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 1 December 2017
 BLC Fellows' Lecture

“Teaching French listening comprehension and cultural awareness through regional variation”

Outline of project modules

Module	Linguistic features of interest	Sociolinguistic themes explored
What is French? Standard and nonstandard language use in the Francophone world	n/a	Ideology and history of standard French
French in context: Spoken and written codes	Widespread spoken features	Register and medium of communication
Regional variety: <i>Parisian French</i>	Vocalic oppositions [a] vs. [ɑ]; [ɛ̃] vs. [œ̃]	Prestige varieties
Regional variety: <i>French of Sub-Saharan Africa</i>	Vowel harmony	Language ecologies
Regional variety: <i>French of Southern France</i>	e-muet [ə] (schwa) and nasal vowels	Covert prestige and self-perception as a dialect speaker
Regional variety: <i>Canadian French</i>	Vowel length and diphthongization	Speaking a minority language
Regional variety: <i>Louisiana French</i>	Vowel + /r/	Reclaiming a regional variety

Pre-class reading: Louisiana French (excerpt)¹

“In 1968, the Louisiana state legislature established the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL). In order to reestablish the use of French in Louisiana, CODOFIL recruited language instructors from Francophone countries. Many were unwilling or unable to teach local usage. Thus, CODOFIL has been seen by some Louisianais French activists as seeking move Louisiana French closer to a Hexagonal standard. Today, CODOFIL makes efforts to acknowledge the internal diversity of francophone Louisianais populations and their speech. Meanwhile, CODOFIL has also established television and radio programming in French. A vibrant cultural scene contributes to the vitality of the language, with Cajun music playing an important role in its maintenance and diffusion.”

In-class activity 1: Phonetic exploration (French of Southern France / Midi French)

Le premier ministre ira-t-il à Beaulieu?

Le village de Beaulieu est en grand émoi. Le Premier Ministre a en effet décidé de faire étape dans cette commune au cours de sa tournée de la région en fin d'année. Jusqu'ici les seuls titres de gloire de Beaulieu étaient son vin blanc sec, ses chemises en soie, un champion local de course à pied (Louis Garret), quatrième aux jeux olympiques de Berlin en mil neuf cent trente-six, et plus récemment, son usine de pâtes italiennes.

Will the prime minister visit Beaulieu?

The village of Beaulieu is in great turmoil. The Premier Ministre has indeed decided to make a stop in that town during his tour of the region at the end of the year. Up to this point, the only claims to fame of Beaulieu were its dry white wine, its silk shirts, a local running champion (Louis Garret), fourth in the Olympic Games at Berlin in 1936, and, more recently, its Italian pasta factory.²

In-class activity 2: Phonology to orthography (Canadian French)

Michel Tremblay, *Les Belles-sœurs*

Germaine Lauzon— J'sais pus trop... j'étais assez énarvée... Y m'a dit que la compagnie pour qui qu'y travaillait était ben contente que j'aye gagné le million de timbres-primés... que j'étais ben chanceuse... Moé, j'savais pas que c'est dire... J'aurais aimé que ton père soye là... y'aurait pu y parler, lui... J'sais même pas si j'y ai dit merci!

¹ Information source: Lyche 1996.

² Translation by Elyse Ritchey.

*Germaine Lauzon: I can't remember. I was so excited. He told me the company he works for was real happy I'd won the million stamps. That I was real lucky, Me, I was speechless. I wish your father had been here, he could have talked to him. I don't even know if I thanked him.*³

In-class activity 3: Languages in contact (French of Subsaharan Africa)

La fourmi et le roi Salomon

- Sire, répondit-elle, ce n'est ni par impolitesse, ni par désobéissance que je ne suis pas venue comme les autres, mais tout simplement, je m'occupe à quelque chose qui me tient particulièrement à cœur : je veux déplacer cette dune de sable que vous voyez là !

The ant and King Solomon

- Sire, she responded, it is neither due to impoliteness nor to disobedience that I did not come like the others did, but very simply, I am busy with something very close to my heart: I want to move that sand dune that you see there!⁴

In-class activity 4: Synthesis and reflection (Louisiana French)

Interview: Rocky McKeon

Intervieweur: Pourtant t'as appris le français de quelque façon.

RK: J'ai commencé à l'école. Et, dans, dans high school. Et puis j'ai été au collège et puis j'ai été à l'autre bord au Belgium pour apprendre français. Et après ça j'étais, qu'en fait après parler comme quelqu'un de là-bas. Et j'ai commencé à changer mon français - je parle comme ma famille.

Intervieweur: Ton retour, est-ce que ça a changé quelque chose pour toi, le fait d'avoir été en Europe et de revenir...?

RK: Je pouvais parler français. Mais c'était, c'était pas trop aisé parce que je parlais comme l'autre bord, je parlais pas comme la Louisiane. Ça fait quand j'essayais de parler français avec ma famille c'est, j'avais de la misère.

³ Tremblay, Michel. *Les Belles-sœurs*. Alexander Street Press, 2017. <http://solomon.nadr.alexanderstreet.com/cgi-bin/asp/philo/navigate.pl?nadr.548> (translator information not given).

⁴ Translation by Elyse Ritchey.

Interview: Rocky McKeon

Interviewer: But you learned French somehow.

RK: I started at school. And in, in high school. And then I was at the university and then I was over there in Belgium to learn French. And after that I was, in fact I was after speaking like someone from over there. And I started to change my French- I speak like my family.

Interviewer: Your return, did it change something for you, the fact of having been in Europe and coming back?

RK: I was able to speak French. But it was, it wasn't too easy because I spoke like over there; I didn't speak like Louisiana. That made it so that when I tried to speak French with my family, I had a rough time.⁵

References

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⁵ Translation by Elyse Ritchey.