So what comes first? *You know like* when you start to talk

Left periphery (LP) discourse markers have been studied from theoretical (Benincà & Munaro, 2011; Boyer, 2014; Rizzi, 1997), discourse-pragmatic (e.g. Aijmer, 2002; Jucker & Ziv, 1998; Schiffrin, 1987), and quantitative variationist perspectives (e.g. Denis, 2015; Dubois, 1992; Pichler, 2009, 2013). I will use these findings from these disciplines to investigate the inventory, structure, and functions of forms on the far left of the LP.

My data comprise a large archive of spoken Canadian English from which I extracted over 20,000 sentences and then systematically analyzed the data using distributional analysis and statistical modelling. Taking this data as a whole, we first discovered that the structure and organization of the left periphery is systematic and remarkably fixed. There are three main slots: i) an 'outer rim' comprises forms that act as attention/acknowledge and agreement markers, ii) an inner slot hosts discourse markers, which organize utterances and situate upcoming sentences in the unfolding discourse, and iii) an 'inner rim' which includes adverbs and parentheticals that encode the speaker's views or ideas about the sentence to come. Mixed effects modelling of the linguistic and social factors on variant choices within the inner slot (N = 7873) suggests that this area of the language is undergoing substantial reorganization. Everyone from pre-adolescents to octogenarians use these features, and the forms that encode them are in some cases stable and in others changing. *Well* is used in response to questions across the generations. *Like* is increasing among youth, particularly women, but with this increase a new regularity emerges as it develops characteristics of a topic marker. In contrast, the most frequent form, *so,* seems to operate outside social evaluation and is used across the age span to mark continuity.

Although many forms can occur within the LP, only a limited set occur on its far 'outer rim', e.g. *ah, yeah, oh,* and *okay* (1-3). 'Standard' discourse pragmatic markers can co-occur, e.g. *like* (1), *well* (2), and *so* (3); however they are always positioned *afterwards*.

> (1) *Ah* like I can only remember that happening once or twice.
> (2) *Oh yeah okay* well we'll see.
> (3) *Okay* so that was basically down where the school was.

It is important to understand that outer rim forms are rare, 6.4% overall. Up to three forms can appear in a sequence, as in (2), corresponding to three distinct functions: position 1 attracts attention, position 2 acknowledges a previous statement, and position 3 is for agreement or

disagreement (see 2). However within this assembly, frequent collocates also occur (12% of the data), which exhibit fixed patterning (e.g. *oh + yeah + okay* rather than *yeah + oh + okay*). This suggests grammaticalization processes that produce fused forms, e.g. *oh yeah*, within certain LP domains, such as the outer rim. I will illustrate how these forms pattern in apparent time and by broad social factors to support to this interpretation.

The results offer new insights into the linguistic nature of these phenomena. Further the LP of spoken English is a multiplex structure comprising distinct discourse-pragmatic functions, systemic ordering and localized developments offering new insights into the intersection between grammar and discourse.

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