The Origins and Development of Emigrant Languages

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THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRONUNCIATION OF FRENCH IN QUÉBEC

by

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Although the early colonists who settled in New France originated from regions having widely divergent dialects, early reports praise the conformity of their usage with the Parisian standard, while modern observations show that the language now spoken in Québec is relatively uniform and still relatively congruent with this standard. Several models have been proposed to account for this state of affairs. A reasonable answer, however, requires a careful distinction between the lexical, syntactical, morphological and phonetic aspects of the language as well as a reasonable knowledge of all the potential 17th-century dialectal sources: the Parisian norm, the regional dialects, and the regional standards.

1. The issues

There are three striking facts about the French spoken in Québec: (1) its relative uniformity, (2) its relative conformity with standard French, and (3) the early reports about its 'quality'. This may appear to be somewhat paradoxical as the early colonists originated from regions having widely divergent dialects, and in particular from Ile-de-France,[1] Normandy, Poitou-Vendée and Aunis-Saintonge, the four regions that provided the largest contingents.

Two models have been proposed to account for this state of affairs: (1) early adoption of both elaborate and colloquial Parisian speech habits (which does not exclude the equally early adoption of *some* non-Parisian features nor a later progressive loss of colloquial Parisian forms)[2] or (2) progressive uniformization of an early dialect – or dialects – toward the Parisian norm (requiring a dismissal of the earlier reports on the quality of the language as being merely ideological); the latter model may be further divided: (2a) the early settlers originally spoke a mosaic of dialectal variants that continued to be spoken for a relatively long period[3] or (2b) the colonists spoke a rather uniform koinê, distinct from that of Paris, which they either learned before their arrival[4] or developed shortly after they settled on the banks of the St. Lawrence River.[5]

Supporting evidence for any of these models would require a reasonable knowledge of the different geographical and social

varieties of 17th-century French as well as the linguistic competence of the early colonists, which is still lacking. Some scholars have thus made 'educated' guesses on the sociolinguistic situation of the Colony based on their impressions of the dialectal and sociolinguistic situation of 17th-century France, the geographic origin of the early settlers, and the demographic growth of the Colony. Working from the opposite direction, others have used both modern data and historical documents to reconstruct some of the early specific linguistic aspects that might support these different claims.

2. Settlement, demographic growth and sociolinguistic characteristics

The demographic history of the French settlement in New France is relatively well known. Started in 1608, the colonization did not seriously begin before 1632, with three massive waves of new settlers in or around 1663, 1680 and 1700. The *Traité de Paris* in 1763 put a definite end to the influx of new French settlers. Under the new British administration, the contacts between the colonists and their former mother state were almost completely severed, not only because it served the British interests, but also because the Québec Catholic authorities feared the effects of the 'atheist' ideas brought by the French Revolution. (Surprisingly, only a very limited number of the fleeing refractory priests and aristocratic *émigrés* decided to settle in Québec.) Contacts were only renewed after 1855, as the second French Empire became politically more palatable, allowing an eager Québecois intelligentsia to bring back the latest Paris fashions, including – probably – new ways of sounding French.[6]

Thanks to a rich documentation extending from the earliest times to the present day and a strong tradition of demographic studies,[7] one can determine with some precision the geographic origin of the early settlers, where they settled or later moved, whom they married, what their occupations were, and – to a certain extent – the kind of education they received.[8] It turns out that many of them were craftsmen and city-dwellers, often poorly prepared for the agricultural tasks awaiting them, and relatively more educated than the French population at large. One may safely assume with Wolf (1991, 1994), that many of the settlers spoke a REGIONAL STANDARD (Fr. 'français régional'), i.e., a local variety of the Paris norm which had been adopted by the elites as early as the 13th century (cf. Kristol

1989:336, Van Hoecke 1987:74) and was already well entrenched in cities as early as the 16th century (*pace* Wittman 1995:291). The proportion of settlers that could *only* speak their REGIONAL DIALECT (Fr. 'patois' or 'dialecte') must have been considerably lower than assumed in earlier studies (in particular, in Barbaud 1984, 1994).[9] It is thus likely that these settlers had no need to develop a new koinê, their regional standard being amply sufficient to satisfy their specific needs for communication.

Although demographic studies are quite valuable to an understanding of the development of French in Québec, their interpretation requires a large number of additional assumptions about the sociolinguistic characteristics of 17th-century France and the dynamics of language dominance that are difficult to verify. To put the different models to the test, sociolinguistic studies must be accompanied by careful reconstruction of the varieties of French spoken both in 17th-century France[10] and by successive generations of Quebeckers from the earliest times.

3. Reconstruction of earlier stages: prerequisites

Many earlier (not to mention some recent) attempts to describe the sources of specific features in Québec French (or for that matter in Acadian French) have unfortunately been marred by an inappropriate methodology.

3.1 Examining all potential dialectal sources

A frequent flaw – recently provoking the ire of Simoni-Aurembou (1991), who speaks of 'genetic mirages', – is to examine only the regional dialects that are presupposed to have contributed some specific features to Québec French. Obviously, this can only prove that the dialects under analysis are *potential* sources of such features but need not be the *actual* sources; *other* dialects are just as likely to have contributed to these features.

Progress can only be achieved if one examines *all* dialectal sources, including – as cogently argued by Wolf (1991, 1994) – regional and social varieties of the national language, as the colonists were definitely not all uncouth peasants.

3.2 Establishing a reasonable historical link

A second frequent flaw is to assume without analysis that specific features of Québec French are automatically inherited from 'similar' features observed in French dialects, rather than being independent developments. It will be instructive to examine three infelicitous analyses here.

3.2.1 Nasal vowels

There have been considerable changes in the phonological and allophonic distribution of nasal vowels in all French dialects since the 17th century, of which little or nothing is known. This evolution involves in particular the loss of earlier length distinctions, e.g., between the short nasal vowel of *champ* and the long one of its plural *champs*, still obtaining in 17th-century French dialects (length distinctions first resulted from an early transphonologization of the EOF distinction *en] : an]*[11] and, later, from vowel shortening in some specific phonetic contexts; their distribution was further modified as lengthening was reinterpreted as a morphological marker, in particular for the plural in nouns and adjectives). As I argue elsewhere (Morin 1994b:50-52), it is quite reasonable to assume that the current distribution of nasal vowels in Québec represents a regular evolution from the 17th-century Paris vocalic system.

