

LANGUAGE LOSS IN CAJUN LOUISIANA: INTEGRATIVE EVOLUTIONARY
APPROACHES IN LINGUISTIC ANTHROPOLOGY

By

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Chair

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Abstract

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This thesis is a preliminary exploration of integrative evolutionary approaches in linguistic anthropology, utilizing fieldwork case studies and historical data from southern Louisiana. The purpose of this thesis is to: 1) examine how evolutionary anthropological approaches to language loss apply to the Cajuns of Louisiana; 2) explore the relationship between language and cultural identity among Cajuns in an anthropological framework; and, 3) to contribute to Cajun ethnography. These goals are accomplished by examining the three primary neoevolutionary approaches used commonly in anthropology today: evolutionary psychology, behavioral ecology and evolutionary cultural anthropology, along with evolutionary and traditional approaches to linguistics, and proposing an integrative, heuristic method to examine language loss by analyzing historical, ethnographic and linguistic information concerning Cajun communities in Southern Louisiana as a starting point for developing workable hypotheses regarding language loss, language change, and ethnic identity. Several hypotheses are presented, and practical applications of known data and literature are outlined in light of each hypothesis in order to gain a fuller understanding of the relationship between language loss and the maintenance of cultural identities.

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Dedication

Pour mon bayou...

CHAPTER ONE

LANGUAGE SHIFT, LOSS AND DEATH

The loss of Cajun French in Louisiana communities has been well documented through historic data, census information, ethnographic efforts and linguistic analysis (Bernard 2003; Binder 1998; Brasseur 2005; Dubois 1997; Dubois and Melançon 1997; Henry and Bankston 2002; Henry and LeMenestrel 2003; Moore 1995; Rottet 2001; Ryon 2002; Trepanier 1991). The number of speakers of French as a first language in Louisiana has fallen dramatically during the 20th century, from approximately 80% before 1905 to less than 8% in 1985 (Bernard 2003). Despite this decline in French as a first language, the sense of Cajun identity has not died or declined (Bernard 2003; Henry and Bankston 2002; Dubois and Melançon 1997; Rottet 2001).

Traditionally, linguistic anthropology has tried to identify the primary reasons behind language shift, loss and death, generally on a group level. Researchers have mostly discussed economic necessity and political domination as the reasons for language loss and death (Bickerton 1990, 1995, 2006; Dorian 1981; Dubois and Melançon 1997; Hill 1978; Rottet 2001). Many of these ideas have grown out of the early 20th century and historical particularism that Boas wrote about (McGee and Warms 2004). This idea of historical particularism is that the history of a group is vital to the understanding of that group's culture and situation (McGee and Warms 2004). Many linguists focused on understanding the importance of language loss and death, in part because much of Boas' work was salvage ethnography and salvage linguistics (the attempt to document everything possible about a culture or language before it disappeared completely). However, different approaches to linguistics eventually led to very different approaches to studying language. For instance, Garrett (2004) points out that "formally oriented linguists" are concerned with the history of language change, the mechanisms of this change and

the very nature of human talent for language, especially in a cross-language context; however, sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropologists take a different view. Sociolinguists examine “the relationships among language structure, patterns of variation in language usage, and specific characteristics (demographic, social, historical, etc.) of the communities” that particular languages are occurring in and linguistic anthropologists are focused on the use of language in a specific cultural context that leads to the “construction of self and community” (Garrett 2004: 49).

In recent years, linguistic researchers have begun to turn to evolutionary theory to further explore the changes that occur in language. Most of this work has focused on language origins, language acquisition and the functions of language (e.g. Bickerton 2006; Jackendoff 1999; Knight, Studdert-Kennedy and Hurford 2000; Nowak and Komarova 2001; Pinker 1994). These “neo” evolutionary approaches utilize recent theoretical extensions and improvements of Darwinian theory. Inclusive fitness theory, in which an individual’s genes exist outside of offspring (Hamilton 1964) and parental investment theory, where the degree of parental investment is major difference between sexes (Trivers 1972) are just two examples of recent theoretical developments. Furthermore, both ultimate (why) and proximate (how) explanations are utilized because they are not mutually exclusive and can further our understanding of the process of evolution, especially in a cultural framework.

Because few evolutionary studies to date have examined the mechanisms and reasons behind language loss, this thesis aims to: 1) examine evolutionary anthropological explanations for language loss and how they might be used to interpret language loss among French-speaking Cajuns in Louisiana; 2) explore anthropological approaches to the relationship between language and cultural identity (ethnicity) and how these approaches apply to Cajuns; and, 3) contribute to

Cajun ethnography. This thesis utilizes historical, ethnographic, and linguistic data from Cajun Louisiana in an effort to understand and explain language shift, loss and death from an evolutionary standpoint. Subsequent chapters present the results of preliminary fieldwork conducted during the summer of 2005; historical and current literature; the issues of Cajun French and Cajun English; theoretical approaches in evolutionary linguistics; approaches in popular evolutionary theory that may be applicable to language studies; and finally, addresses a much needed set of hypotheses for future testing of the causes of language loss and death and the subsequent effects on cultural identity. The primary aim of the thesis is to try and explain language loss among French-speaking Cajuns in Louisiana with contemporary evolutionary theories and approaches. I will also explore the relationship between language and cultural identity among the Cajuns and contribute to Cajun ethnography.

Language and Identity

Our identities as individuals, and as a part of a larger group, appears to be rooted, at least in part, in our language and ability to communicate (Seuren 1998). In the early 1900s, Franz Boas (1966), an anthropologist and ethnographer, pointed out that language and culture, while intertwined, are still separate. Culture groups may see changes in culture but maintain their language; however, the reverse is also true, a culture can stay relatively intact, but the language may change drastically. Janet Byron (1978), in a discussion on dialect replacement, argues that there is not enough research to determine what “conditions motivate a population to maintain or abandon its language” (613). Perhaps Byron (1978) simply had not considered the linguistic, anthropological and sociological data (among others) collected to date concerning economic, political and social decisions individuals make in regards to their speech in order to maintain their status or group identity.

