

Convergence, divergence and the recent history of Acadian French

RUTH KING
York University

Acadian French refers to varieties of French spoken in Atlantic Canada - in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and parts of eastern Quebec - which owe their origins to immigration from the centre-ouest of France during the 17th century. While they share a set of features which make them structurally distinct from Laurentian French, differences among Acadian varieties have been noted from the earliest linguistic studies in the late 19th century. The 20th century saw often dramatic decline in conservative features (e.g. loss of the simple past in most varieties; loss of the traditional 1st person plural *je+verb+ons* in varieties where there has been close contact with supralocal varieties of French), along with innovation triggered by the interplay of linguistic and social factors (e.g. variable reanalysis of the ti Q marker as tu; emergence of P-Stranding in some varieties but not others). Based on comparative variationist and qualitative sociolinguistic analyses, I present evidence concerning the current situation of Acadian French in terms of its relation to Laurentian varieties and in terms of the valorization of local features as new discourses of Acadian identity take hold.