In an early study on the sources of the pronunciation of Québec French, Rivard hastily concluded that the specific front variants [ɛ̃], [æ̃] or [ã] for the modern reflexes of EOF *en]* and *an] must* have been inherited from Picard dialects:

[...] *gens* se prononce parfois *jã* (français), parfois *jẽ* (picard), parfois *hã* (saintongeais) ou encore *hẽ*; et ce dernier produit comprend ce qu'il y a de dialectal dans les deux autres. Rivard 1914:59

His conclusion, however, it simply based on the relative similarity between the modern reflexes of EOF *en]* in Québec and Picardy – wrongly presupposing an invariance of the system of nasal vowels in French dialects since the 17th century.[12]

It turns out that Rivard's analysis is further flawed because Picard dialects are not even a plausible source for modern Q. [ɛ̃], [æ̃] or [ã]. The distinction between EOF *en]* and *an]*, which has been neutralized in Paris and in Québec French, has been retained in Picard and can still be observed in most modern dialects (cf. Maps 96, 180, 240, 284, 300 of the *Atlas linguistique picard*, Carton & Lebègue 1989). Thus, if the reflexes [ɛ̃], [æ̃] or [ã] < EOF *en]*, as in *gens, vent* or *dent*, were a Picard feature in Québec French, one would also expect the reflexes of EOF *an]*, as in *Jean, champ* or *blanc* to be different – as in Picard. The distinction predicted by Rivard's analysis, however, is not observed (Morin 1994a note 72).[13]
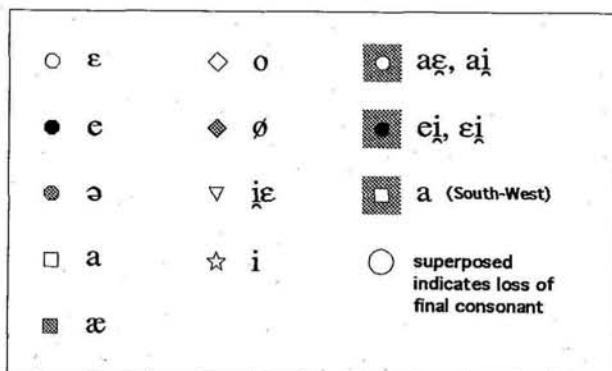
3.2.2 Diphthongs

The second example is provided by the development of raising diphthongs in (some varieties of) Québec French. Typically, these diphthongs – which often alternate with phonetically long monophthongs – are the reflexes of 17th-century mid and low long vowels in closed stressed syllables (this lengthening is either compensatory, as in *fête* < 17th-c. [fɛt(ə)] < EOF *feste* [fɛstə], or specific to the environment [-z(ə)] and [-r(ə)], as in *aise* or *plaire*). The development of diphthongs from phonetically long vowels is a regular development in many languages, and such diphthongs in Québec French need not be inherited from any other French dialects (cf. Dagenais 1981, 1986, 1991 for a lucid presentation of the problem and arguments for a recent autonomous development of diphthongs in Québec).

Nonetheless, Hull (1994:187) claims that the diphthongs in Québec partly reflect an earlier complex system of diphthongs that is supposed to characterize northwestern regional dialects.[14] The terms are vague: 'Les patois du Nord-Ouest étaient caractérisés, et le sont encore aujourd'hui, par un système complexe de diphthongues représentant, on le suppose, une « nouvelle » diphtongaison...' and seem to imply the existence of a diphthongization in northwestern dialects as early as the 17th century (the author, however, gives no evidence or references to support this claim).
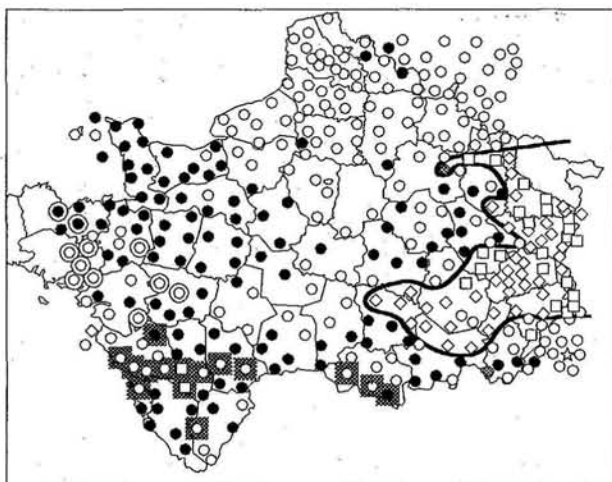
Map 1. Diphthongization of lengthened [e] in Northern France (after ALF *crête*, map 351)

Legend (for all maps)

248
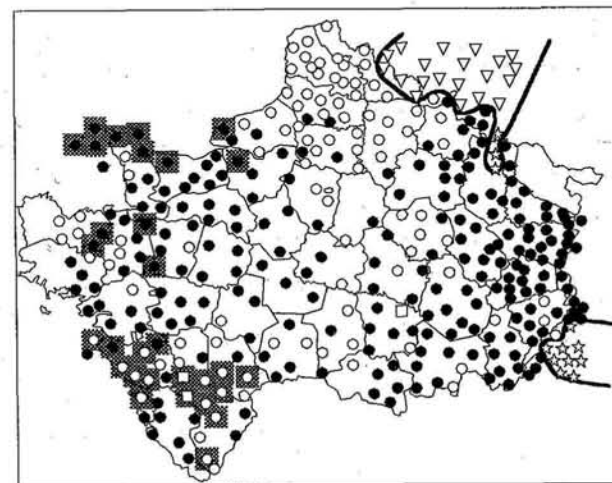
Map 2. Diphthongization of lengthened [ε] in Northern France (after ALF *les bêtes*, map 129)

Evidence from the ALF (*Atlas linguistique de la France*, Gilliéron & Edmont 1902–1910) containing data collected at the turn of this century, shows that diphthongization of earlier long close [ē], as in *crête* 'comb (of bird)' < EOF *creste* [krestə], was mostly attested in the southern part of the Départements of Vendée, Deux-Sèvres and Vienne, as shown on Map 1 (the large gray squares show the points where diphthongs are observed).[15] For earlier long open [ɛ], as in *tête* 'head' < EOF *teste* [tɛstə], diphthongization extended to the northern part of the Département of Vendée and occurred in a separate area north of the river Loire, around the Département of Ille-et-Vilaine and in the northern part of Normandy, as shown on Map 2.[16]

The ALEC (*Atlas linguistique de l'Est du Canada*, Dulong & Bergeron 1980) is the earliest systematic dialectal survey of Québec which can be compared to the ALF. It was intended to be relatively conservative, and relied on older informants (born in the 19th or early 20th century). It appears, though, that the different investigators were not equally sensitive to phonetic distinctions. Maps

249

3a and 4a include only information gathered by Ghislain Lapointe – the investigator who appeared to be the most sensitive to the presence of diphthongs and who visited alone 73 of the 169 points under study, scattered over most of the territory (a large gray square indicates diphthongization and a plus (+) its absence in Lapointe's survey).[17] These maps show that diphthongization is mostly observed in southern Québec for the reflexes of both long close [ē] and long open [ɛ] and that the resulting diphthongs have a relatively low initial vocalic part, e.g., [aɛ]. This corresponds precisely to the pattern observed in the southern part of the Départements of Vendée, Deux-Sèvres and Vienne, i.e., the area from which the majority of the Acadian colonists originated (Flikeid 1994:286, Poirier 1994:263). Strangely, however, diphthongization of earlier long [ē] and long [ɛ] is seldom observed in Acadian French, as Hull (1994:187) aptly remarks: 'Le français acadien, par contre, provient de régions situées plus au sud et ne connaît pas cette diphtongaison.' In an earlier study, this author offered two possible explanations:

> either [...] the first Acadian colonists left before diphthongs became established in that area (entirely possible: Pignon finds the first indication of these diphthongs at the end of the 17th century; the first colonization of the Acadian region took place in the early and middle part of that century) or that the diphthongs (non-phonemic in nature) were levelled by subsequent dialect mixture. Hull 1968:259-60

According to this earlier view, diphthongization in the Vendée-Poitou area may simply be too recent or too 'superficial' to have left any trace in Acadian French (indeed, the same conclusion applies equally well to all 'recent' forms of diphthongization in France and their influence on Québec French). In any case, diphthongization in southern Québec, which affects both the reflexes of long close [ē] and long open [ɛ],[18] is unlikely to have been inherited from 'northwestern' dialects north of the Loire, where it appears to be limited to the reflexes of long open [ɛ].

