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Intergenerational pattern of interference and internally-motivated changes in Cajun French*

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We examine the variable use of locative prepositions in Cajun French, adding two dimensions to existing studies: real-time evidence, adding a diachronic descriptive perspective, and a methodological tool, measuring the degree of exposure to French (MDI). The goal of this paper is to determine the origins and the directions of language change within the system of locative prepositions. The majority of the interviews are taken from the Cajun French/English corpus, conducted by Dubois in 1997. Our results indicate that the restricted speakers use an array of innovative forms in all locative categories. Systemic and extralinguistic evidence show that some of these forms represent interference-induced innovations, while others are internally-motivated innovations stimulated in an indirect way by language contact. A model of change emerges where the older restricted speakers introduce changes that are gradually adopted by the following generations, regardless of the extent to which their linguistic ability in Cajun French is diminished.

Cajun French manifests variable usage of prepositions, as do all varieties of French. Some of them coincide with the standard model (*chez ma mère* "to my mother's"), while others are long-standing local features within the community (*aller dans le Canada* "go to Canada", *venir à la Louisiane* "come to Louisiana"). Furthermore, there are changes that can be attributed to attrition(*aller à ma mère* "going to my mother's", *il travaillait sur Lafayette* "he worked in Lafayette"), although no empirical evidence is provided. In this paper, we examine locative prepositions in Cajun French, adding two dimensions to existing commentary on this subject. First, we replace the synchronic descriptive perspective by real-time evidence in order to detect true language change over time and to distinguish local Cajun French norms or ENDONORMS within the community from standard forms or EXONORMS coming from outside the community. Endonorms are linguistic innovations originating within the Cajun French community (e.g. the use of *dans* before state names and countries), whereas exonorms are adoptions from the surrounding varieties of language (e.g. the use of *en* as a locative preposition by the young generation or the use of *au* before buildings is strongly correlated to language contact). Second, we introduce a methodological tool measuring the degree of exposure to French. This index, called the Market Dialect Index or MDI, allows us to show the influence of language restriction on the usage of locative prepositions. Our work is inspired by Mougeon and Beniak's study of locative prepositions in Ottawa French, Canada, in which interference is seen as the intersystemic equivalent of simplification (1991, p. 219). We will show that some locative forms in Cajun French are a clear result of overt interference[2] while other forms are stimulated indirectly by language contact.

We will consider four locative categories, each of them corresponding to different grammatical aspects of location in Cajun French.

1. Prepositions expressing movement to or indicating the location in a building (*à l'hôpital* "at/to the hospital", *à l'école* "at/to school", *au cinéma* "at/to the movies") or a room in a building (*à la cuisine* "in/to the kitchen", *au salon* "in/to the living room").
2. Prepositions expressing movement to or location at a person's dwelling or place of work (*chez ma mère* "at/to my mother's", *au médecin* "at/to the doctor's").
3. Prepositions expressing movement to or location in cities (*à Baton Rouge* "in/to Baton Rouge", *à la Nouvelle Orléans* "in/to New Orleans").
4. Prepositions expressing movement to or location in countries (*j'ai été dans le Canada* "I went to Canada", *j'habite à la Louisiane* "I live in Louisiana").

We will describe the use of locative prepositions by Cajun speakers from five generations. Our analysis will show that there is a strong connection between attritional

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[1] Attrition is defined as a person's diminished linguistic ability (Andersen, 1982, p. 83).

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[2] The term 'overt interference' applies to a qualitative development in the minority language.

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forms and young age and restriction (a low degree of exposure to French). Restricted speakers introduce most of the attritional forms and the young generation is responsible for the production of almost half of the attritional forms and has difficulty following the linguistic conditioning for *à* together with motion verbs in some contexts. Both factors play a role in the generational pattern found in Cajun French: the restricted speakers of the previous generation introduce a new form that both fluent and restricted speakers of the following generation adopt. The young generation as a whole thus embraces all the changes introduced by earlier generations; they are not the true innovators of these new forms, but rather act as the adopters.

Corpus

The data for this study are taken from the Cajun French/Cajun English corpus that was drawn from two sources. Many interviews were collected by Dubois in 1997, this first database representing 121 speakers, who can be divided by age, gender, locality (Avoyelles, Lafourche, St. Landry, Vermillion) and, more importantly, linguistic ability. The interviews consist of three different recording sessions conducted by three different interviewers. Each interview is made up of approximately 40 minutes of English and 110 minutes of Cajun French. The second source consists of 10 interviews with Cajuns born just before or at the beginning of the 20th century, originally conducted by the researchers Gold, Louder and Waddell, who were the directors of a socio-geographic project financed by the Ford Foundation in 1975. The entire corpus of Cajun French includes 131 Cajun French speakers from five generations, representing almost a century of Cajun French: (i) the monolingual ancestors (4 speakers, all women, born between 1890 and 1901); (ii) the French-dominant elders (7 speakers, 5 men and 2 women, born between 1905 and 1915) and the bilingual elders (8 speakers, 2 men and 6 women, born between 1908 and 1914); (iii) the old generation (32 speakers, 16 men and 16 women, born between 1916 and 1933); (iv) the middle-aged generation (40 speakers, 20 men and 20 women, born between 1934 and 1951); and (v) the young generation (40 speakers, 20 men and 20 women, born between 1953 and 1978).

The ancestors from our corpus (1890–1901) never learned English. Only one of them briefly attended elementary school. Some of these individuals learned to write with the help of their mother or other members of their family. Following the footsteps of their parents, the ancestors worked all of their lives in the fields. All the members of their family, their children and their friends spoke Cajun French. Their variety of Cajun French represents the oldest oral representation of the language that we have. It gives us access to the local norms that were vigorous in the Cajun community during a time when the vitality of Cajun French was still at its zenith.