In regards to identity, John Joseph (2004) argues that language serves two functions: to communicate information and to provide a way for humans to think about their world. This may be loosely based on the work of Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf, whose ideas of language influencing and determining culture have come to be known as the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis. The premises behind this hypothesis are that 1) language determines culture and 2) language influences culture. Nancy Bonvillian (1997) points out that “neither [Sapir nor Whorf] thought of the relationships among language, culture and human thinking as rigid and mechanistic but, rather, as coexisting in fluid and dynamic interaction” (52). In other words, language may influence our thinking as humans and therefore our culture, but the full impact will vary from language group to language group.

Joseph (2004) explains that phatic and performative communication are linked to our identities as humans. Phatic communication, as defined by Bronislaw Malenowski in 1923, is “the very fact of speaking with someone, as a social act,” though “the propositional content exchanged is irrelevant” (Joseph 2004: 17). In other words, it does not matter what is said so much as the fact that something is being spoken in an effort to interact with another person. Joseph (2004) gives small talk as a strong example of phatic communication, because it is the act of communicating that is important to creating and maintaining social ties. Another function of language that Joseph (2004) describes is the performative function, or the “claims made through performance” (20). He explains that the statement of action is relatively equivalent to the completing of the action, and can therefore be related to identity in that humans express their intentions to be a part of the group or complete obligations to the group (Joseph 2004).

It is important here to note that, while the function of language is important, linguistic anthropologists also emphasize “the importance of the perceptions and practices of the full range

of speech community members” (Bucholtz and Hall 2004: 371) and not just that of an individual or individual group. It is vital to consider the understandings of an individual with regard to their own identity and culture, as well as the understandings of those outside of that culture. This creates in-group and out-groups to consider when analyzing speech and speech acts.

With this in mind, we must consider that the manner in which an individual communicates with another will mark them as a part of the group or as an outsider. Markedness, according to Bucholtz and Hall (2004), is the concept that there exists a “default status that contrasts with the identities of other groups, which [is] usually highly recognizable” (372). For instance, regional dialects can mark a person as being from the Southern portion of the United States (or almost any other part) and can elicit positive or negative reactions depending upon where that person is in relation to where they are from. If an individual is from the bayous of Louisiana, and they have the distinctive accent expected there, then they will be welcomed in the area; whereas, if they are on vacation in New York, that same accent will mark them as an outsider and may bring with it the stereotype of being lazy and backwards.

Cajun Ethnography

The French speakers of Louisiana are an excellent resource for exploring the possible applications of an evolutionary approach to language loss because “surprisingly little has been written about its declining language varieties” (Rottet 2001). Due to an increasing interest in Louisiana over the past 50 years, mostly because of tourism, much has been written about two of Louisiana’s ethnic groups: the Cajuns and the Creoles. The chief interest of this paper is the culture and language of the Cajuns in Southern Louisiana. Most of the current publications are focused on the history and culture of the area, but many do not address the ethnographic information from an anthropological viewpoint. Those few that do address Cajun ethnography

are either outdated (Allain 1978; Esman 1985) or are primarily historical or sociological in scope (Bernard 2003; Brasseaux 2005; Henry and Bankston 2002).

Updated ethnographic information may provide insights into how the Cajun culture has adapted and changed over the past 200 years with the onset of Anglo contact, but still maintained a strong ethnic identity separate from the rest of America, and yet somehow became integrated (Bernard 2003; Henry and Bankston 2002). This ethnolinguistic data will allow us to consider the impact of language loss on identity and ethnicity.

Language Loss and Death

Over the past century, linguists have commonly approached the phenomenon of language loss and death as being only a side effect of linguistic change over time (Fromkin and Rodman 1998; Greenberg 1968; Hall 1959). Rottet (2001) describes language loss (shift) as “a community’s transition from predominant use of one language to predominant use of another” (4). In other words, the people speaking a particular language change, or shift, to the use of another language. One outcome of language loss can be actual language death, which is the *complete* loss of a language and no living speakers of the original language remain (Rottet 2001). Due to the far reaching implications of language loss, language death and the mechanisms behind them, researchers from anthropology and other disciplines, including linguistics, have recently begun to take an interest in learning more about language processes and have attempted to adopt new methodological paradigms that focus on not only qualitative information, but also quantitative and testable hypotheses (Dorian 1981; Hill 1978; Pinker 1994).

One major question that is repeatedly asked concerns why language loss occurs. Is it a result of cultural assimilation or some other cultural, linguistic, or environmental event? Kevin Rottet (2001), a noted French linguist, explains how language loss and death can happen either

suddenly, or gradually over time. For instance, natural disasters that kill an entire population, or the genocide of an entire group, can occur, but those instances are rare (Rottet 2001). The gradual extinction of a language is more likely, and is generally the result of coming into contact with a dominant group that has no interest in maintaining the native language (Dorian 1981; Rottet 2001). Language contact can be said to “occur whenever and wherever two or more human groups with different languages – and in most cases, different cultures and worldviews as well – encounter one another and attempt to engage in linguistic communication” (Garrett 2004: 48). Sydney Lamb (1964) points out that linguistic extinction can be found wherever languages are distributed geographically over large areas and that language spread will always occur at the expense of another language, usually as the result of contact between two competing groups. We can also argue that contact itself is not responsible for language loss, but is rather the result of economic and political conflicts that are a result of culture contact. No real theories explaining language loss have been developed, in part because language loss is simply considered a feature of culture loss (Rottet 2001).

Dorian (1981) points out that one reason for a lack of literature on the process of language loss and death is that early linguists and anthropologists were reluctant to “work with imperfect speakers of a language, who were also, by implication, imperfect representatives of the cultural group in question” (3). Another factor in the shortage of literature was the focus on salvage linguistics, as mentioned previously. As mindsets have changed and researchers have focused on all speakers of endangered languages, some systematic differences between “healthy” and dying languages have come to light (Dorian 1981; Hill 1978). There appear to be many sociocultural features that contribute to the loss of a language, such as economic status, contact with other languages, and loss of fluent speakers to “monitor” the younger speakers (Dorian

1981). Hill (1978) points out there may also be patterned syntactical changes that occur during the loss of a language that can be compared to the syntactic features found in pidginized and creolized languages.

