**Introduction**

**Change in French Pronouns**
- Corpus studies have shown a change in French pronoun usage: ‘on’ is replacing ‘nous’ for the first person plural.
- ‘Nous’ is the traditional first person plural (‘we’).
- ‘On’ (roughly equivalent to ‘one’) is considered informal, but is growing in use.
- ‘On’ may sometimes occur for referents other than first person plural.
- ‘Nous’ may be retained in formal contexts, or for certain meanings.

**Questions**
- Is ‘nous’ still used in spoken French?
- If so, in what contexts?
- Does the formality of the context matter?
- Is ‘on’ spreading into other pronouns?

**Hypotheses**
- Speakers use ‘nous’ in more formal contexts.
- Speakers may use ‘on’ for pronouns other than first person plural, perhaps as gender neutral.

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**Method**

**Experimental Design**
- Our team crafted a slideshow to present participants with prompts to elicit pronouns referring to various people.
- Formality was manipulated by having the prompt introduced by a different character, who was the intended recipient of the response: a child, an adult peer, or an elder/authority figure.

**Procedure**
- 10 subjects completed the experiment during the Global Programs French Riviera trip.
- Prompts were presented on a tablet computer, and participants spoke their answers to the prompts into a microphone.
- A character will tell you a story and ask you a question.
- Please answer the question to help complete the story.
- Please answer in a complete sentence.
- Please do not repeat the names of the people in the story.

**Coding**
- Responses were coded by listening to each audio file.
- Only responses in which the subject used a pronoun (62%) were analyzed.

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**Findings**

**1st Person Plural Pronouns**
- ‘Nous’ was used in the majority of cases.
- Only 4 subjects used ‘on’.
- Did the written format encourage formality?
- There are important differences between written and spoken French.

**Formality**
- ‘On’ was used more often in low formality contexts.
- Should be interpreted with caution due to low occurrence.

**Innovative Uses**
- ‘On’ was used for referents other than first person plural.
- Other uses occurred nearly as often as first person plural.
- Not all referents were elicited, and some of these uses could be errors.

**Conclusions**
- ‘Nous’ is still in use in spoken French, in some contexts.
- Greater use than in corpora might mean formality plays a role, and our design encouraged formality.
- Speakers might know multiple grammatical systems, and can switch between them depending on style.

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**References**


**Acknowledgements**

- Penn State Brandywine Global Programs.