The elders with French as the dominant language (1905–1915) learned English relatively late in life and preferred to speak French. They did not attend school (in English) for a very long period of time (2–5 years maximum) and their attendance was often sporadic, especially for the male speakers, who at a very young age had to help their fathers during the harvest. One speaker from the old generation, Abel, was practically monolingual and cannot even write his own name. Those individuals that did not become farmers worked in either the fishing industry or for one of the oil companies. Their spouses and all of their children spoke French. The bilingual elders (1908–1914) had a more profound knowledge of English. Some of them spoke English very well because they attended school for a longer time, especially the female members of this group. For others, mainly the male speakers, the presence of English speakers in their family environment or in the locality where they grew up favored an early acquisition of English. All of these speakers knew how to read and write in English. In spite of their abilities in English, several of these speakers used exclusively French in their daily life. They spoke French with all of the members of their family and the majority of them have raised their children speaking Cajun French. However, when compared to the Cajun French of the eldest children of the old generation, the younger children do not speak the language as well. The bilingual old generation constitutes the first group of Cajuns who speak English in our corpus. Some of these speakers make use of English loan words contrary to the practice of the elders with French as the dominant language.

The old generation of the sociolinguistic corpus was born between 1916 and 1933. They, more than the preceding generation, were intensively subjected to the economic and social pressures of English. Without exception, these individuals learned English while very young and mastered it perfectly. During the 1930s, Louisiana's economic and linguistic policies had a considerable impact on Cajun communities. Notably, the start of compulsory education began in 1916 and the abolishment of French instruction occurred in 1929. The Cajuns quickly learned the new linguistic rule imposed by the Anglophone majority: only the English language will lead to work and to a better salary. Contrary to their predecessors in the Cajun community, the old speakers used English in all the situations of daily life outside the family network. For those Cajuns who married Anglophones, the language of family life became English rather than French. Almost all of the old speakers raised their children using both languages but the youngest children generally responded in English. The old generation, more than earlier generations, was profoundly subjected to the consequences of linguistic imperialism. Their first

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language became devalued and their variety of English was ridiculed.

After World War II, several changes (e.g. the expansion of education, the decline in agriculture, the development of the oil industry, etc.) transformed South Louisiana, particularly the economic situation on which the Cajun community depended. The middle-aged Cajuns (born between 1934 and 1951) grew up during the post-war period, cultivating the financial and social benefits of the changes taking place. They were conscious very early of the discredit attributed to Cajun French and the stigma attached to the Cajun culture. Not surprisingly, they quickly assimilated into the Anglophone American culture. The majority of these speakers were raised using both languages. They preferred to speak English with their brothers and sisters and used both languages with their parents. As adults, they chose to speak English at home and to raise their children only in English. Much more educated than their parents, some speakers being college graduates, their variety of English resembles the English spoken in non-Cajun communities. Their linguistic behavior reflects the many pressures directed at the Cajun community to conform to the behavior and the attitudes of the dominant group. This generation promptly rejected the usage of French in favor of English.

During the 1960s, the number of Cajun French speakers rapidly declined and the cultural assimilation was well underway. Ironically, it is at this time that the Cajun culture began to be celebrated. This movement went on to greatly influence the political agenda of Louisiana. The state adopted a series of laws aimed at encouraging the usage and preservation of the French language. Louisiana declared itself bilingual (although French is not mentioned in the constitution), the instruction of French as a second language expanded, and an international network was built with the goal of developing relations with other Francophone countries. The political elite in charge of promoting the renaissance of French was composed of white Francophiles who were monolingual English speakers. This elite chose academic French as the language of instruction rather than one of the local varieties, wrongly thinking that only the knowledge of the academic model would permit interaction with Francophone countries (Ancelet, 1988; Henry, 1990).

This renaissance strongly inspired the youngest speakers of our corpus (born between 1953 and 1978). They are proud of being Cajun now that the Cajun identity has become not only positive but also desirable. They also benefit from the economic development of industries (oil, manufacturing, and tourism) in Louisiana. However, this cultural renaissance did not help to impede the decline of Cajun French, since its usage is no longer considered necessary from an economic or identifying point of view (Dubois and Melançon, 1997, p. 86). The Cajuns born at the end of the 1950s no longer speak French. Moreover, the knowledge of academic French by a minority of young people in immersion programs is too weak to qualify them as speakers. It is important to realize that the young Cajun French speakers that make up our sample represent the exception that confirms the norm. The majority of them learned Cajun French because their grandparents raised them or because they grew up in the middle of a compact social network very isolated from the large population centers such as New Orleans and Baton Rouge. Although they may be bilingual, these young speakers interact almost entirely in English with their parents and members of their immediate family. They are conscious of being the last native speakers in their community and they realize that their variety of French shows, more than the French of earlier generations, important signs of linguistic attrition (Dubois, 2001). Even the most fluent speakers from the younger generation do not possess the older or the middle-aged speakers' facility in expressing themselves in Cajun French.

Fluency and attrition in Cajun French

Sustained pressure from English as the dominant language within small Cajun communities resulted in a significant number of speakers who were once fluent in French but who no longer use it or use the language infrequently. There are also plenty of speakers who never really mastered French either because of their early exposure to English or because of insufficient exposure to French. In order to be able to determine the effects of a diminished linguistic ability on the use of locative prepositions, we created a methodological index using Bourdieu's notion of the linguistic marketplace (see Sankoff and Laberge, 1978, p. 239; Chambers, 1995, pp.177–185), which corresponds in our case to exposure to French, that is, the acquisition or use of French as symbolic capital. A weak exposure relates to a diminished language ability while a strong exposure signals a robust language ability. Each speaker of the Cajun French/Cajun English corpus was assigned a MDI value, according to the degree to which he or she has access to the French linguistic marketplace. This placement is based on the assessment of their life histories by the research team who interviewed the speakers and collected the data. To establish the MDI, a procedure similar to that used for other sociolinguistic French corpora (Poplack, 1997) was followed. The degree of exposure was calculated on the basis of the cumulative scores for the measures presented in Figure 1.