Language loss is an interesting subject for research because it can aid in other pursuits, such as analyzing historical data to determine protolanguages (“original” languages), the preservation of language, issues of bilingualism, and cultural identity (Dorian 1981; Rottet 2001). Furthermore, dying languages can be a living laboratory for cultural and linguistic change in that they tend to happen rapidly, over only a few generations (Dorian 1981; Rottet 2001). We can analyze information about how languages function, such as what elements are resistant to change, what features are most likely to disappear first and even the maintenance of ethnically marked language. Each of these can “provide insights into other similar processes of simplified or reduced language systems” for reconstruction, preservation or reversal efforts (Rottet 2001: 4). For instance, while much research has been conducted on the issue of preserving endangered languages, most did not focus on why the loss occurs to begin with. Rottet (2001) points out “no comprehensive theory of the phenomena of language shift and language death has yet emerged” (5). He does not expand heavily on this matter and does not give any explanation of what a comprehensive theory would entail. He mentions that there are some who believe there is not enough data available to develop one. I disagree; there is enough data on enough languages to determine if there are systematic changes that occur during language loss, how those changes manifest and possibly even why they occur.

My review of the literature indicates few anthropological studies exist on the evolutionary nature of language loss and death, although there are exceptions (Hill 1978). Most of the attention in evolutionary linguistics has been focused on language origins, language

acquisition and the functions of language (Bickerton 1990, 1995, 2006; Buss 2004; Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman 1981; Christiansen and Kirby 2003; Dunbar 1996; Ellis and Bjorklund 2005; Fitch 2000; Jackendoff 1999; Knight, Studdert-Kennedy and Hurford 2000; Nowak and Komarova 2001; Pinker 1994, 2002; Tomasello 1999). Further understanding of evolutionary theory and how it may be applied more widely to issues of language change are necessary.

CHAPTER TWO

NEOEVOLUTIONARY APPROACHES TO LANGUAGE

Subsequent chapters in the thesis will review the history of evolutionary linguistics and some of the problems with these approaches in understanding language loss and identity, but this thesis also uses three neoevolutionary approaches for developing hypotheses regarding Cajun language loss. I went to the field with these theoretical orientations in mind, but the fieldwork was exploratory, so the hypotheses were not directly tested in the field. In this chapter, I introduce the three neoevolutionary theories and some of the tentative hypotheses that will be considered in the final chapter.

Evolutionary Psychology

Evolutionary psychologists take functional and adaptive approaches to human behavior and language (Smith 2000). They are concerned with the universals of the human mind, in which humans developed a genetic propensity in the environment of evolutionary adaptation (EEA) for specific, universal behaviors and responses to cultural incidents (Hewlett and Hewlett in press), such as food sharing, mate preferences, sexual jealousy, and language acquisition. Eric A. Smith (2000) explains that, according to evolutionary psychologists, humans will eventually develop specific responses to specific environments, and that those responses will be passed from generation to generation through genes or culture. These responses create mental modules that can work together or separately and have created a brain that is specialized, and therefore may create adaptive mismatches in the long run, such as the modern desire for sweets (Smith 2000). Essentially, those behaviors that encouraged survival and greater reproductive success would have been the behaviors passed on to the next generation.

Linguistic approaches in evolutionary psychology have mostly addressed these ideas of modularity and universal processes. Buss argues there is much in psychology to utilize when considering language and language change, but that researchers generally narrow their focus to “two topics of central concern...: (1) Is language an adaptation? (2) What adaptive problems, if any, did language evolve to solve?” (Buss 2004: 381). Buss (2004) further points out that Chomsky (and Gould) see language more as a by-product of the growth of the human brain, and not as an adaptation – “language simply emerged spontaneously as one of many side effects” (381). Buss (2004) presents Stephen Pinker’s work as the other side of this argument, that “language is an adaptation *par excellence* – produced by natural selection for the communication of information” (382).

However, Chomsky (1965) and Pinker (1994) appear to agree that there has to be deep structure of grammar too well designed to be a side effect or by product of some other mechanism. In the 1960s, Chomsky proposed that all language is innate; that we are born with the capacity to learn language that carries with it a grammatical and lexical structure that is only developed and perfected throughout childhood. “It seems reasonable to suppose that a child cannot help constructing a particular sort of grammar to account for the data presented... Thus, it may be that the general features of language structure reflect the general character of one’s capacity to acquire knowledge – one’s innate ideas and innate principles” (Chomsky 1965: 59). He termed this innate ability “Universal Grammar” (Chomsky 1965). Pinker (1994) takes this argument further and discusses child language acquisition (see Chapter 5 for a full discussion) as evidence for the universal language capabilities laid out by Chomsky.

As outlined in detail in Chapter 5, language acquisition carries with it specific stages that children go through on the path to fully adult language. There are particular grammatical

patterns, as well as patterns in conjugation and lexical addition that may give insights into language loss, which also has similar patterns. In other words, if there are modules for learning language, there may also be modules for language loss. These may have to do with identity as well in that if a language marks a person as part of a group, then the modules that deal with recognition of others may also deal with language loss. For instance, if humans need to be able to recognize who to ally with socially, the need to speak the same language may have caused a language recognition module to develop. Furthermore, if contact with an outside group occurs, especially one that is more dominant or more successful, then it may be in the best interest of an individual to learn to speak the language of the dominant group in order to be marked as a member of the in-group.

One drawback to this approach is that researchers have focused primarily how language might have begun and how it is acquired, but not necessarily why those same languages continue to change and eventually die. If the original language (and therefore language module) was good enough to gossip about the neighbors and keep up with their actions, or even helped to elicit a proper sexual partner or mate, then why would humans continue to add to the lexicon, and why would there be thousands of different languages and dialects? Furthermore, given that adding to the linguistic repertoire was essential in the beginning, why would those hard earned languages die out or be assimilated by others? Hypotheses may be developed under evolutionary psychology to address the innate abilities of humans to adapt to cultural and linguistic situations.

One advantage of evolutionary psychology is that it may provide insights into how and why language loss might occur in a culture, specifically the Cajuns in Louisiana. For instance, if the most successful (e.g. economically, reproductively) people in a Cajun community are speaking Cajun French, then the children of that group will most likely speak French in an effort

to copy their success; conversely, if the most successful people are speaking English, the children are more likely to speak English, regardless of whether or not French is being spoken at home by the parents. This need to imitate the successful traits of another may be an evolved psychology that will allow for further, more in-depth studies in Louisiana.