One can certainly conclude that diphthongization in Québec is very likely to be an independent development.
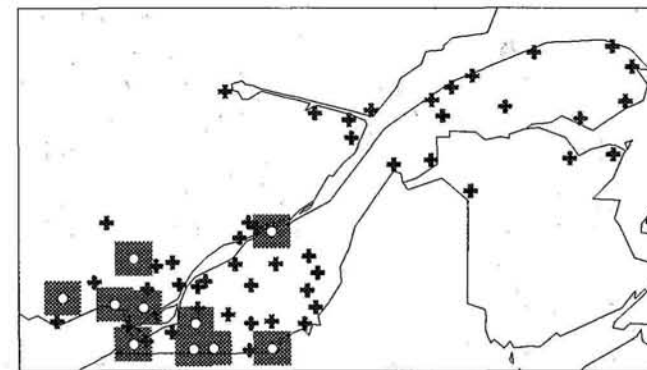
Map 3a. Diphthongization of lengthened [e] in Québec (after ALEC *crête* and *crêpe* – Lapointe's survey only)
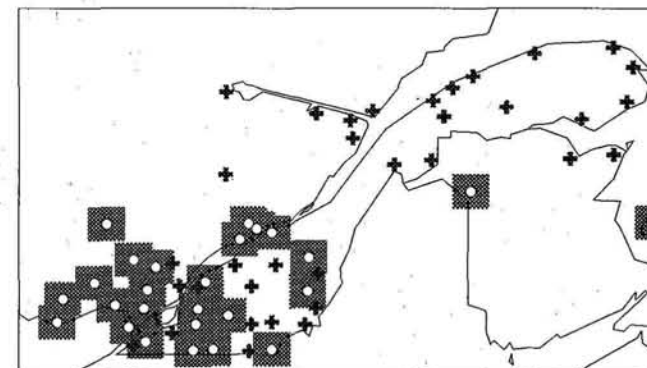
Map 4a. Diphthongization of lengthened [ɛ] in Québec (after ALEC *bête* and *tête* – Lapointe's survey only)

3.2.3 Lowering of /ɛ/ to /a/

It has often been claimed, after Gendron (1966:66, 1970:346-348), that lowering of earlier [ɛ] to [a] in word-final position in Québec French, as in *billet, poulet, frais, français, lait, raie* or *vrai*, has been inherited from colloquial Parisian French (Juneau 1972:50, Poirier 1975:200, 1994:266, Mougeon & Beniak 1994b:29, 33). This kind of change, however, is so common that one should carefully ascertain that it did not develop independently in Québec.[19]

In Québec, this change affected [ɛ] in word-final position but not elsewhere, and in particular, neither short [ɛ̃] nor long [ɛ̄] in closed syllables, as in *sept, boulette* or *fête*. As word-final [-t] was retained for a long time in the endings *-ait* and *-et*, as in *(il) avait, baquet, bonnet, buffet, chevalet, corset, crochet, fouet, mantelet, paquet, piquet, porcelet* or *rouet* (cf. Juneau 1972:188-193 for early evidence, and GPFC 1930 – s. v., *bufette, cabinet, gilet, piquet', porchet', rouette* – for attestations at the beginning of this century), one may surmise that the lowering of [ɛ] to [a] was still productive rather late, *viz.* after the loss of word-final [-t] was generalized in Québec, and that this change is unlikely to have begun before the 17th century.

Another argument against Gendron's hypothesis can be derived from Hull's (1968:257, 1994:188) and Walker's (1983, 1984:84-86) observations that the lowering of [ɛ] to [a] is part of a larger chain shift that also implies the backing of word-final [a] to [ɑ] or [ɒ]. According to this interpretation, it is significant that lowering of [ɛ] to [a] should be limited to word-final position, where the outcome does not conflict with other vowels. In colloquial Parisian, on the contrary, the structural constraints on the change are quite different. In particular, there is no evidence that [a] was absent in the contexts where [ɛ] was lowered; cf. pairs such as *paix* : *pas* or *laisse* : *lasse*.[20]

The strongest argument against Gendron's hypothesis, however, is simply that it fails to account for the widely different conditions under which lowering of [ɛ] to [a] occurred in France and in Québec.[21] Rosset's description (1911:89-91) of the specific colloquial Parisian French[22] lowering of [ɛ] to [a] that is claimed to have left its mark on Québec French, shows that only *long* vowels were lowered, and that this lowering was not restricted to word-final position, as the selected examples given by Gendron and Juneau would imply. The forms noted by Rosset include long [ɛ̄] in word-final position, as in *fra (frais), jamas, mauvas, disas, étas, venas*, long [ɛ̄] in closed syllables,

as in *masme* 'même', *rasve* 'rêve', *vaspre* 'vêpre', *faste* 'fête', *salepastre* 'salpêtre', *lasse mouay* 'laisse-moi', *lastychouar* 'laisse-t'y choir', and vowels that were arguably long in unstressed position, *faza* 'faisait' and *vraman* 'vrai(e)ment' (there are, however, only two occurrences of this latter case). It is instructive to contrast the treatment of the suffix *-ais(e)*; in Québec, lowering is limited to the masculine form, where [ɛ] is final, but in colloquial Parisian both masculine and feminine forms were affected, as shown by Rosset's examples *bourgeas, bourgease* 'bourgeois, bourgeoise' (with the popular ending *-ais(e)*, as in *français(e)* for *françois(e)*). Conversely, none of the forms noted by Rosset contained an earlier *short* [ɛ̃], a restriction that does not apply to Québec French; thus the *short* vowel of the 3sg imperfect ending *-ait*, which was often pronounced [-a] in colloquial Québec French, is never lowered in the texts examined by Rosset; cf. *si vous piaisait* 's'il vous plaisait' (V, 8) with an unlowered short final *-ait* vs. *si pliast à Dieu* 's'il plaît à Dieu' (IX, 8) with lowered final *-ast* < long *-aist*.

One can safely conclude that the lowering of word-final (short) [ɛ] to [a] in Québec and that of long [ɛ̄] to (probably long) [ā] in colloquial Parisian French were two totally unrelated changes and that the former is probably a Québec innovation.[23]

3.2.4 Linguistic reconstruction

It should be obvious that superficial similarities between two dialects are not enough to establish a historical link. One must establish that they cannot be independent developments. In all cases, a careful reconstruction of earlier stages and a precise description of the conditions under which the change took place are required. This is often sufficient to exclude spurious cases.