For each language and education measure, French only was given the highest score, whereas English only was attributed the lowest one. The use of both languages fell in between. Regarding the linguistic histories of spouses and parents as well as the professional usage of French, we used a measuring system ranging from 0.1 (the weakest) to 0.15 (the strongest). A detailed number of eight categories of degree of exposure naturally emerged from the

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1) Reported initial language learning experience. Speakers grew up in a home where French was spoken either exclusively or most of the time (high score), one in which both French and English were spoken (medium score) or one in which English was spoken exclusively or most of the time (low score).
2) Reported language used more frequently with members of the nuclear family, i.e. at home with spouses and children, if applicable.
3) Reported language used more frequently with members of the extended family, i.e. parents and grandparents as well as older relatives (aunts and uncles).
4) Reported language used most frequently in routine interactions such as at work or with members of the community (friends).
5) Reported history of French background with respect to an individual's education, e.g. French and English as the medium of instruction versus English only for the older generation, French learned or not learned at school for the younger generation.
6) Reported language histories of the spouses and parents: e.g. they were raised in English and never learned French, they grew up mostly speaking English but learned French, they have spoken French all their life, they learned the school-taught variety of French or they are non-Cajun but native French speakers.
7) Professional usage of French, e.g. radio announcer, French teacher, Cajun French musician or singer, reporter for local newspaper or Cajun French advocate for local or wider organizations.

Figure 1. Measures for MDI (Market Dialect Index).

statistical analyses. They can be roughly divided into three levels of exposure for statistical purposes, labeled 'high', 'medium', and 'low'. Subsequently, this index was added to the database as an independent factor.

The MDI allows us to distinguish the inherent members of the Cajun French community from other speakers situated at the two extreme ends of the scale measuring exposure to French. Individuals who are at the midpoint of the MDI scale are fluent in Cajun French: they learned it from their parents who had this variety as their first language, they also speak French on a regular basis with members of their family and sometimes speak French at work or with their friends. Their way of speaking reflects the community norm. The fluent Cajun French speakers who also were exposed to academic French taught at school or who make professional usage of French (e.g. teachers or radio hosts) received the highest MDI value, they are called the achievers.

The speakers with a low MDI are considered restricted speakers rather than semi-speakers. They, like the other speakers, use Cajun French in various social and cultural interactions with the appropriate vocabulary and they are linguistically capable of talking about hobbies, their future and abstract themes. The restricted speakers in the sample are fluent. They may have lost some linguistic features because of their low degree of exposure, but what they display linguistically conforms basically to the local norms. As such, their speech does not present "gaps in their ability to communicate" (such as being unable to talk about hypothetical events), nor is it "overtly characterized as strange by the [fluent] community itself", linguistic attributes that characterized the semi-speakers in Rottet's study (1995, p. 72). Being 'out of practice' was the common claim of restricted speakers to the interviewer. What being 'out of practice' means is not speaking French at home, at work, in routine daily interactions with people outside of one's extended family, or having no one else, except for older relatives, to talk to. Again, recall that the younger generation is characterized by a lesser level of fluency. Unlike the semi-speakers, our restricted speakers can talk about hypothetical events but they do so in a less complex structural way.

The subsample used for our study is made up of 79 interviews in Cajun French from the Dubois collection conducted by an in-group Cajun speaker from each parish and 7 interviews from Gold, Louder and Waddell, totaling 86 speakers from three parishes. Approximately 130 hours of speech production were analyzed. Since we are particularly interested in focusing on linguistic interference, we focused on fluent speakers with a medium MDI value and the speakers who received a low value, those considered restricted speakers. A total of 5187 tokens were coded using the statistical package Statview. Cross-tabulations of factor groups were examined to check for potential and artificial effects between social factors such as age and degree of exposure.

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Table 1. *Locative prepositions as local norms within the Cajun speech community.*

	Ancestors		French Elders		Bilingual Elders		Old		Middle-aged		Young	
Buildings												
À l'école												
1344 63%	69	65%	68	62%	100	64%	356	64%	427	64%	324	61%
DANS l'école												
778 37%	37	35%	41	38%	56	36%	197	36%	244	36%	203	39%
Persons												
CHEZ ma mère												
323 77%	40	93%	26	79%	37	77%	116	85%	62	68%	42	62%
AU docteur												
71 17%	2	5%	7	21%	5	10%	15	11%	23	25%	19	28%
SUR ma mère												
25 6%	1	2%	0	0%	6	13%	5	4%	6	7%	7	10%
Cities												
À Eunice												
1478 87%	72	84%	102	77%	110	93%	491	89%	380	84%	323	90%
AU Baton Rouge												
220 13%	14	16%	31	23%	8	7%	65	11%	70	16%	35	10%
Countries												
DANS la Louisiane												
182 58%	5	50%	14	67%	17	77%	70	62%	42	49%	34	52%
À LA Louisiane												
111 35%	5	50%	7	33%	3	14%	33	29%	41	48%	22	34%
EN Louisiane												
23 7%	0	0%	0	0%	2	9%	10	9%	2	2%	9	14%

Local norms in Cajun French

Locative prepositions are frequently produced; they also have a very broad meaning and are multifunctional. Variation between prepositional forms was very frequent before the 20th century and still is within vernacular French. Table 1 shows the distribution of forms within the four locative categories. These forms represent the local norms in Cajun French: they are used by all generations of speakers and neither language attrition, nor the level of education in English, condition their production.

Before expressions referring to buildings, the forms *à* (*à la/au/à l'/aux*) and *dans* "at/to" and "in" are in stable variation across all generations of Cajun speakers. Grammarians have suggested that the variable use of *à* and *dans* could be related to contextual factors such as the type of verb (static versus motion) and the presence of determiners. However, it is important to realize that the English system of locative prepositions differs from the French system. In English, the prepositions *to* (*à* in French) and *in* (*dans* in French) are in complementary distribution conditioned by the type of verb. *To* only appears after motion verbs whereas *in* occurs after static verbs. No such strict rule exists in French, even for the academic variety. The prepositions *à* and *dans* can be used in both contexts (*j'habite au collège*, *je vais au collège* "I live in college, I go to college"). This is also true for locative prepositions before persons (*je suis chez le docteur*, *je vais chez le docteur* "I am at the doctor's, I go to the doctor's") and cities (*je suis à Baton Rouge*, *je vais à Baton Rouge* "I am in Baton Rouge, I go to Baton Rouge"). What is a rule in English is more of a tendency within many varieties of French.