However helpful this approach may be, Smith, Borgerhoff Mulder and Hill (2001) point out that much of evolutionary psychology is performed in labs, through public surveys and logic tests and cannot truly address the human condition in everyday, ordinary situations. This may be an issue because human behavior does not always conform to what happens in a laboratory. On the other hand, Tooby and Cosmides (1994) argue for more consistent approach to looking at all things human, particularly behavior. They feel there are “universal mechanisms” that underscore all behavior, regardless of the variability present in those behaviors, but because these approaches may leave out the great diversity in human responses to in their natural environment, we will want to consider alternative frameworks, such as evolutionary ecology (human behavioral ecology).

Evolutionary Ecology (Human Behavioral Ecology)

Evolutionary ecology seeks to answer questions of human behavior in terms of diversity of that behavior and not in terms of universals (Hewlett and Hewlett in press). The focus is on how ecological variables and the forces of evolution can and do interact. The primary interest is the determination of environmental impact on behavior and what factors may cause variability of behavior in different culture groups (Laland and Brown 2002). Of particular interest for language in human behavioral studies are cost and benefit trade-offs, such as are seen with optimality modeling, costly signaling, kin selection or life history theories. One of the biggest

strengths of this approach are its systematic, testable methods that may be employed among people in real-life settings and not just laboratories.

Costs and benefits concern the trade-offs humans make in order to optimize their return on a variety of behaviors. For instance, optimality modeling began as a way to analyze how animals utilize and manage their time (Krebs and Davies 1997). Originally these models were used to look at behaviors such as food procurement, particularly in birds and insects (Krebs and Davies 1997). As researchers began to use these same models on human behavior, a variety of possible pursuits opened up and have been used widely in anthropology as a way to understand why people make the choices they do (Kelly 1995).

Another use of cost-benefit analysis is to determine an explanation for behaviors such as sharing and cooperation between individuals. One such explanation is the idea of kin selection. This is the premise that the reproductive fitness of an individual may be increased by improving the reproductive fitness of closely related individuals (Krebs and Davies 1997). Of course, this does not explain why individuals would choose to cooperate with non-kin, so the addition of creating alliances to further reproductive fitness is necessary to consider when looking at cooperation (Kelly 1995).

An alternate hypothesis to explain cooperation that involves costs and benefits is known as costly signaling. It is grounded in the idea that every action taken by an individual is potentially costly; therefore, behaviors that have high costs, such as hunting, should result in the individual acting selfishly (Kelly 1995). With human groups this explanation is not so simple because people do share the foods they obtain with others in their group (Kelly 1995). Costly signaling is one possible explanation to this dilemma in that it postulates people will engage in expensive behaviors to show they are potentially high-quality mates or allies; the costs of these

expensive behaviors is countered by the benefit of higher reproduction or stronger alliances to gain prestige, resources or mates (Bleige Bird and Smith 2005).

According to Daan and Tinbergen (1997), life history research focuses on reproduction intensity, timing and mechanisms. Life history theory is concerned with both genetic and environmental influences on an individual's fitness and addresses the trade-offs (e.g. slower maturity rate for larger, more energy demanding brains) made for species to reach maturity and to reproduce successfully; this includes the timing of maturity, life span, and investment in offspring. Daan and Tinbergen (1997) point out that life history theories focus on the two decisions concerning when to have offspring and how much to invest in that offspring – in other words, is it better to have few offspring and invest heavily, or is it better to have many offspring and invest little?

Studies of language in behavioral ecology have often included studies of other animals and non-human primates. Recognition and communication systems have been widely tested. For instance, Seyfarth and Cheney (1997) have shown remarkable similarities between the acquisition of warning calls in vervet monkey infants and that of language acquisition in human infants. However, using models from evolutionary ecology to address the diversity of language in humans, specifically the idea of tradeoffs, may allow for a more in-depth analysis of why one language may be given up for another.

Social and demographic contexts, such as population density, environmental factors, age and gender, are of particular interest in human behavioral ecology (Laland and Brown 2002). The question becomes a matter of why one group would develop a specific behavior while another group under similar (or exact) circumstances would develop a different behavior. For instance, why would rural Cajuns be more likely to keep speaking French or be bilingual for

longer than those in urban areas would? This would most likely be explained by kin selection because the more rural areas consist of closely related individuals and urban areas have more constant contact with other groups. Therefore, the costs of maintaining French in the rural areas would be lower, at least for a generation or two. Consideration of who is and who is not speaking French and their specific situation and life history is of the utmost importance to the behavioral ecology viewpoint.

The methodologies and tested models introduced in behavioral ecology have far reaching implications in determining why humans may choose, as individuals, to follow or go against the norms of the group in which they live. However, I believe that some of the methodologies remove the “human” aspect because people are reduced to their biological functions in many, but not all, cases. Evolutionary cultural anthropology furthers the research in behavioral ecology and evolutionary psychology by attempting to answer how and why human behavior is passed to subsequent generations through the interactions of genes and culture.

Evolutionary Cultural Anthropology

Evolutionary cultural anthropology (ECA) has the smallest numbers of researchers and includes those who use cultural transmission (Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman 1981), co-evolutionary theory (Durham 1991), dual transmission (Boyd and Richerson 1985) and niche construction (Odling-Smee, Laland and Feldman 1996). The research focuses on the evolutionary nature of culture, but most researchers recognize a genetic/biological component of culture. ECA researchers are also concerned with examining the diversity and variability of behaviors in response to the environment (Laland and Brown 2002). Much of the current research focuses on the mechanisms of cultural transmission and their properties (Boyd and Richerson 1985; Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman 1981; Durham 1991; Hewlett and Cavalli-Sforza

1986). ECA draws on the four necessary mechanisms of natural selection: 1) natural selection requires variation in individuals; 2) there must be competition between individuals; 3) there must be inheritance of successful variations; and, 4) there is an accumulation of the modifications in variation (Hewlett and Hewlett in press).

Of particular importance to many ECA theorists is the idea of inheritance, also discussed as transmission. The idea behind transmission is that cultural behaviors are passed (or learned) directly from one individual to another. Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman (1981) and Hewlett and Cavalli-Sforza (1986) present several types of transmission: vertical (parent-to-child), horizontal (peer-to-peer), one-to-many and many-to-one. Vertical transmission, in which information is passed from a parent to a child, has a high variability both within and between groups and is slow to change in a given culture. This type of transmission generally occurs in a stable environment that is not changing often or rapidly (Laland and Brown 2002). The repetitive, concentrated efforts of parents to teach their children social norms and language may result in copies of key characteristics being passed from one generation to the next.