3.3 Distinguish linguistic components

Some scholars appear to be under the impression that languages are monoliths, with their components – lexicon, syntax, morphology, phonology, and phonetics – all moving together; thus Barbaud (1994:92) objects to my hypothesis that Québec French adopted very early a pronunciation close to that of the Parisian norm, because

somehow this would be incompatible with the fact that some lexical items clearly betray the influence of other regional dialects. Actually, the adoption of specific lexical items is probably completely independent of the non-lexical aspects of languages (the converse is not true; borrowings may lead to changes in the phonology, morphology or syntax – but need not always do so: though Amerindian languages have clearly left their mark in the lexicon of Québec French, their influence does not appear to have extended elsewhere). Although the interrelationship between the other components may be somewhat stronger, one simply cannot assume that the syntax, morphology, phonology and phonetics of Québec necessarily derives from that of any specific dialect. A clear distinction among the development of the different components must be maintained.

3.3.1 Lexicon: borrowings or vestiges?

Lexical comparisons are among the most frequent tools used to reconstruct the early linguistic situation in the Colony. Yet, the results are highly ambiguous. Chauveau & Lavoie (1993) presents what is probably the best comparative study on a specific aspect of the Québec lexicon, clearly showing the limits of such inquiries.

These authors have developed a precise methodology that takes into account all the regional dialects of the early settlers. They examine the vocabulary of traditional hay and cereal harvesting, techniques that have been relatively stable since the 17th century, were widely known in a mostly rural community, and have been amply documented in a series of homogeneous surveys for all these dialects. A significant lexical convergence can be found between the vocabulary used in Québec and in a specific area extending from Lower Normandy to Beauce. The authors build up a realistic scenario – based on solid demographic data – showing how a relatively small community of early rural settlers from Perche (a Province belonging to the area delimited at the outset) may have been the source of this vocabulary.[24] The adoption of Percheron agricultural terms by other settlers – the majority of them craftsmen and city-dwellers who lacked the specific agricultural terms needed for their new activities – is not different from the borrowing of Amerindian words to designate unknown North American entities such as *atoca*

'cranberry'. There was a difference, however. The Québec forms *botteau* [bɔto] 'bunch, bundle (of wheat, hay, straw, flax...)' and *quinteau* [kẽto] 'heap of standing sheaves', which are claimed to have been borrowed from Percheron, are now pronounced [bɔtjo] and [kẽtjo] in Perche and were probably [bɔtjo(u̯)] and [kẽtjo(u̯)] in the 17th century. The modern Québec forms cannot possibly derive from these through regular sound changes. One must assume either that Percheron speakers standardized their pronunciation when they spoke to outsiders, or that these forms were first borrowed with their Percheron pronunciation and later standardized. This normalizing process (to which we will return) is prevalent in interdialectal borrowings, but not possible with lexically unrelated languages. It is important to stress that lexical borrowings from Percheron need not have been accompanied by the transfer of other Percheron features into the language of the colonists.

In their analysis, the authors correctly exclude lexical types that belong to *common French*, i.e., types that are now found in most dialects, and, above all, in the standard language, e.g., words such as *fourche* 'fork', *meule* 'stack', *tas de foin* 'hay-stack', *gerbe* 'sheaf', *râteau* 'rake'..., because these may have been used by colonists from all Provinces or even possibly introduced into Québec French at a much later time. To determine the specific lexical contribution of the Parisian norm to the formation of Québec French it would be necessary to examine specific fields in which the Parisian French terminology is distinct from that used outside Paris. The historical extension of the Parisian norm to the rest of France, however, makes this impossible. Lexical analyses, as this study shows, can only indicate the relative contribution to the Québec lexicon (in specific fields) of *one regional dialect* compared to that of *other regional dialects*. It also confirms that these analyses have no necessary bearing on the understanding of how the other linguistic aspects (syntax, morphology...) developed.

3.3.2 Syntax and morphology

Compared to lexical studies, investigations devoted to the formation of the syntax and morphology of Québec French are very rare (cf. Wolf 1991). Globally, the syntax and morphology of the French spoken in Québec and in Paris appear to be quite similar, if one

admits for both varieties a continuum between elaborate and colloquial levels. As soon as one examines specific details, minor problems arise (cf. Mougeon & Beniak 1994b:38-40; to appear) for which there do not appear to be immediate solutions.

It is often difficult to characterize precisely the nature of the syntactic or morphological changes that occurred between the 17th and the 20th centuries, a period of relative stability. Although Mougeon & Beniak (1994b:34) interpret the current use of the pronoun *on* as a substitute for the 1pl clitic subject *nous* (or in some dialects for the 1pl clitic subject *je* or *i*) as the result of a morphological change,[25] this change may be stylistic rather than morphological or syntactic. This use of *on*, it is often argued, corresponds to an early and still productive modality of this indefinite pronoun (cf. Weerenbeck 1943:10–22); thus *on* in *nous autres, on veut* 'we want (*lit.* us, one wants)' would essentially have the same function as the second *on* of *qu'on appelle la reine; et vous, qu'on sorte* (Voltaire) 'let the Queen come in; and you, please, leave! (*lit.* and you, one should leave)'. I do not think that this is a correct interpretation of this new usage. There appears to have been a definite change in the coreference patterns associated with *on*. Whereas some dialects of modern French regularly allow *on* to be (idiomatically) referential to the 1pl definite personal pronoun *nous* in expressions such as (a) below, a similar reference appears to be extremely difficult between *on* and other definite personal pronouns. In sentence (b), 'indefinite' *on* may semantically refer to a 2sg, but is syntactically referential to 3sg *son*. If one replaces 3sg *son* in (b) by 2sg *ton* – in the same fashion as in (a) *on* is referential to 1pl *nous* – the resulting sentence (c) becomes ungrammatical.

(a) *On$_i$ a perdu notre$_i$ chemin* 'we$_i$ lost our$_i$ way'
(b) *Alors, jeune homme, on$_i$ a perdu son$_i$ chemin?* 'so, young man, you$_i$ lost your$_i$ way?'
(c) **Alors, on$_i$ a perdu ton$_i$ chemin?* 'so, you$_i$ lost your$_i$ way?'
(d) *On$_i$ a perdu son$_i$ chemin* 'we$_i$ lost our$_i$ way'

The ungrammaticality of (c) shows that 'indefinite' *on* cannot refer to a 2sg definite personal pronoun, although this would be semantically appropriate. One must conclude that *on* in sentence (a) does not have its normal 'indefinite' function. It is likely that *on* recently acquired a new 'definite' function and that this constitutes

the relevant change alluded to by Mougeon & Beniak. Unfortunately, changes in the referential properties of *on* do not appear to have been the object of any analyses.

Conversely some speakers of French (those I observed were from Liège, Lyon and St. Étienne) can still use (d), and sometimes even prefer to do so, to mean 'we$_i$ lost our$_i$ way', which other speakers can accept only with an indefinite meaning. Again, I do not know of any dialectal description of such syntactic differences.