In Cajun French, the type of verb slightly conditions the variability between these two forms. The preposition *à* appears more often with motion verbs (63% or 832/1319) whereas *dans* occurs more frequently with static verbs (73% or 548/752).

(1) Je connaissais pas l'anglais du tout quand j'ai été **à** l'école. (Marguerite – 1: A)
"I didn't know English at all when I went to school."

(2) Moi, j'ai été élevé aller **à** l'église et mon père et ma mère avaient beaucoup confiance à leur religion. (Rose – 29: S)

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"I was raised to go to church, and my father and my mother had much faith in their religion."

(3) À Marksville, j'ai commencé **dans** l'elementary school à Marksville, là j'étais dans l'high school à Marksville. (Eugène – 8: A)
"In Marksville, I started in the elementary school in Marksville, then I was in the high school in Marksville."

(4) Plus ou moins **dans** les restaurants, ils ont un special. (Eugène – 2: A)
"More or less in the restaurants, they have a special."

The most common form used to express movement to or location at a person's dwelling or someone's place of work is *chez*.[3] Its usage is in decline within the middle-aged and young generations that present a larger repertoire of forms.

(5) Mais un seul temps je parle en français c'est quand je vas voir ma maman ou je vas **chez** mes voisins. (Roger – 9: A)
"But only one time do I speak in French, that's when I go to see my mother or I go to my neighbors' place."

(6) Alors, vraiment, j'ai eu une année de, de vivre **chez** moi toute seule. (Marguerite – 3: A)
"Now, really, I had a year of, of living at home all by myself."

The variant *au* is also found in Cajun French but its usage is restricted to certain expressions, notably professions (*aller au ministre, aller au doctor*, *aller au traiteur* "go to the minister's, go to the doctor's, go to the healer's"), like it is in popular French (Grevisse, 1980, p. 2284).

(7) On a voulu le ramasser, aller le ramener **au** docteur. (Anne – 7: A)
"We wanted to pick him up, to bring him to the doctor."

The form *sur* in Cajun French appears to be the long-standing vernacular variant of *chez*. Corroborating evidence of this very old variation pattern can be found by looking at its historical use. *Sur* is attested as a morphosyntactical variant of *chez* between the 14th and the16th centuries in France, but by the 17th century, *sur* is rejected in favor of *chez*. However, *sur* as an alternative to *chez* managed to survive in many vernacular varieties of French such as in Quebec French and Cajun French. Its usage does not appear to be a calque from English.

(8) WELL, on va sur ma sœur, euh, qui reste à, à Tickfaw, â reste en haut de CAMERON là euh, LOUISIANA, et on va **sur** son frère. (Eugène – 5: A)
"Well, we go to my sister's, uh, who stays in, in Tickfaw, she stays north of Cameron there uh, Louisiana, and we go to my brother's."

(9) Il fallait quelqu'un achète du whiskey, la liqueur, et l'apportait à eux-autres, il fallait eusse va boire ça **sur** eux-autres là, sur le RESERVATION. (Eugène – 18: A)
"Somebody had to buy whiskey, liquor, and to bring it to them, they had to drink it at their place, on the reservation."

In both standard French and Cajun French, *à* is the most commonly used form for city names. Formations of *au* and *à la* together with city names consisting of more than one word are also part of the Cajun French repertoire. Table 1 shows that this variation between *à* and *au* is stable over time.

(10) Elle reste devant l'hôpital, là, devant l'hôpital **à** Marksville. (Eugène – 6: A)
"She stays in front of the hospital, there, in front of the hospital in Marksville."

(11) A reste à alle est restée dans l'Mississippi mais elle a juste déménagé **à** Baton Rouge. (Annette – 30: A)
"She stays in she stayed in Mississippi, but she has just moved to Baton Rouge."

(12) Ça nous, nous amenait **à** Basile, ou **à** Crowley pour les bals, et ça nous espérait. (Ruth – 9: S)
"They brought us, us to Basile, or to Crowley for the balls, and they were waiting for us."

According to grammarians (Grevisse, 1980, p. 627), *au* and *à la* are "usually" selected before city names determined by an adjective or a complement (as in *à la Nouvelle Orléans* "to New Orleans"). In Cajun French, this usage applies to what we have called compound structures (45%),[4] which comprise proper names (*au Jean Lafitte*, *au Pierre Part* "to Jean Lafitte, to Pierre Part"), common names with adjectives (*à la Ville Platte*, *au Baton Rouge* "to Ville Platte/Baton Rouge") and surface places as city names (*au Canal Yankee*, *au Lac Charles* "to Canal Yankee/Lac Charles"). *Au* (or *à la* if the noun is feminine) also appears frequently (55%) in Cajun French before single city names such as Galliano in Lafourche parish (*rester/aller au Galliane* "live/go to

[3] We have included locutions such *as à la maison/dans la maison* "at home" in the building category (e.g. *Tous ces là qui étaient chez Silty dans la maison* "all of them who were at Silty's at home", *j'ai commencé à avoir des boyfriends, ç'a venu à la maison* "I started to have boyfriends, they came at home") since it was too difficult to distinguish the semantic function of several occurrences of *à la maison/dans la maison* "to/in the house vs to/at someone's house" i.e., indicating the location in a building or location at a person's dwelling.

[4] In the case of cities, the form *à* is used with non-compound morphemes. This category represents 76% of the city nouns.

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Galliane"). One explanation is that since most of these places started as small localities they were considered surface places, therefore requiring the usage of the definite article (assuming an underlying construction such as *au port de cotton* "to the port of cotton" for *au Cottonport* and *au village/au hameau de Galliane* "to the village/hamlet of Galliane" for *au Galliane*).