Horizontal transmission, which occurs between offspring, or peers, appears to be one of the most rapid mechanisms of change because children will tend to copy their peers once they are in contact with them (Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman 1981). It can also have high variability between and within groups, but the rate of change is also high, in part because the environment in which it occurs is unstable and is continually being updated (Hewlett and Cavalli-Sforza 1986). This is noted in language by the rapid innovation and change of slang terms not only from generation to generation, but also within a single generation. For instance, words like “awesome” or “cool” are rapidly replaced by “phat” and “bad” within a generation, but not necessarily between them, in part out of the importance to “fit in” with one’s peer group.

One-to-many transmission is also important to language shift and loss. One-to-many transmission allows for a very rapid evolution of terminology and grammar, especially with the ever-increasing influence of technology (Hewlett and Cavalli-Sforza 1986). Teachers and leaders also may have an impact, but this will not be as rapid as peer-related transmission, simply because they are generally attempting to teach many of the same characteristics as the parental generation (i.e. standard speech, cultural norms).

In 1991, William Durham published a book on his idea he termed “coevolutionary theory”. Durham (1991) points out that evolution is not necessarily improvement and progress or simply genetic, but that it deals with culture as well. He discusses the fact that we need to consider the causes of humans becoming more culturally and linguistically alike (homogenization) through the “the patterns and processes of cultural evolution, and the nature of relationships between cultural dynamics and genetic evolution” (Durham 1991: 20). He sees that biology and culture will work in concert and evolve simultaneously; specifically, culture evolves through transmission processes (Durham 1991). Of greatest importance to the discussion of language loss is his idea of imposition, which is when the decisions of an external group (agent) are imposed (forced) upon the reference group (Durham 1991). Individuals really face no choice at all. Imposition is a rapid form of transmission and occurs in unstable environments (Laland and Brown 2002).

Boyd and Richerson (1985) propose another theory they have termed “dual transmission” to explain the relationship between culture and genes. They utilize mathematical modeling to analyze the mechanisms of how culture can drive genetic change. They argue that social learning (transmission) is how culture is maintained and that it occurs through biased transmission. Frequency-dependent bias is also known as conformist bias and tends to “improve

the chance of acquiring the locally favored cultural variant, and...increases the amount of cultural variation” (Boyd and Richerson 1985: 206). This suggests that if the majority of peers that a child comes into contact with speak (or behave) a particular way, then that child will also speak and behave in that manner, regardless of what the child encounters at home (Boyd and Richerson 1985). In other words, the rarity or commonness of a trait that a person is exposed to will predict the speed of transmission. If behaviors are common, they will be most likely to be transmitted than behaviors that are rarely seen or heard (Laland and Brown 2002). For example, if the majority of a population speaks English, it is likely everyone will speak English.

Odling-Smee, Laland and Feldman (1996) introduce their idea of a feedback loop in evolution because “Organisms, through their metabolism, their activities and their choices, define, partly create and partly destroy their own niches” (641). In other words, humans will manipulate their environment to suit their own needs, but this causes the environment itself to be altered and humans must once again either adapt to these changes or alter the environment (Odling-Smee, Laland and Feldman 2003). They propose a simple model of evolution based on this feedback loop that includes cultural and genetic transmission as a way to maintain evolutionary change in human society.

Building on their ideas of transmission, Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman (1981) introduce levels of learning that are helpful to understanding language transmission. The first level is the innate, or imprinting of traits. The idea builds in part on Chomsky (1964) and argues that humans are born with the ability to learn, and through repeated conditioning those characteristics that are most important are permanently imprinted in the brain. This meets, oftentimes, with some skepticism from people who believe the opposite is true and that we are born as a “blank

slate”. Steven Pinker (1994) also argues against this idea by showing countless items of “proof” that we have innate mental characteristics.

The second level Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman (1981) describe is observational learning, in which people learn by watching others and not repeating their mistakes (or simply, repeating their successes). This comes very close to the third level known as imitative learning, which is simply watching and repeating those actions that are observed. The final level of learning is accomplished through direct teaching/instruction through reinforcement and purposeful coaching of behaviors (Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman 1981).

Practical approaches to language loss and death using the methodology and theoretical perspectives introduced through evolutionary cultural anthropology can be very diverse and productive and have seemingly endless possibilities. In Louisiana, this may hold true today because most children speak English. However, during the critical period in which Cajun French began its rapid decline, most children spoke Cajun French at home, at school and in the community; teachers, administrators and the Louisianan government dictated they learn in English.

Because teachers in Louisiana public schools enforced the idea that English should be the primary language used in Louisiana, children who spoke French in school were punished for not speaking English. Furthermore, the language of politics and law turned to English early in Louisiana history. The effect was that, as more and more transactions occurred in English, the greater the hold of the English speakers became. Language may also be lost in a subtler sort of imposition due to one-to-many transmission associated with mass media. If children are watching television, listening to radio, reading, or being taught primarily in a language that is counter to that spoken at home, they will be more likely to learn and speak the dominant

language used in the media. Under indirect bias, children would be more likely to learn the language of prestigious individuals, and if those individuals that are successful speak a different language, then language loss should occur.

The benefits of all three neoevolutionary approaches to the study of languages and language loss are that each can provide its own unique perspective to how humans have evolved the communication systems they have. However, each approach alone cannot bear the full weight of how and why languages change over time, even to the extent of being lost to a culture altogether. Perhaps an integrated, heuristic model such as proposed by Hewlett and Lamb (2002) would be appropriate to organize the biological, cultural and environmental influences on speech and language behaviors. Before we can address such an integrated model, we must first examine what is known about Cajun language use and its subsequent loss.

CHAPTER THREE

FIELDWORK, METHODS AND LITERATURE

Fieldwork

I went to Louisiana with the intention of interviewing members of the Creole community in order to understand, in the context of a case study, the processes of language and culture transmission, language acquisition and the Creole Continuum, as explained by Derek Bickerton (1981; see Chapter 5 for a detailed discussion). Since my family is from Louisiana, and I grew up visiting Lake Charles and Lafayette and surrounding areas for several weeks during the summer months, I felt I had an appropriate relationship to the region and people that would allow me the necessary connections to conduct interviews.