One can only regret the relative poverty of historical and synchronic studies on the syntax and morphology of colloquial and dialectal varieties of French (with notable exceptions for regions that have contributed little to the population of Québec, e.g., Remacle 1952-1956-1960),[26] which makes it difficult to decide whether the convergence observed between the two sides of the Atlantic already existed in the 17th century or results from later independent developments. A domain briefly examined by Tuaillon (1975:620-626) and Maury (1991) concerns the generalization of the complementizer *que* or its variant *ce que* after other complementizers, e.g., *quand que, où que, comment que, à qui que...*, as in *j'étais pas là quand qu'il est venu* 'I was not there when he arrived', *c'est des gens avec qui qu'il s'entend bien* 'they are people he gets along with', found both in Europe (Bauche 1928:104, 143, Remacle 1960:107-110)[27] and in Québec (cf. Seutin 1975:196, 321, 389 and Maury 1991). Tuaillon's survey shows that the type *où qu'il va* 'Where does he go? (*lit.* Where that he goes?)' was dominant at the beginning of this century in northern France, while the type *où ce qu'il va* was limited to marginal areas. It would be hazardous, however, to conclude that *où ce qu'il va* in Québec has its sources in the dialects of these areas. One would definitely need to know the dialectal distribution of the complementizers *que* and *ce que* in other contexts, e.g., after *quand*, and above all one should build a model for the historical development of such complementizers. If, as I have argued (Morin 1990), the consonant [t] heard between *quand* and a following word beginning with a consonant, as in *quand* [kãt] *Pierre est venu,...* 'when Peter came,...' results from the lexical reanalysis of the complementizer *que* following *quand*, its early presence both in Québec and in France would indicate that *que* was the original form used in Québec and that *ce que* represents a later development. Obviously this is very speculative.

## 4. The origin of the pronunciation of French in Québec

4.1 Dialectal sources of the pronunciation of Québec French?

In an earlier study on the origin of the pronunciation of French in Québec (Morin 1994a), I tried to reconstruct the 17th-century reflexes of EOF [ɛaṵ], [i̯aṵ] (< Lat. -ĕllŭm), stressed [e], stressed [ɛ], stressed [ai̯] and stressed [ɔ] in the Parisian norm and the regional French dialects of the Provinces of origin of the early settlers. The results can be summarized in Table 1.

Early Old French	17th-century regional dialects	17th-century Parisian norm	20th-century Québec
[ɛaṵ], [i̯aṵ], e.g., *gâteau*	[i̯aṵ], [i̯ɔ], [ea]	[ɛɔ]	[o]
stressed [e] (remaining short) e.g., *mettre, bouteille, valet*	[ĕ]	[ɛ]	[ɛ]
preconsonantal [e], [ɛ] and [ai̯] (later lengthened), e.g., *crête, bête*	[ē], [ɛ̄]	[ɛ̄]	[ɛ̄] (rarely [ē])
stressed [ɔ] (later in word-final position), e.g., *sabot, trop*	[ɔ]	[ɔ]	[o]

Table 1. Reflexes of EOF [ɛaṵ], [i̯aṵ], [e], [ɛ] and [ɔ] in the 17th-century

The reflexes of EOF [ɛaṵ], [i̯aṵ] (< Lat. -ĕllŭm) and those of unlengthened stressed [e] clearly oppose the Parisian norm and these regional dialects. In both cases, the modern Québec usage is more likely a reflex of the Parisian norm than of the dialects. On the other hand, the modern reflexes of EOF lengthened stressed [e] and [ɛ] in Québec, as they appear in Maps 3b and 4b,[28] indicate that the influence of the Paris norm was not as important for these vowels. (The specific raising of [ɛ] to [ē] after a velar consonant observed in Map 5 for *guêpe* may be a later development in Québec.)[29]
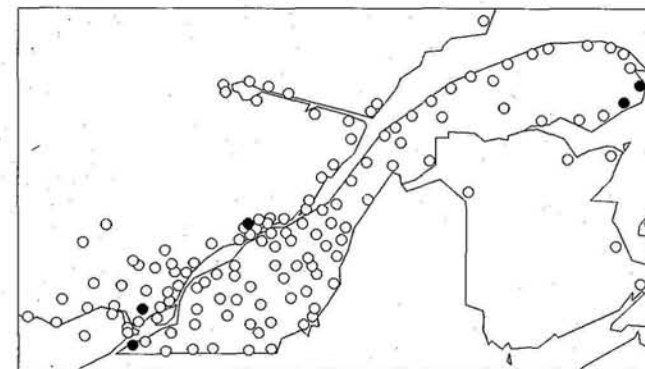
Map 3b. Non-diphthongized reflexes of lengthened [e] in Québec (after ALEC *crête* and *crêpe*)
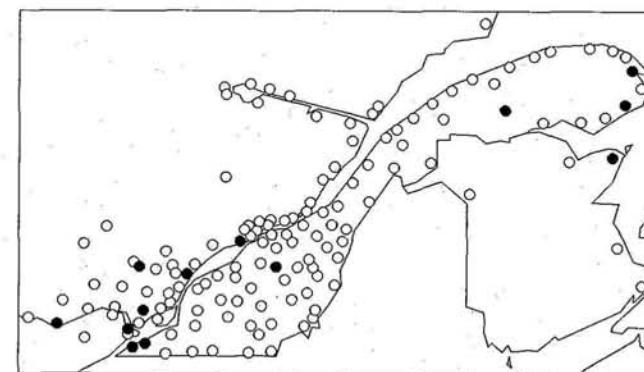
Map 4b. Non-diphthongized reflexes of lengthened [ɛ] in Québec (after ALEC *bête* and *tête*)
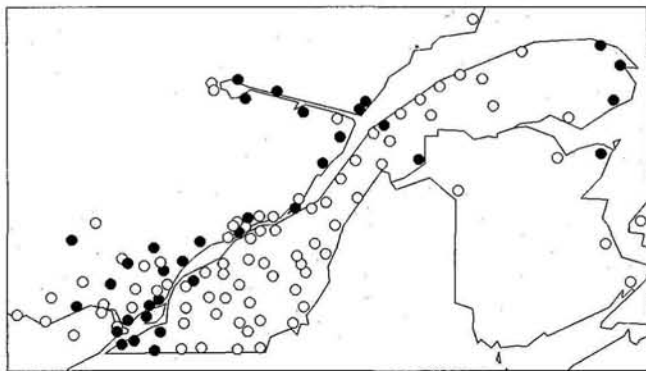
Map 5. Non-diphthongized reflexes of lengthened [ɛ] after velar in Québec (after ALEC *guêpe*)

Finally, the raising of EOF [ɔ] to [o] in word-final position – which is also observed in the Parisian norm at the beginning of the 19th century (cf. Morin, Langlois & Varin 1990) – appears to have occurred independently in Québec.

Other studies confirm the conformity of the pronunciation of Québec French with the 17th century Parisian norm (cf. Morin 1994b for nasal vowels, Morin & Ouellet 1991 for the reflexes of EOF [e] and [ɛ] before word-final [-s(ə)] as in *messe* [mɛ̌s] vs. *presse* [prɛ̌s]) and the existence of later development in the same direction, e.g., the loss of distinctive length in word-final position (Hull 1968:256, 1994:187-8 says of these changes that they were 'latent'). Similar comparisons would have to be undertaken for other classes of sounds before a firm conclusion could be drawn. It nonetheless appears that regional dialects have contributed few distinctive phonetic features to the pronunciation of French in Québec.