(13) C'est son frère, Marvin euh, c'est son frère, il est **à** la Pointe à la Hache. On a été là euh à'près deux fois, depuis là on y avait été, il a déménagé, et on a retourné après ça**, à** la Pointe à la Hache. (Eugène – 5: A)
"That's his brother, Marvin uh, that's his brother, he stays in Pointe à la Hache. We've been there, uh, maybe two times, since we have been there, he moved, and we came back after that, to Pointe à la Hache."

(14) J'ai commencé dans l'école, TEACH **au** Simmesport. Et elle donne le cours au Simmesport, au SACRED HEART et **au** Plaucheville. (Vincent – 2: A)
"I've started school, teach in Simmesport. And she teaches in Simmesport, at Sacred Heart and in Plaucheville."

Dans before country names is the most frequent local norm in Cajun French. It appears before masculine or consonant-initial names (*dans le Canada* "in Canada"), before feminine country names (*dans la France* "in France"), as well as before U.S. states (*dans le Texas* "in Texas"). The latter usage reflects a tendency also reported for modern French by Spang-Hanssen (1963, pp. 165, 166). Historically, *dans* was an accepted alternative before country nouns (Grevisse, 1980, p. 632), but its usage became restricted to departments or regions in France and in Europe (*dans le Poitou* "in Poitou"). The ancestors use *à* and *dans*; the elders and the old speakers favor the use of *dans* while the restricted speakers from the younger generations reduce its use favoring other forms.

(15) Moi j'aime à cuire, j'aime à rôder **dans** la Louisiane. (Marguerite – 4: A)
"I like to cook, I like to stroll in Louisiana."

(16) Ses filles qui demeurent **dans** le Texas l'a téléphoné. (Marguerite – 19: A)
"Her daughters who stay in Texas called her."

The origin of *au* and *à la* goes back to when the definite article (*l'/le/la/les*) became more and more popular in French in the 15th and 16th centuries and old-fashioned forms with EN (*en l', en le, en la, en les*) were replaced by the *à* forms in many contexts (Fahlin, 1942, pp. 210–212). The frequent use of *au* and *à la* in Cajun French, especially by the ancestors and the French elders, suggests that these forms were still commonly used in France in the 18th century. As for the building category, the choice between *à* and *dans* is, as pointed out above, linguistically conditioned: *à* is more frequently found after motion verbs whereas *dans* usually follows static verbs. Interestingly, the conditioning rule for *à* and *dans* is strongly maintained by each generation of Cajun speakers. Once again, this is a tendency, not a rule as it is in English, since both forms can appear in both contexts in French (*je suis au Canada*, *je vais au Canada* "I am in Canada, I go to Canada").

(17) On les ramenait **à la** France. (Omer – 3: A)
"We brought them back to France."

(18) J'ai fait des études à LSU et **au** Canada et en France et BELGIUM. (Marguerite – 1: A)
"I studied at LSU and in Canada and in France and Belgium."

The form *en*, which is the norm in standard French before feminine or vowel-initial names of countries or regions, is particularly interesting in Cajun French. *En* is not found within the generation of the ancestors and elders, but appears in the speech of a few speakers who were exposed to standard French, notably the younger ones who learned it in high school. The only locative context where *en* is produced by all speakers is within the expression *en ville* ("in town").

(19) Ils demeuraient, les grands-parents sont demeurés **en** France. Ils sont venus de la France en Amérique. (Marguerite – 2: A)
"They stayed, the grandparents stayed in France. They came from France to America."

Although restricted speakers use local norms, they sometimes behave differently with regard to the *à* and *dans* conditioning rule. The tendency for the older and middle-aged restricted speakers is to follow the rule established by the fluent speakers. They use *à* more often with motion verbs for buildings (68% and 71%) and persons (100% and 89%); they use *dans* with static verbs for buildings (70% and 77%) and countries (70% and 75%). One exception to all these tendencies is the use of *à la* with countries which is employed with static verbs by all restricted speakers (71% and 65%), contrary to the old fluent Cajun speakers' usage of *à la* with motion verbs in this context (57% and 60%). The young restricted speakers are even more inconsistent: they follow the conditioning rule for *dans* with buildings (69%) and with countries (75%) but do not obey the rule for *à*, using it more often with static verbs before buildings (55%).

Innovations due to attrition

In Cajun French, several other prepositional forms appear at a different degree of frequency within the locative context. In the case of buildings, we find the use of

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the local norm *à* without the article and three other prepositional forms: *au*, *en*, and *sur*.

(20) Je vas jamais oublier quand nous-autres a été **à** magasin icitte, asteur c'est GRAND ISLE VALUE SUPERMARKET. (Anaïs – 19: L)
"I'll never forget when we went to the store here, today it's Grand Isle Value Supermarket."

(21) Quand moi j'allais là-bas, mon grand-mère parlait tout le temps en français: <Euh, tu vas aller au, euh: au le, **au** boutique pour moi?> (Normand – 2: S)
"When I went there, my grandmother spoke in French all the time: <Uh, will you go to, uh: to the, to the store for me?>"

(22) Tu vois: j'ai pris deux classes **en** collège, o.k., mais: euh: j'appris le langue écrit et un petit peu lire. (Thomas – 5: L)
"You see: I took two classes in college, o.k., but: uh: I learned the written language and a bit of reading."

(23) Elle a des, elle a des catins, je vas te montrer **sur** la chambre, il n'a pas rien qui manque. (Claire – 21: A)
"She has some, she has some dolls, I'll show you into her room, there is nothing missing."

(24) I y a le week-end de le FRENCH FOOD FESTIVAL, moi, je travaille dans un de les bars parce que mon parrain, mon oncle, Red Whitney Reed, î a tout le temps été le, il travaillait sur le, **sur** le bar pour le FAIR. (Philippe – 20/21: L)
"There is the weekend of the French Food Festival, I work in one of the bars because my godfather, my uncle, Red Whitney Reed, he has always been the, he worked at the, at the bar for the Fair."