I arrived in late June to unseasonably hot and humid weather, with a lack of the customary rains. I was based in Lafayette and went daily into either the urban centers around town or the more rural areas surrounding Lafayette, looking for anyone who would talk to me, listening to people talk in public areas, and visiting museums and cultural events. My second night in town, I attended a public forum video screening that discussed the current status of French in Louisiana. This was part of the documentary video series “Gumb Oh La La” and was sponsored by *Louisiane à la carte*, a group dedicated to documenting various French speakers in the Louisiana parishes through interviews and real-life experiences of the locals in various parishes around Louisiana. The first video was an extended interview of a prominent Creole-speaker and Creole activist in the Lafayette area. The second video described a young Cajun man of about 16, who had attended the CODOFIL immersion program and outlined his difficulties and successes in learning French in an area where French was quickly dying.

I listened carefully and with excitement as the 30 or so people assembled discussed their own feelings on the subject. I was surprised that the assortment of people attending leaned mostly to older, white Cajuns and had very few Creoles. They all spoke carefully to one another, both in French and in English. There appeared to be an underlying discomfort and strain between the groups that was even addressed from time to time. Immediately following the discussion, I attempted to make contact with any of the few Creole speakers there, but was met with a lack of interest in my research and an almost hostile attitude. I did not give up on the idea of finding even a small community of Creole speakers outside of New Orleans to interview for this project until nearly two weeks later, but I should have figured out earlier to not waste my time.

As mentioned earlier, I was staying at local hotel near Interstate 10. On my way out for the morning on my third day, I overheard two of the staff discussing something in a very animated way. They appeared to be friends and were laughing and joking in what I assumed at first to be French. I lingered in front of the soda machine for a moment, fishing for change, and listened more closely. I heard the distinctive “mo” instead of “je” of Creole French in Louisiana, and approached the ladies as they smoked outside. They had been very friendly to me all week and I knew one of them by name, so felt rather comfortable speaking to her. After I explained what I was doing, I was met with something of a scowl from both of them, accompanied by a rolling of the eyes. They politely declined to be interviewed and spent the next five weeks dodging me every chance they got.

I spent the first two weeks attending various museums, music and cultural events and heritage centers. I was able to interview one woman, Laura, who identified herself as Creole in heritage, but she did not speak Creole. The one person I spoke with who did speak Creole was a

Cajun man in his 90's, who had learned snippets of Creole when he was a teenager from the black farmhands on his father's rice farm. I was beginning to get frustrated and had decided to re-focus in the New Orleans area when I spoke with Diane from CODOFIL. After a wonderful interview outlining the preservation and immersion work they do in Louisiana, I asked her if she could suggest any Creole informants who may be interested in participating in my research. I was politely told that this would not be possible. She refused to name anyone because they are "tired of being bothered and researched" as if they were something strange that needed to be analyzed.

Since I had already been speaking with many Cajuns, I had realized the real issue may not be language origins, but rather I should try to understand the process of language change, specifically language loss. The preservation efforts in Louisiana are tremendous. There is a definite feeling of the culture being tied directly into the French language. The question then arose of what is more important when looking at language and cultural evolution, origins or adaptation.

I also found the Cajuns much more receptive to my research. Everyone I spoke with was very vocal about their opinions on language in their communities. I also found the fact that my family is Cajun as well to be helpful. Many people would ask what my family names were, or what part of Louisiana I was from, before I would even mention my own background. Apparently, I fit the template for a "typical" Cajun woman. Inevitably, I would also be asked if I could cook specific dishes (e.g. gumbo) and if I could speak French. The issue of French was more important to the older people I spoke with. When I told them I was just now learning the language, but that my parents did not speak it either, I was met with condolences and a small shake of the head. It is almost a shameful thing, not because I did not grow up speaking French,

but more that French is going away so rapidly. For many of the younger people I spoke to, it was a matter of understanding – their parents had not spoken French at home, except as a secret language to discuss things children did not need to hear.

This is an interesting point that needs to be expanded upon because the generational differences are not evenly divided across all of Louisiana. The oldest generation of Louisiana grew up speaking French and eventually learned English, although there are still a very few alive who only speak French. The middle aged Cajuns (age 50-70) are a mixed bag. Some speak both French and English. Many learned French as a first language, only to have it beaten out of them in their youth in school. Some speak only English because their parents did not teach them French at home, again in part to avoid being punished in school for speaking French. Another part of that is the idea that in order to get a good job and advance, children needed to learn English. There is little evidence to back up the hypothesis that some of this is due to geography, but it appears that those in more rural areas are more likely to know French, and those in the more urban areas are less likely. Finally, the generations that are younger than 50 years old, and speak French, mostly know standard French, having learned it in school.

As I focused my efforts on looking for French in the Cajun population, I was disappointed to find that it is not spoken in the public world very often. I spent many hours sitting in malls, coffee shops, cafes, casinos and attending cultural events. In the malls, restaurants, and other public areas in the urban areas, almost no one speaks any French, not even the little terms I would have expected, such as *tous de suite* (immediately, right now), *cher* (term of endearment). In fact, the only term I heard in a public gathering, outside of telling jokes, was the term *culloin* (idiot). Two gentlemen were talking at a flea market about a purchase one of them had made. One said to the other “You culloin! You paid too much for dat!” Another

exception occurred in a local café in Lafayette, but was during the telling of jokes. Three gentlemen, in their 50s, were telling Boudreaux and Thibodeaux jokes to one another and utilized the necessary Cajun terms, along with the thick, “typical” Cajun accent, in order to emphasize the humorous aspects of their culture.

The large cultural gatherings were nearly the opposite, however, where French was a primary part of all music performances or heritage groups, and English took the background and was usually only a translation of the previously spoken French. This is another effort to preserve the French language and Cajun culture in Louisiana. Cajun music, what appears to be the most common reason for having a cultural gathering, is still mostly in Cajun French, and even those songs that are primarily in English, such as that of *Cypress City*, still include phrases in Cajun. The younger generations are learning to speak French and Cajun in order to keep with this tradition in music.

After attending a particularly lively music performance in Eunice, I was able to interview the members of a Cajun band. Each of the members are male and in their early 20s. Surprisingly, only one of the four men I spoke with grew up learning French at home and one member of the group was currently missing because he was in Nova Scotia attending a French immersion program. The other three (one young man was actually a member of another band) made comments about how their parents did not speak French at home at all, but that they had learned French at school and simply “picked up” the Cajun variation by talking to “old timers” in the music industry. Each commented on the fact that they only spoke French to each other, when they were at an event or in one of the many bars where they were playing, or when talking to the old timers (to do otherwise would be rude).