4.2 Regional standards as sources of the pronunciation of Québec French?

The Parisian influence on the pronunciation in Québec may have obtained indirectly, through the regional standards spoken or simply known by the large proportion of the early settlers who were of urban origin. To understand the contribution of these standards to the pronunciation of Québec French, it would be necessary to reconstruct their phonological systems in the 17th century, which – again – is *terra incognita* for most of the Provinces of origin of the early settlers.

An analysis of the relationship between regional standards and dialects would certainly contribute to this reconstruction. Dialect speakers,[30] when they learn a prestige norm, develop correspondences between the phonetics of their dialect and that of the norm as they perceive it (cf. Edmont 1905, after Chaurand 1985:347, Bloch 1921:125-129, Chauveau 1977:114). For instance, dialect speakers in La Combe de Lancey (Vincenz 1974:13) establish correspondences such as 'dialectal unstressed final [a]' is omitted in the standard or 'dialectal [ẽ]' ≡ 'standard [ã]' which allow them to guess that dialectal ['lẽga] 'tongue' should be standard [lãg] (assuming that they had not yet learned that word). This explains why some regional terms may have 'Parisian' phonetic shapes even though they are indigenous, e.g., *languelle* [lãgɛl] 'kind of wedge' for dialectal [lẽ'gɛla] in La Combe de Lancey. This is how – if one accepts Chauveau & Lavoie's analysis – one may surmise that 17th century Percheron forms such as [bɔtjɔ(u̯)] and [kẽtjɔ(u̯)] appeared in early Québec French as *botteau* [bɔtɛɔ] and *quinteau* [kẽtɛɔ] (or ([bɔto] and [kẽto], if it happened later).[31]

It is instructive to observe how specific classes of sounds are 'adjusted' or 'preserved' in the passage of dialect to standard.[32] In Table 2, I have tried to compare some of the modern features of the Touraine dialect, the Tour standard and the Parisian norm. For the modern reflexes of EOF -*ot(s)*, I have relied on Martinet's survey of regional standards (1945, 1971:84-87), where he noted that the distinction between *mot* 'word' and its plural *mots* at the end of World War II was still frequent in all the regional standards spoken in the Provinces west of Paris. This distinction corresponds either to a phonological quality distinction [ɔ] ˷ [o] or a length distinction [ŏ] ˷ [ō] (or both), now absent in both the Parisian norm and Québec French.[33] For the other aspects I used Davau's description (1979) of

the rural Touraine dialect and Gueunier *et al.*'s observations (1978) for the regional standard of Tour.[34]

| Early Old French	20th-century Touraine dialect	20th-century Tour standard	20th-century Parisian norm
[-e̦au̯], [-i̯au̯], e.g., *gâteau*	[-i̯ɔ]	[-ɔ] or [-o] ?	[-o]
[-e̦au̯s], [-i̯au̯s], e.g., *gâteaux*	[-i̯o]	[-o]	[-o]
[-ɔt], e.g., *pot*	[-ɔt]	[-ɔ] or [-o] ?	[-o]
[-ɔts], e.g., *pots*	[-o]	[-o]	[-o]
[-et], e.g., *volet*	[-ĕt]	[-e]	[-ɛ]
[-ets], e.g., *volets*	[-ē]	[-e] or [-ē] ?	[-ɛ]
[-et(r)ə], e.g., *mettre, bavette*	[-et(r)ə]	[-et(r)ə] ?	[-ɛt(r)ə]
[-est], e.g., *forêt*	[-ē]	[-ɛ] or [-ē] ?	[-ɛ]
[-estə], e.g., *bête*	[bēt]	[bet], [bēt], [bĕt] ?	[bĕt] (∞ [bēt])

Table 2. Reflexes of EOF [eau(s)], [iau(s)], [e], [ɛ] and [ɔ] in 20th-century Touraine

The 'conspicuous' features that differentiate the Touraine dialect from the Parisian norm are absent from the Tour standard: the initial glide of the diphthongs [-i̯ɔ] and [-i̯o], and the final [t] of the endings *-et* and *-ot*. The elimination of conspicuous features was probably facilitated by correspondence rules. On the other hand, minor differences have been more resistant: the open vowel [ɔ] of the ending *-ot* was probably retained until the middle of this century; the close vowel [e] of the ending *-et* is still dominant in Tour, and was analogically extended to the plural (perhaps also lengthened) even though the dialectal plural form was closer to the Parisian norm. The retention of these features reflects the speakers' unawareness of the difference between their regional standard and the norm, as noted by Gueunier *et al.*, which probably happens only when the phonetic differences are relatively small.

Early Old French	17th-century Touraine dialect	17th-century Tour standard	17th-century Parisian norm
[-e̦au̯], [-i̯au̯], e.g., *gâteau*	[-i̯ɔ]	[-e̦ɔ]	[-e̦ɔ]
[-e̦au̯s], [-i̯au̯s], e.g., *gâteaux*	[-i̯o]	[-e̦o]	[-e̦o]
[-ɔt], e.g., *pot*	[-ɔt]	[-ɔt]	[-ɔt]
[-ɔts], e.g., *pots*	[-o]	[-o]	[-o]
[-et], e.g., *volet*	[-ĕt]	[-ĕt]	[-ɛt]
[-ets], e.g., *volets*	[-ē]	[-ē]	[-ē]
[-et(r)ə], e.g., *mettre, bavette*	[-et(r)ə]	[-et(r)ə]	[-ɛt(r)ə]
[-est], e.g., *forêt*	[-ē]	[-ē]	[-ē]
[-estə], e.g., *bête*	[bēt]	[bēt]	[bēt]

Table 3. Reflexes of EOF [e̦au̯(s)], [i̯au̯(s)], [e], [ɛ] and [ɔ] in 17th-century Touraine

A plausible reconstruction of the pronunciation of the same endings in the 17th century appears in Table 3. Most noticeable are the reflexes of EOF stressed [e] in the endings [-et] and [-et(r)ə], which appear to have kept their close quality in both the regional dialect[35] and the regional standard. This observation can certainly be generalized to the regional dialects and regional standards of all the French Provinces west of Paris, i.e., the original home of most of the early Quebec settlers that did not originate from Paris. Evidence for the close vowel of the ending *-et* in these regional standards appears in Martinet (1945, 1971:116-117, if one can generalize his observations for the noun *piquet*). Neither Martinet nor Gueunier *et al.* seem to contemplate the possibility that EOF [e] was retained in closed syllables, yet it was widespread at the beginning of this century as is shown on Map 6 for *omelette* (after ALF),[36] and probably even many years later. Furthermore, Edmont's survey certainly underestimates the retention of EOF [e] in closed syllables, as they were still used in the immediate vicinity of Paris some sixty or seventy years later (cf. the pronunciation of *blette, moyette* or *mettre* observed by Fondet 1980:maps 27-9, 9-6 and p. 626).
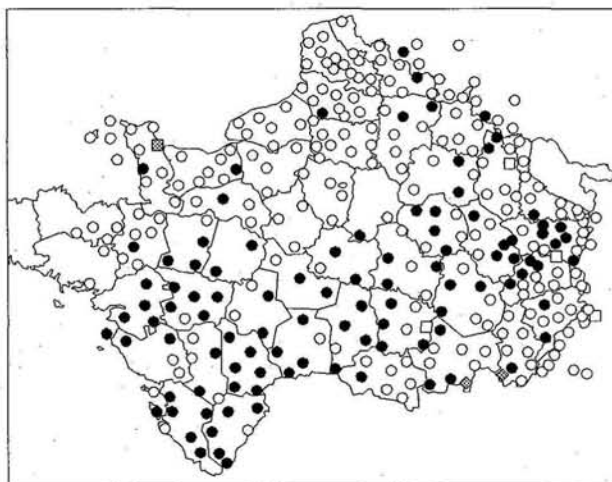
Map 6. Reflexes of [ɛ̃] in Northern Standards (after ALF *omelette*, map 940)

