

Dialect contact and the sociolinguistic history of Acadian French

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Since Trudgill's 1986 *Dialects in Contact*, considerable research has addressed questions regarding the kinds of linguistic processes that work on heterogeneous linguistic data; the roles of perceptual salience and relative proportions of variants; and the interplay of social and linguistic factors. Britain (2002) points out that much of this literature has been concerned with phonology, which is arguably still the case. An important question is the extent to which explanations which have received their primary empirical support from the study of phonological change also account for cases of grammatical change.

This presentation introduces a new research project which focuses on systematic comparison of spoken-language data for five varieties of Acadian French which differ considerably in their sociodemographic histories with regard to degree and type of dialect contact. We take the Baie Sainte-Marie variety of southwest Nova Scotia as our baseline: due to dialect isolation across several centuries, it is arguably closest to the variety spoken by Acadian settlers of the New World. By way of contrast, we target varieties whose histories involve shared population movements during the 18th and 19th centuries: those of Chéticamp, Nova Scotia; Cap-aux-Meules, Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Quebec; and L'Anse-à-Canards and Stephenville, Newfoundland. Detailed analysis of sociodemographic data drawn from nominal censuses, cadastral maps, and family genealogies allows us to trace this history. The study targets the language use of speakers born between 1850 and 1900 and speakers born between 1900 and 1930, with corpora constructed from folklore recordings from the mid-20th century and sociolinguistic interviews from the 1970s and 1980s.

In this talk, we present the project methodology along with the quantitative results to date for two variables: choice of first person plural pronoun (*je* vs *on*) and use of the imperfect subjunctive (vs other variants) in subjunctive-selecting contexts.