The more rural areas I visited were also quite different. I witnessed a few exchanges that occurred in a mixture of Cajun (perhaps Creole) and English. For instance, one young white woman in her thirties had a lengthy exchange with a black man who was about 70 in a convenience store in Baldwin, Louisiana. She was a cashier and he was paying for his gas purchase; they were discussing the chances of winning the lottery:

Woman: hallo! Ca va?

Man: good, good. You?

W: good! do you want your ticket today?

M: (muffled)

W: yea, well, can't win if you don't buy, no?

M: ah...not mushance odat, dough [...not much chance of that, though].

W: non, not really

M: ah

W: cela!

I had hoped for a great deal of variety in the casinos, as they are very common throughout Louisiana in both rural and urban areas. What I did find, however, was that most people only spoke English. The casinos in West Lake, Louisiana, near Lake Charles and very close to the eastern Texas boarder, were the least appropriate for my research. Most of the cliental were from Texas and only the cashiers and dealers were from the area. I did not witness any of them speaking French, although there were a few women in their 60s-70s who would exclaim in French at the slot machines.

I believe it is important to note that the card game tables at a few casinos actually have a disclaimer that only English is allowed to be spoken while playing at the tables. I asked one dealer why this was the case and was informed that the French and Vietnamese populations were so great that people were cheating by telling each other what they had in their hands. Another difficulty to overcome was being able to make notes about what was observed without breaking the rules of the casinos. One interesting observation that I was able to make was at a casino near

Baldwin, Louisiana. The English dialects of the Cajun patrons varied greatly. While playing at a *Let It Ride* table, I was privileged to hear a conversation between two men in their 70s. Both spoke only English, but their pronunciation was quite different. I asked where each was from and was told they had both grown up in towns about 30 miles apart. When I commented that they sounded very different, they laughed and explained that the little towns in the area had been established around the railroad depots, about 10 miles apart from one another. One jokingly stated that he could go from his hometown near Houma and by the time he got to Lafayette (about 100 miles north), “the Cajuns up there are speaking a different language!”

I was only able to officially interview eight people in my six weeks in Louisiana (Figure 1). Lafayette is a centralized, urban city in the heart of Cajun country. It lies between New Orleans and Lake Charles and grew around the University of Louisiana located there, as most of the larger cities (Baton Rouge, Lake Charles) did. I stayed at a local hotel, which was unfortunately situated near the interstate on the outskirts of town. As a result, I spent many days traveling to and from locations to observe and interview people. I would spend many hours in downtown Lafayette, considered the “cultural center”. I also traveled on three occasions to Houma and the towns between Houma and Lafayette. I spent one day in Breaux Bridge, two in New Orleans meeting with academic contacts, and one day in Lake Charles. The final days of my research were spent in Galveston, Texas at the wedding of a cousin. I had not intended this to be part of my research initially, but found that a Cajun wedding is a spectacular place to make contacts and to learn where I should have gone.

Case Number	Alias	Gender	Age	Occupation	French	English	Cajun
401	Helen	F	60	reception	standard	1st language	N
263	Clarence	M	22	musician	Cajun	1st language	Y
282	Ray	M	24	musician	Cajun	1st language	Y
309	Jerome	M	23	musician	learning	1st language	Y
269	Charles	M	21	musician	Cajun	1st language	Y
376	Nicole	F	27	housewife/mother	none	1st language	Y
354	Marie	F	60	housewife/mother	1st language	2nd language	Y
132	Homer	M	91	retired	1st language	2nd language	Y

Figure 1: List of Interview Participants (names have been changed to protect participant identity)

Methods

I utilized participant and non-participant observations in many public arenas, including two malls, several cafes and coffee shops, art galleries, flea markets, museums, cultural events, several casinos, restaurants, one gun show, one flea market and three farmer's markets. On rare occasions, I was able to get permission to interview an individual. Due to an expressed lack of interest on the part of many people, I was limited to a sample of convenience for interviews. Eight individuals consented to formal interviews, all of which were videotaped. I was able to speak with nearly twenty more individuals in detail, but none granted express permission to use their information, nor did I conduct formal interviews with them. I took detailed notes of conversations heard in public as often as possible, as well as daily field notes to record information from casual conversations.

One major difficulty in my research is that I do not speak any variety of French fluently, and only had a beginning knowledge of French going into the field. I am familiar with many terms from my own upbringing and focused my French studies the year before going into the field on becoming more familiar with the particular variety spoken by Cajuns. This limited my available sources for interviews to those people who spoke English.

I found it interesting that most people were happy to talk to me, even after learning about my research, even though they did not grant interviews. I assumed this was due, in part, to

American attitudes of and desire for privacy. Six of my eight interviews were exceptions to this because one works in a public heritage forum (Helen), four are musicians used to being interviewed and one is in the tourism business (Homer). The only two people not regularly in the public eye (Nicole and Marie) came about because Nicole was living in the same hotel as I was and we saw each other daily and talked over morning coffee regularly.

Each of the eight interviews lasted 20 minutes on average. My first informant, Helen, is an African-American woman in her 60s. She is employed in a cultural center and grew up in the same area south of Lafayette and lives there today. She offered many interesting insights on language and ethnic groups in Louisiana, including Vietnamese, Laotians, Cajuns, blacks, and caucasians. She believes she is Creole in a sense because she is a descendant of a slave and makes a distinction between white and black Creoles. She speaks standard French, which she learned from her brother and in books, despite the fact her mother and grandmother, who spoke French, spoke to the children in French, but rather used it as a secret language. Helen addressed the fact that the French of Cajuns is definitely differently from other varieties, such as those in Parks or Breaux Bridge. She explained that the differences were mainly due to tone of voice, speed, and pronunciation. Helen does not know anyone who really speaks French in public, as English is the primary language used in her community.