The prepositions *à*, *en* and *dans* are found with persons.

(25) Pauvre bête, î pouvait pas voir, il va là-bas à, **à** mon grand-mère, il visitait, il pouvait pas voir si c'était: c'était noir le soir. (Jonathan – 18: S)
"Poor thing, he couldn't see, he goes over there to, to my grandmother's, he visited, he couldn't see if it was: it was dark at night."

(26) Eusse pourraient pas dire qu'est-ce qui était WRONG et â l'a amené **en** traiteur. (Guillaume – 29: L)
"They could not say what was wrong, and she brought him to the healer."

(27) On a été pour mardi gras l'année passée, on était seize qu'a été et euh on a écouté **dans** Fred's, î jouent, c'est un CAJUN BAND. (Colette – 14: A)
"We went for Mardi Gras last year, we were sixteen that went and uh we listened at Fred's, they play, it's a cajun band."

With cities we find the forms *dans*, *en* and *sur*.

(28) J'étais née **dans** le, euh, Nouvelle Orléans, mais ma grand-mère et ma grand-père m'a: m'a élevée, et mon papa, mais mon papa, tu vois, mon papa était après travailler tout le temps. (Anaïs – 19: L)
"I was born in, uh, New Orleans, but my grandmother and my grandfather, they've: they've raised me, and my father, but my father, you see, my father was working all the time."

(29) Il n'a le cochon de lait [festival]. **En** Mansura. (Francine – 14: A)
"There is the Cochon de Lait [festival]. In Mansura."

(30) Et MOM restait sur OLD MANSURA ROAD. **Sur** Cocoville. (Constance – 8: A)
"And mom stayed on Old Mansura Road. In Cocoville."

The forms *à* used without article and *au* when no article (*à* + *le* = *au*) is needed are produced with country names as well as with U.S. state names.

(31) Et là ils m'ont envoyé **à** Colorado. (Joachim – 4: A)
"And then they sent me to Colorado."

(32) Ouais, j'ai été à OVERSEAS, j'ai été à, **à** euh SWEDEN, **à** FINLAND et Stockholm, j'ai été là pour trente jours dessus un, un CRUISE de bateau. (Normand – 19: S)
"Yes, I have been overseas, I have been in, in uh Sweden, in Finland and Stockholm, I have been there for thirty days on, on a cruise."

(33) J'aimerais aller **au** la France, SAME place j'veux aller. (Rachelle – 11: S)
"I would like to go to France, the same place I'd like to go to."

(34) Le langue est le même langue, même le monde qui parle anglais **au** ENGLAND c'est pas le même anglais qui nous-autres parlent. (Thomas – 3: L)
"The language is the same language, even the people who speak English in England, it's not the same English we speak."

Table 2 shows all the forms found in all locative contexts. With the exception of *à* before countries, which represents the most frequently used preposition (32%), the young Cajun speakers are responsible for more than half of all these new forms (53%), the middle-aged speakers produce 28% of them.

Table 3 summarizes the fluent and restricted speakers' usage of these forms. Leaving aside the case of *à* before countries for the moment, we can see that the restricted speakers introduce them. Within the older generation, there are few tokens in some locative contexts and the restricted speakers generally produce most of them. The distinction between fluent and restricted speakers in the middle-aged generation is not as clear-cut since both

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Table 2. *Locative prepositions as innovative forms within the Cajun speech community.*

	Ancestors	French Elders	Bilingual Elders	Old	Middle-aged	Young
Buildings						
À école						
57 36%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	4 7%	24 42%	29 51%
AU école						
66 42%	0 0%	0 0%	4 6%	11 17%	19 29%	32 48%
EN école						
27 17%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	11 41%	16 59%
SUR l'école						
8 5%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	3 37%	5 63%
Persons						
À ma mère						
70 86%	0 0%	0 0%	7 10%	11 16%	18 26%	34 49%
EN/DANS ma mère						
11 14%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 9%	1 9%	9 82%
Cities						
DANS Eunice						
136 75%	1 7%	2 1%	3 2%	26 19%	34 25%	70 51%
EN/SUR Eunice						
46 25%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	16 35%	5 11%	25 54%
Countries						
À Louisiane						
168 85%	0 0%	6 4%	13 8%	55 33%	58 35%	35 21%
AU Louisiane						
30 15%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	10 33%	20 67%

Key: Percentages through the generations are calculated for the total of each variant because of the low number of occurrences of innovative forms.

Table 3. *Usage of innovative forms within prepositional categories split as a function of speaker MDI.*

	Building	Person	City	Country AU	Country À
Old					
Fluent	30	20	38	0	50
Restricted	70	80	62	100	50
Middle-aged					
Fluent	53	33	68	14	43
Restricted	47	67	32	86	57
Young					
Fluent	38	51	17	10	54
Restricted	62	49	83	90	46

groups use a similar number of forms in some locative contexts. With the exception of the person category, the younger generation presents a pattern similar to the previous generations, the restricted speakers produce a high number of these forms. In the case of buildings, half of the occurrences (e.g. *à école*) appear in a context which requires no article in English (to school) and the other half is produced in a context which necessitates an article (to the school).

Unlike most of the forms, *à* with countries is not conditioned by the MDI, both fluent and restricted speakers use this preposition and they do so across

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generations. We found six such occurrences in the speech of the elders who have French as their dominant language but no occurrences were found in the speech of the ancestors. When we examine in detail all occurrences of *à* with countries, we find that the elders and old speakers frequently produce this form with U.S. state names (*à Texas*, *à Mississippi*), whereas in standard French, the country rule is applied (*au Texas*, *au Mississippi*).

