groups according to their length of stay in Paris: 1-3 years, 4-6 years, 7 years, and above.

Table 7. Distribution of *bon ben enfin fin* in three groups of the length of stay

Length of Stay	<i>Bon</i>	Avg.	<i>Ben</i>	Avg.	<i>Enfin</i>	Avg.	<i>Fin</i>	Avg.
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1-3	102	6	77	4.529	0	0	36	2.118
4-6	64	5.818	58	5.273	15	1.364	237	21.55
7+	73	6.083	214	17.83	1	0.083	294	24.5
P-value	.9973		.1280		.2422		.0705	

To our surprise, the length of stay was not proved to be statistically significant to any of the four DMs here. However, we notice that the use of *ben* and *fin* seems to increase largely with more time spent in the target community. Though functionally interchangeable in most cases, *bon* and *enfin* are different from *ben* and *fin* in their formality. The formers could also appear in the written text, while the latter two could only be used in oral production. The result from Table 10 reveals that acquiring some highly informal DMs such as *ben* and *fin* requires some time spent in the natural setting.

4.3.5 Extracurricular contact

The last factor to be examined is the extracurricular contact with native French speakers in Paris. The speakers are divided into three groups based on the self-reported frequency of extracurricular contact: frequent contact, occasional contact, and rare contact.

Table 8. Distribution of *bon ben enfin fin* in three extracurricular contact groups

Extracurricular Contact	<i>Bon</i>	Avg.	<i>Ben</i>	Avg.	<i>Enfin</i>	Avg.	<i>Fin</i>	Avg.
Frequent	168	9.882	303	17.82	15	0.882	474	27.88
Occasional	33	4.714	29	4.143	1	0.143	70	10
Rare	38	2.375	17	1.063	0	0	23	1.438
P-value	.0369		.0233		.5034		.0246	

Table 11 shows that frequent contact with native speakers facilitates the use of *bon ben enfin fin* in non-native speech. The pattern is almost the same for all four DMs. However, due to the small number of occurrences of *enfin*, the difference between groups for *enfin* did not reach the statistically significant level. An increase in use correlates with the increase of contact frequency with native speakers is proved to hold for all three other DMs, especially for *ben* and *fin*, whose increase in use is quite drastic. The result reveals that frequent contact with native speakers in the target community is indeed needed to acquire DMs, which also corroborates with the results obtained in previous research on other DMs with non-native speakers from different L1 backgrounds. (Sankoff et al., 1997)

5. CONCLUSION

This article proposed to analyze *bon ben enfin fin* that are functionally interchangeable when used as DMs. The current work differed from the previous work in SLA on DMs in that we used the data from L2 users in a natural setting other than L2 learners in a classroom setting. Meanwhile, it also exploited how some extralinguistic factors influence the use of *bon ben enfin fin* in the speech of 40 Chinese L1 speakers of French in Paris. The calculation was based on the data from 30 hours' recording collected between 2014 and 2017.

The ranking of the frequency of these four DMs in non-native speech is different from that in native speech reported in earlier work. *Fin* is the most popular form by non-native speakers, while *bon* is the preferred form by native speakers. Very few occurrences of *enfin* were found in our corpus, while it appears to be one of the most frequently used in native speech. The reason why *enfin* is the avoided form in non-native speech remains unclear for now. More data is needed for further study.

Despite some tendency observed concerning the impact of some social factors, only the extracurricular contact with native speakers of French was indeed proved to be statistically significant to three of the four DMs examined here in this article, except for *enfin*, which might be due to the small number of tokens that we had for analysis. It is proved that extracurricular contact with the natives facilitates the acquisition of DMs in a natural setting: the more frequent this contact is, the more one uses the DMs.

Decades ago, DMs were a sign of discontinuity in discourse. With more knowledge of DMs, we start to realize that they help guarantee the fluidity of the discourse with various discursive functions. It is also vital to teach DMs in a language class to help the L2 learners better understand the actual use of the language in a natural setting. It is often reported that L2 learners do not vary their registers as native speakers do. The introduction of DMs might serve as an excellent example of the difference between different registers and, therefore, help the L2 learners master the authentic language use better. However, the potential stigmatization of certain forms should be taken into consideration. It would be better to introduce the concept of DMs to advanced learners rather than beginners. However, teaching DMs remains a problem to be explored further in future studies.

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