Borrowed Adverbs in a Variety of Acadian French  
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Minority languages in high contact communities often exhibit borrowing from the majority language. This is evident amongst speakers of Chiac (a variety of Acadian French spoken in Moncton, New Brunswick) who extensively borrow from English – the majority language. My research focuses on the distribution of the borrowed English-origin adverb “right” such as (1):

(1) a. puis le garage est right à côté de mon hookah et le radio  
   ‘The garage is right beside my hookah and the radio’  

b. c’est right bon et Meredith a un petit bébé  
   ‘It’s right good and Meredith has a little baby.’

The emphatic use of English “right” by Chiac speakers is likely a result of the contact with local Anglophone communities – “right” used emphatically (e.g. I am right tired) is grammatical in many local English dialects.

Young’s (2002) thesis reveals that English “right” and French “vraiment” (2) are the most common emphatic adverbs amongst Chiac youth – with “right” occurring ~300 times and “vraiment” occurring ~180 times in a corpus of ~53 000 word corpus:

(2) J’ai actually vraiment aimé ça.  
   ‘I actually really liked that.’ (Young, 2002)

Despite certain semantic differences, “right” and “vraiment” can be used interchangeably in Chiac when modifying an adjective such as in (3), where both signify emphasis.

(3) a. le début est vraiment bon  
   b. le début est right bon

Chiac is often characterized as the dialect of the young; therefore this synchronic study examines a uniform population of young speakers recruited at the city’s community college in Dieppe, Moncton. The corpus (~7 000 words) was collected in October of 2014, and consists of 11 participants between the ages of 17 and 25. I adopted the methodology of Perrot (1995) where participants were administered a series of questions to discuss in pairs. The questions were comparative in nature in order to obtain natural occurrences of adverbs, for example: “Le Canada devrait avoir le plus honte de Justin Bieber ou de Rob Ford? Pourquoi?

The results revealed 13 occurrences of emphatic “right” and 6 occurrences of English “pretty”. The corpus also revealed the occurrence of French emphatic equivalents “vraiment” (11 tokens) and “trop” (6 tokens). Within 17 instances of adjective modification, the study revealed Chiac speakers used English “right” (9 tokens) and “pretty” (6 tokens), and French “vraiment” (2 tokens). Chiac speakers also used emphatic “right” to modify 2 prepositional phrases – French “à côté de”, and English “off”. The following table identifies what the emphatic adverbs can modify:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Quantification of Emphatic Adverbs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adj (English)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pretty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vraiment</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
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</tbody>
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Results indicate that “right” modifies adjectives (both English and French), as well as prepositional phrases. As such, it appears that “right” has been integrated into the grammar,
unlike “pretty”, which modifies only English adjectives. Although my sample is small, it appears to show a change in progress, with “right” being used almost to the exclusion of “vraiment”.

References:


Young, H. A. N. (2002). "C'est either que tu parles francais, c'est either que tu parles anglais": A cognitive approach to chiac as a contact language. Doctoral Dissertation, Rice University.