The behavior of restricted speakers

Our restricted speakers' lesser ability in Cajun French is not pronounced enough to cut them off from the vernacular. They master the local norms of the locative system. They are not left with a reduced system; in fact they exhibit a larger repertoire of forms. What the locative system of the restricted speakers suffers from is a loss of structural integrity (Mougeon and Beniak, 1991). They depart from the conservative norm in two different ways. First, they do not always respect the normative relationship between forms and categories of location. For example, *dans* should only be used before countries and buildings in Cajun French, never with cities or persons. Second, restricted speakers do not always follow the linguistic constraints which rule the usage of local norms (King and Nadasdi, 1996). While fluent speakers limit the usage of some forms to specific linguistic environments (e.g. type of verbs), restricted ones show greater variability between environments or simply do not obey the internal rules.[5]

According to Mougeon, Nadasdi and Rehner (this volume), who studied locative prepositions in Ontario French, Canada, one has to determine the source of innovations produced by restricted speakers. These innovations can be a result of interference from English or they can be internally-motivated developments stimulated in an indirect way by language contact. Two distinct sets of evidence allow the researcher to assess the degree of contact with English (direct influence or reinforced by) on the emergence of innovations. The first one is the systemic procedure, which comprises the complexification process (a general form is replaced by a more specific one, e.g. *dans* replaced by *au* or *en*; see Mougeon et al., this volume). We added the violation of a basic rule of French morphosyntax, the noncompliance of the verbal conditioning tendency for local norms (*à* after dynamic verbs and *dans* after static verbs) and the respect of the verbal conditioning rule in English (*à* always after dynamic verbs and *dans* always after static verbs), as evidence militating for interference-induced innovations. The second set of evidence is to be found in the distribution of the forms from a sociolinguistic viewpoint. We selected the following methodological guidelines: (i) the historical continuity; (ii) the usage of monolingual speakers (are these innovations produced by monolingual or French-dominant speakers?); (iii) the usage of restricted speakers (are these innovations mostly created by restricted speaker?); and (iv) the usage of young speakers regardless of linguistic ability (are these speakers responsible for approximatively half of the occurrences?).

Table 4 shows five innovations used relatively frequently in Cajun French. The systemic and extralinguistic criteria are evaluated for each one. The shaded columns constitute evidence for interference-induced innovations against counter-evidence for internally-motivated innovations. Before we discuss the results, let us mention that the source of all these innovations appears not to be the result of a direct transfer from English.

The case of *au* and *en* before building is straightforward: the cumulative evidence point to interference-induced innovations. They can be analyzed as some form of complexification (we also find many plural forms such as *à les restaurants* "to the restaurants") and represent major departures from the morphosyntax of French. Moreover, they do not obey the internal constraints ruling their usage: *au* is used with motion verbs and *en* is used as a locative community norm only appearing within the expression *en ville* "in town". No occurrences can be found in the speech of monolinguals; restricted speakers favor their usage and young speakers are responsible for more than half of the tokens. Since *au* and *en* are produced more often in contexts where no article is needed in English, they appear to be interference-induced innovations. However, the usage of both forms does not follow the verbal rule in English: half of the *au école* occurrences ("TO school" + motion verb) occur after static verbs. Their production is therefore constrained by the French variable system even though the source is language restriction. It is important to remember that *au* is also used before cities in Cajun French (*au village de Pierre Part* "to the village of Pierre Part" and *au port de Simmes* "to the port of Simmes" become *au Pierre Part* and *au Simmesport*) and therefore available as a lexical resource.

The use of *dans* and *à* before cities and countries, respectively, could be attributed to a process of morphological regularization operating between these two locative contexts, reinforced by the overall restriction in the use of French. The distinction between countries and cities became blurred overtime (*à Eunice/à Louisiane*, *dans la Louisiane*/*dans Eunice* "to/in Louisiana/Eunice")

[5] A potential difference between semi-speakers and fluent speakers with little exposure is that semi-speakers would simplify and loose a part of a specific grammatical system, whereas fluent speakers with less exposure to French would restructure the system, altering the distribution of forms according to linguistic constraints. It might also be that both types of speakers are restructuring the system, but in two different ways: semi-speakers will loose a part of the variability envelope, thus simplifying the diversity of its use. Fluent speakers on the other hand will constrain the distribution of forms in another way: they create a new constraint or they add more linguistic environments to a pre-existing constraint.

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Table 4. *Systemic and extralinguistic evidence for interference-induced innovations and internally-motivated innovations in the locative system (gray-shaded areas highlight potential interference-induced criteria).*

SYSTEMIC EVIDENCE								
	Complexification		Violation of basic rule in French		Respect of verbal conditioning (dynamic vs. static) in Cajun French		Respect of verbal constraint (dynamic vs. static) in English	
	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
AU École	X		X			X		X
EN École	X		X			X		X
À ma mère		X		X	X			X
DANS Eunice		X		X	X			X
À Louisiane		X	X			X		X
EXTRALINGUISTIC DISTRIBUTIONAL EVIDENCE								
	Historical continuity		Used by monolinguals		Mostly used by restricted speakers		More than 45% used by younger speakers	
	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
AU école		X		X	X		X	
EN école		X		X	X		X	
À ma mère		X		X	X		X	
DANS Eunice	X		X			X		X
À Louisiane		X	X			X		X

but no (or only minor) basic rules are violated. All generations of restricted speakers follow the verbal conditioning trend for innovative *dans* (84% static verbs) with cities, but they still produce 16% of *dans* with motion verbs, a usage prohibited in English. The case of innovative *à* is noteworthy. It is more often employed with static verbs (69%), a usage which goes against both the verbal tendency in French and in English. In addition, the extralinguistic evidence strongly suggest that *à* with cities and *dans* with countries are internally-motivated innovations.

The innovation *à* before expressions referring to persons is more difficult to interpret. Extralinguistic evidence strengthen the assumption that its usage is due to interference whereas systemic evidence advocate an internally-motivated development. Its frequency is low (likewise other features that are due to interference) but there is no complexification, no violation of basic morphosyntactic rule and verbal conditioning in French. *À* before persons appears with static verbs (53%) as much as with motion verbs (47%) following the variable verbal system in French rather than the verbal constraint in English which restricts its usage (*to* for *à*) with motion verbs. When we look more closely at the data, we notice that most of the tokens produced by the bilingual elders and two older speakers precede names of people that correspond to business establishments (*aller à Cabrini* "going to Cabrini" which is similar to *aller à Albertson's* "going to Albertson's") contrary to most of those occurrences in the speech of middle-aged and young speakers. This finding suggests that the innovative *à* started as an internally-motivated development but its recent expansion is indirectly correlated to a higher level of contact with English.