If one assumes that the Québec colonists first developed a koinê based on the linguistic usage of the early settlers, it seems ineluctable that it should include the pronunciation [e] for the vowels of *-et, -ette* and *-ettre*, which was that of the vast majority of them (whether they spoke the dialect or the standard of their place of origin). If one further assumes that the current pronunciation [ɛ] in Québec results from a progressive 'dedialectalization' of this early koinê after the Parisian norm (as in Juneau 1972:275), this process should be similar to that observed in the formation of regional standards in western France: both had the same early pronunciation [e] of *-et, -ette* and *-ettre*, and both were under pressure to conform to the Parisian norm (one may even assume the social pressure to be stronger in France). One would thus expect to still find traces of this early pronunciation in Québec, albeit as a socially marked variant, just as one does in Tour. This is apparently not the case.[37]

There are two logical explanations for this remarkable difference: either the Parisian norm [ɛ] was adopted very early in Québec (as proposed by Morin 1994a) as a result of the exceptional social conditions experienced by the colonists, or the lowering of [e] to [ɛ] in these words is yet another independent development, on a par with the closing of word-final [ɔ] to [o] for instance.[38]

5. Conclusion

Although the main features of the formation of French in Québec are relatively well known, many specific aspects remain mysterious. I have argued here that one must carefully distinguish the specific evolution of its lexicon, its syntax, its morphology and its pronunciation – which may be relatively independent from one another. In particular, lexical borrowings from any sources (be they regional French dialects, Amerindian languages, etc.) may be totally unrelated to the other aspects of its development.

A better understanding of this formation requires the reconstruction of all representative dialectal and social usages in 17th century France and a better understanding of how modern usages have developed since that time, both in France and in Québec. This is definitely a large and difficult program, without which, however, one risks the pitfalls that have all too often characterized earlier attempts to discover the origin of Québec French.

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Notes

1. As Simoni-Aurembou (1991:73-74) rightly points out, one should further distinguish between the varieties of French spoken in the Ile-de-France and those of Paris, particularly during and after the 16th century.
2. Chaudenson (1994), Morin (1994a), Niederehe (1987), Poirier (1994), Valdman (1979, 1980), Wolf (1991, 1994).
3. Dulong (1973).
4. This is a reasonable interpretation of Hull (1968, 1974). This author later made it clear that the koinêization process may have continued during the early period of colonization (Hull 1994).
5. Barbaud (1984, 1994).
6. Wolf (1987:14-18).
7. Lortie (1914), Godbout (1946), Charbonneau (1990), Charbonneau *et al.* (1987), Charbonneau & Guillemette (1994a, 1994b).
8. Similar data are also available for their descendants, from the early colonial period to the present day.
9. In Morin (1994a), I did not claim that 'the colonists did not speak the *patois* of their place of origin' as a reading of Barbaud (1994:89) may suggest. I only 'excluded the hypothesis that the majority of the colonists would *only* speak the *patois* of their place of origin with their children at home' (1994a:229).
10. One should probably also examine later developments of the Parisian norm; cf. Kemp & Yaeger-Dror (1991), who argue in great detail for a possible influence of the Parisian norm on the pronunciation of the ending *-ation* in Québec a century ago, thus long after the *Traité de Paris*.
11. The abbreviation *n*] represents any nasal consonant in syllable coda.
12. Thus, one cannot accept the conclusions of Mougeon & Beniak (1994b:40-41) – who rely on Rivard's authority – that this constitutes a valid example of 'interlectal' variants. Note that there is no reason either to believe that the [fi] or [h] reflexes of earlier [ʒ] have necessarily been inherited form Saintongeais.
13. Léon (1983:52, 56) claims that there is a slight statistical difference in the distribution of the variants [ɛ̃], [æ̃], [ã] and [ɑ̃] for the reflexes of EOF. *en*] and those of *an*], which he hastily attributes to a Norman influence (a more reasonable choice than Picard, indeed). The differences reported by Léon, however, do not appear to be significant (cf. Morin 1994a:91*n*72, 95*n*99). But even if they were, many other 17th-century regional dialects and standards, both east and west of Paris, shared with Norman the distinctions that he claims have survived in the distribution of nasal vowels in Québec.
14. Without finding it necessary to even mention the existence of opposing arguments such as those of Dagenais.

15. I have assumed that the [a] reflexes of long [ē] and long [ɛ] in these areas represent a later development of the diphthong [aɛ].
16. Recent observations (Fondet 1980) show that diphthongization was certainly more widespread in France than this survey indicates. In particular, diphthongization of both long [ē] and long [ɛ] could still be observed in the late sixties around Paris (an area poorly covered by the ALF).
17. The maps 3a, 3b, 4a, 4b and 5 combine answers to different questions: *bête* (questions 396x, 418, 425x, 461s-1, 473, 487x, 587x, 594x, 710x, 1548, 1558, 1587, 2009), *crêpe* (questions 236x, 236, 526x, 2077), *crête* (question 599), *tête* (questions 133, 403, 720b, 900, 1311, 1839x, 2084, 2085x), and *guêpe* (questions 641, 646x, 1269x, 1567, 1975-1). The gray squares indicate that AT LEAST ONE of the occurrences of *crête* or *crêpe* (Map 3a) and of *bête* or *tête* (Map 4a) were noted with a diphthong at that specific point; there may be one or several variants without a diphthong for the same forms at the same point.
18. Maps 3a and 3b may give the impression that diphthongization of BOTH long [ɛ] and long [ē] is limited to the southern Québec border, while elsewhere in southern Québec, diphthongization would be limited to the reflexes of long [ɛ]. This distribution, however, may not be significant. It may be due to the difference in the size of the samples for *crête* and *crêpe* on the one hand (106 forms, 10.4% of which are diphthongized) and *bête* and *tête* on the other (465 forms, 10% of which are diphthongized), which contributes to the superior 'visibility' of the reflexes of [ɛ].

