

Louisiana French: French Americas' linguistic Gumbo

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It is well known that Louisiana French contains a good deal of lexical borrowings from Quebec, Caribbean and Acadian dialects. But what of its grammar?

The phrase *Cajun* or

textitAcadian French, often used to designate the non Creole French dialects of the Acadiana parishes suggests a proximity to Acadian French. As we shall see, depending on the regions, it is possible to detect phonological and morphosyntactic influences coming from Quebec and the Caribbean, while still preserving a linguistic unity to Louisiana French. We shall examine several cases where a Quebec or Caribbean influence should be preferred to an Acadian influence, when the latter should not simply be excluded. We shall also examine cases where an Acadian influence is to be seriously considered. As a consequence of these facts, it appears more logical to consider Louisiana French as forming a separate branch of French in the Americas. Such examples of dialects or languages situated half way between two or more sister dialects or languages already exist. Thus, it has been known at least since Meillet that Armenian shares certain innovations with Greek, but others with Indo-Iranian languages (see Martirosyan 2013 for a recent survey of the issue). These mutual influences must have occurred at a time when the three Indo-European branches were distinct (each was undergoing native changes), yet still mutually intelligible to a certain degree. Within Greek itself, it is difficult to construct a tree of dialects that influenced each other (Garrett 2003). Thus, the idea of mutually intelligible dialects that influence each other to a point where one cannot group a dialect with one over another is well established in historical linguistics and we wish to demonstrate that it constitutes the optimal solution to the question of the classification of Louisiana French.