Language restriction as a generational pattern

Because language shift in Cajun communities in Louisiana was not sudden but happened over time, the younger generations are more susceptible to be influenced by its effects than the older ones. Elderly restricted speakers generally had more contact with or exposure to Cajun French than young restricted speakers because French was spoken more extensively in the 1930s than in the 1970s. English was the language at school but the language on the playground was French, as one of our speakers mentions. Fluency within the young generation does not match the fluency held by the older generation,

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Table 5. *Attritional changes across generations.*

Category	Bilingual Elders	Old	Middle-aged	Young
Country	*À Texas*		*AU Louisiane*	
City		*DANS Eunice*		
City		*EN/SUR Eunice*		
Building		*AU école*	*À école*	
Building			*EN école*	
Building			*SUR école*	
Person	*À ma mère*			*DANS/EN ma mère*
Total changes	2	3	4	1

with the middle-aged generation falling in between. In other words, fluent speakers from younger generations have a very different linguistic background compared to previous generations (because of a lack of speakers to talk to and opportunities to speak French as well as the variable linguistic ability of their parents in comparison with that of their grandparents). As a result, the locative system of the older restricted speakers is more aligned with the one established by the linguistic community in contrast with the middle-aged restricted speakers whose system is more fine-tuned than the one presented by the young restricted speakers. The use of *en* is revealing: educated speakers who grew up during World War II introduce the form before countries (*en Louisiane* "in Louisiana") and some young speakers use it as well because of their exposure to academic French. However, the latter do not restrict *en* to country names, but produce it in other locative categories (*en école*, *en Baton Rouge*, *en ma mère* "in school, in Baton Rouge, to my mother's").

It should not come as a surprise then that both fluent and restricted young speakers adopt attritional changes introduced by previous generations of restricted speakers or from imperfectly following the conditioning rules (Gal, 1984; King, 1989). As an example, once the old restricted speakers introduce the form *à* with persons (*à ma mère* "to my mother's"), its use increases among fluent speakers from the middle-aged generation (35%) and even more among young fluent speakers (41%) whose usage only slightly differs from that of restricted speakers. The use of *à* without an article before buildings (*à école* "to school"), an item absent in the speech of older fluent speakers, goes up to 25% for the middle-aged fluent speakers and then to 34% for the young fluent speakers. Therefore, once an attritional form is introduced within a new locative category, its usage is usually passed on to the next generation of speakers as a language change.

In addition, the earlier the form is introduced, the less of a difference in frequency there is between fluent and restricted speakers in the following generations. The use of *à* without an article before U.S. State names and country names as initiated by the first real bilingual speakers exemplifies this pattern. The bilingual elders adopted the preposition *à* here perhaps because *à* is a very common local norm with buildings (with an article), cities and countries (with an article) in Cajun French. This attritional change was later endorsed as a local norm by all fluent and restricted speakers of the following generations who present no significant difference in their use of *à* with U.S. state names or country names (old fluent 50%, restricted 50%; middle-aged fluent 43%, restricted 57%; young fluent 54%, restricted 46%).

Innovators or adopters?

We know that the restricted young speakers produce a higher number of innovative forms and loosely follow the conditioning rule and that this generation as a whole is marked by a lower degree of exposure to French in comparison with the previous generations. However, are they truly responsible for the erosion of the locative system of prepositions or do they only follow the footsteps of the older speakers? To distinguish between the innovators and the adopters, we use two arbitrary criteria: a percentage higher than 10% and the presence of a form in the speech of at least four speakers. Table 5 summarizes the results.

None of these attritional changes are introduced by the ancestors or the elders who have French as their dominant language. The bilingual elders initiate two changes and extend the use of the preposition *à* across the system. The old restricted speakers introduce three forms, that is two prepositions with cities and one with buildings. The middle-aged speakers bring up four new changes, especially with buildings, a context where the previous generations exhibit a very stable behavior. The young restricted speakers are accountable for only one innovation, but the entire generation ratifies the nine changes introduced by the previous generations. These instances of attritional changes can also be ordered according to a scale of "agrammaticality". The structures *à école* without article and *au* instead of *à la* are not

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"correct usages" but they are less of a challenge to comprehension than *en ma mère* ("in my mother's") for *chez ma mère* ("to my mother's") or *sur école* ("on school") for *à l'école* ("to school") or *dans l'école* ("in school"). This scale of agrammaticality seems related to age: the younger the innovators, the more agrammatical the innovations. The bilingual elders extend the use of a local norm *à* across the system, the older restricted speakers start to produce forms that are local norms in some contexts within new locative categories and the middle-aged speakers embrace all these new changes and further push the variability between each locative category.

The young Cajun speakers are clearly more the adopters than the innovators. In fact, each previous generation of speakers plays the innovators' role. Because ability in French decreases over time, each generation adds its own attritional changes to the locative system, while embracing those introduced by the preceding generation. It is the combined effect of language shift from French to English and language restriction within each generation that leads to the structural erosion of the prepositional system of young Cajun speakers.

Conclusion

Attrition is a question of degree, it is not a categorical phenomenon. Language restriction in Cajun French leads to a loss of structural integrity within the prepositional system, resulting in a multitude of new usages of prepositions applied to other categories. Our results indicate that a diminished language ability in Cajun French also manifests itself as a generational pattern. Moreover, linguistic persistence of local norms can be distinguished from changes triggered by language restriction. Restricted speakers introduce interference-induced innovations but most of the innovations are internally-motivated ones. Fluent and restricted speakers of the younger generations adopt all innovations introduced by previous generations of restricted speakers who are the 'true' innovators of change.

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