    The absence of diphthongization north of (approximately) Québec City, however, does appear to be significant. This distribution does not match any known pattern in the distribution of the early settlers according to their Provinces of origin and is thus difficult to reconcile with the hypothesis that diphthongization was inherited from 17th-century French dialects. On the contrary, it strongly militates in favor of an independent development, which would have begun in the southern part of Québec.
19. If one assumed that all North American varieties of French have a common ancestor, the absence of lowering of [ɛ] to [a] in Missouri French would also imply that it is a later independent development in Québec, as argued by Hull (1956:47, 1968:257).
20. One may perhaps argue that long [ā] had already become back [ɑ], allowing the phonological distinction to survive – but this is an unsettled issue; cf. Morin 1986:216*n*11.
21. The scattered examples of word-final [ɛ] lowering to [a] that Gendron (1970:347-348) and Juneau (1972:50) observed in the ALF could have quite different sources and are quite inconclusive. Chauveau's detailed analysis

(1989:106-113 and map 55), for instance, shows that the pronunciation [ʒa] for *geai* in northeastern Brittany has absolutely nothing in common with the apparently 'similar' change observed in Québec.

22. Rosset (1911:91-108) describes many other cases of lowering of [ɛ] to [a] which are not specific to this variety of French and often much older.

23. Mougeon & Beniak (1994b:33) rightly remark that 'Morin [1994a] does not tell us anything about the *retention* [the emphasis is mine] of the reflex [a] in modern Québec French in words such as *bleuet* or *poulet* [...] that originates from 17th-century colloquial Parisian French'; there is indeed little to be said about it.

24. The absence of a systematic dialect survey in the rural areas around Paris, however, has probably warped the dialectal picture they reconstructed. One may also suspect that dialect decay since the 17th century must have been stronger in the areas that are closer to Paris, vitiating Chauveau & Lavoie's postulate (1993:377) that the modern geographical distribution of lexical forms is representative of the situation in the 17th century. The authors have not included in their survey Fondet's data (1980) from rural areas close to Paris, because these do not follow the same protocol as the other sources they used. A *global* compilation of these data, however, indicates a rate of conformity at least as high as that of any of the *individual* points they examine. If one accepts the hypothesis of a stronger decay of dialects in the vicinity of Paris, one may surmise that the area they delimited extended all the way to the gates of Paris in the early 17th century.

25. Mougeon & Beniak (1994b:34-5) credit me with interesting hypotheses about the development of *on* as a substitute for *nous*, to which they then raise some objections. I feel flattered, but hasten to say that I never advanced such hypotheses.

26. Remacle's observations may nonetheless be quite valuable to the understanding of the genesis of some of the forms observed in Québec. In particular, his analysis (1956:329) of the reduplicated preposition *de* – with the variants *de d'* [dəd] in the Liège standard as in *à deux kilomètres de d'là* 'a few kilometers from here' and the corresponding variants [dɪd] or [ddɪ] in Walloon – can easily be extended to the other French dialects where it is observed (including colloquial varieties spoken both in Québec and Paris). It should be preferred to the unlikely agglutinative analysis proposed by Wittman & Fournier (1982) and adopted by Mougeon & Beniak (1994b:41).

27. As pointed out by Remacle, the type *quand que* can even be observed in Northern Italian dialects.

28. A black dot indicates that AT LEAST ONE of the occurrences of *crête* or *crêpe* (Map 3b), of *bête* or *tête* (Map 4b) and of *guêpe* (Map 5) was heard as [e]

or [ẽ]. Other variants with the vowels [ɛ] or [ɛ̃] were also observed at ALL THE POINTS of investigation (not to mention the variants with a diphthong reported in Maps 3a and 4a). The difference between Maps 3b and 4b is probably not significant because the difference in the size of the samples for *crête* and *crêpe* on the one hand (217 forms, 3.5% with a close [ẽ]) and *bête* and *tête* on the other (911 forms, 4% with a close [ẽ]) overrepresents the reflexes of EOF [ɛ]. It should be noted, however, that most of the occurrences with close [ẽ] were noted by Lapointe and that an analysis limited to the points he surveyed seems to indicate a partial preservation of the earlier distinction between EOF [e] and [ɛ] (lengthened EOF open [ɛ] is more likely to have become close [ẽ]). This distinction, if it could be sustained, would exclude a later Québec development of [ɛ] > [ẽ] (after a hypothetical early stage of conformity with the Parisian norm).

29. The high proportion of close [ẽ] for *guêpe* (27.5%) ensures that the difference from *crête*, *crêpe*, *bête* and *tête* is quite significant, although the sample is relatively small (189 forms). In France, the vowel of *guêpe* (ALF Map 672) appears to have had an evolution similar to that of *bête*.

30. A state of bi-dialectalism may endure for a long time, especially through the continuous influx of rural speakers to the cities and the progressive extension of regional standards to surrounding rural communities. The complete loss of regional dialects in Europe is often the result of a deliberate decision by parents not to use them with their children (cf. Vincenz 1974).

31. Conversely when a historical correspondence is limited to a few forms, e.g., that between [œ] and [u] in *gueule ∞ goule*, the variants will likely be interpreted as independent lexical forms and may both co-exist with different meanings. In historical terms, this represents a lexical, rather than a phonetic problem.
N.B. Although it is frequently said that *goule* is a southwestern form – une 'forme basilectale poitevino-saintongeoise' in Hull 1994:193 – Aurembou (1973:392-393) has shown that this is a hereditary form observed in all western Provinces and extending all the way to the East of Paris.

32. Other patterns are not excluded. A regional standard may develop features that are found neither in the dialect nor in the norm.

33. Similar phonological distinctions obtain in all regional dialects and standards of northern France, except those of Picardy. Although the distinction between *mot* and *mots* does not obtain in the eastern Provinces, this only reflects the absence of morphological distinctions between singular and plural nouns; the phonological distinction existed and was noted by Martinet in the pairs *pot* : *peau*.

34. Gueunier *et al.*'s analysis was mostly concerned with those vowels which correspond to Paris word-final [ɛ]. The authors did not take into account their etymological sources (EOF [e] or [ɛ], lengthening, etc.) and explicitly discarded length distinctions (1978:28). The data for the 20th-century Tour standard given here correspond to the dominant patterns I was able to reconstruct from their presentation.

35. Cf. Van den Bussche (1984:52–59) for early observations in western dialects.

36. As shown by Kawaguchi (1994), Edmont's informants frequently provided him with regional-standard rather than dialectal forms. This is the case of *omelette*, for which the eastern dialectal forms [-at], [-ɔt] or [-œt] < Lat. ĬTTA are almost completely missing.

37. GPFC (1930) notes – perhaps mistakenly – *bourrelet* [burle] (Morin 1994a:220*n*32 also mentions *sec*, which appears to be a mistake). The variant [rye] of [ryɛ] for *rouet*, may be a specific development after the glide [ɥ]. Morgan (1975) also gave some isolated forms such as *crochet* (p. 24) or *Recollet* (p. 89). (One should not construe the pronunciation [fosɛ] for *fossé* as a hypercorrection triggered by a hypothetical lowering of [e] to [ɛ]; this is a change of suffix, as shown by the – also masculine – variant [fosɛt].)

38. One would have to assume that the lowering of [e] to [ɛ] in the ending *-et* either took place before the loss of word-final [-t] (when word-final *-é* and *-er* were still pronounced [e]), or resulted from an analogy with its plural form, if it was then [-ɛ] (as in the current Tourangeau dialect).

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