Nicole is a 27-year-old mother of four, born in a rural area about an hour's drive south of Lafayette. She does not speak any French, nor does her husband (also Cajun) or her children. Her mother (Marie, see below) does speak French, but her father does not. She is very adamant that she is a Cajun regardless of what she speaks. After a little prodding, she admitted she does understand some French and uses a few key phrases, such as curse words, but mostly it is "not the good stuff". Nicole believes that French is an "awesome language", and wishes she had

really learned it when she was young because it “looks better” to know two languages and she would love to be able to talk to the older people who speak only French. Nicole feels she would be a better Cajun if she spoke French.

Marie, Nicole’s mother, grew up speaking French as a first language and is only one of two informants where this was the case. She is a 55-year-old mother of three and grew up on the farm where she still resides. Her father was a soybean farmer, and her family still owns and pays to have the farm worked. Marie learned English when she was three from her sister-in-law and mother, which she feels gave her an advantage over many of the other children in school. She remembers the punishments that were given for speaking French in school, even on the play yard. While she loves her husband, she sometimes wishes he spoke French so that their children would also know the language. Marie does not know many people who speak French outside of their home, except the older generations who know very little English. The only time she speaks French in public is when she meets one of these older people in the grocery store or church; it “would be rude to speak English with them”.

Homer is an elderly male in his 90s, but is full of life and stories that he loves to tell the tourists. He also grew up on his father’s farm and often took water and lunch to the black Creole workers. Homer’s first language was Cajun French, but he learned English as a young man in school. He also learned some Creole French from his summers working on his father’s farm. He has strong attitudes about teaching children French, and all of his own children are fluent speakers, as are many of his grandchildren.

Clarence, Ray, Jerome and Charles are members of two Cajun music bands in the Lafayette area and are all in their early 20s. I interviewed them all at the same time and was pleased by the results of watching and listening to them interact. Jerome is the only one who did

not grow up in Louisiana and is a member of a different band than the other three. He grew up in Houston, but his father is from Louisiana and is of Creole and Indian heritage. Jerome is only now learning French from his friends and in school. Ray grew up in Louisiana and speaks Cajun and standard French fluently. He learned standard French in school and has been able to “pick up” Cajun through the music and “hanging out with the old-timers”. His parents did not speak French, but his grandparents did, as do most of his siblings.

Clarence also learned French in school and grew up in a small town near Lafayette. His parents did not speak French, but all of his siblings and grandparents do. He joked about the fact that they all use French as a secret language against his parents and enjoy the fact that they can do so. He, too, learned the Cajun variety of French through the music industry. Charles grew up in a small Cajun family north of Lafayette. His father spoke French at home, but Charles feels he only learned a little from that exposure. His French came primarily from school, and he prides himself on the fact that he travels to France regularly to tour with the band and to give music lessons. He was the most vocal about his Cajun identity and the importance of maintaining the French language in Louisiana.

I also spent time early in my field season in two library archives in the area, one in Natchitoches, Louisiana and one at the University of Louisiana, Lafayette. I was also able to have one-on-one interviews with Dr. Carl Brasseaux at the University of Louisiana, Lafayette, Dr. Thomas Klinger at Tulane University in New Orleans, and a staff member at the Center for Development of French in Louisiana (anonymity has been requested). Brasseaux is a leading expert on Louisiana history, specifically the Acadian culture. Klinger is also a leading researcher in the varieties of French spoken in Louisiana; although his focus is primarily on Creole languages, he has published widely on the Cajun variety of French as well. Both were very

helpful in directing me to pertinent resources, encouraging my future research and answering many questions about the importance of language in Louisiana. I attempted, unsuccessfully, on several occasions to contact members of C.R.E.O.L.E., Inc., a group dedicated to preserving the Creole culture and language.

History of Research on Cajuns

Most of what has been written on the Cajuns and Louisiana linguistics has generally been either historical or descriptive. Ethnography has not been addressed robustly since 1985 (with a few exceptions, such as Bernard (2003) and Brasseur (2005), but even these are more historical). Issues of language loss in Louisiana have been dealt with, but not anthropologically and certainly not from an evolutionary standpoint. Those that try to explain the reasons behind language loss usually do not expand beyond linguistic, historical, or sociological explanations to attempt to address why or even how languages in general are assimilated or lost (Bernard 2003; Brasseur 2005; Dubois 1997; Dubois and Melançon 1997; Rottet 2001); they tend to focus only on the features and facts of what is happening to the French language in Cajun or Creole communities. Most are simply descriptive, although some do deal with identity issues regarding language – e.g. trying to explain how much of the population considers themselves Cajun but do not speak Cajun French and why this is an issue (e.g. Dubois and Melançon 1997).

In 1931, William A. Read published a book on the French language in Louisiana. He deals primarily with what he feels were the two main dialects in Louisiana: Creole and Acadian. He defines the Creoles as “the white descendants of the French and Spanish settlers of the Colonial Period” (Read 1931: xvii). The variety of French spoken by these Creoles is described as being not far removed from Standard French. The Acadians, on the other hand, are described as speaking an archaic variety of French, which dates back to the Normandy, Picardy, Saintonge

and Paris areas of France (Read 1931: xviii). Read (1931) provides a brief, if somewhat outdated, history of the French settlers in Louisiana, along with lexical information. He also lists words borrowed from the Indian languages of Louisiana, as well as German, Spanish, English, Italian and various languages of African origins. He addresses issues concerning place names and surnames, but does not provide any in depth reasoning behind why the French dialects in Louisiana should be considered all that different from Standard French, except for some borrowing due to colonial contact with several different culture groups.

By 1959, more interest in the languages of Louisiana had pushed forward more scholarship. The changing ideologies surrounding the importance of understanding the language in southern Louisiana allowed for Joseph LeSage Tisch to publish a small manuscript outlining a more detailed history of the Acadians from their beginnings in France to how they found their way to Louisiana. He takes more care to explain the varieties of French spoken throughout Louisiana in the last chapter: 1) Creole-French spoken in New Orleans and Baton Rouge; 2) Acadian French; and 3) “patois negre” of the St. Martinville area (Tisch 1959: 50).

Tisch (1959) points out that these varieties are based on class distinctions, but does not take the thought much farther than that. While he does not explicitly state that the Creole-French he is referring to is the same as Read (1931) points out (that they are the white descendants of the colonial French), he does reference Read (1931), so we may assume Tisch’s (1959) definition to be the same. He spends a little more time on the “patois negre” (the dialect of French spoken typically by black members of the community) of the Acadian country towns, explaining that there is a hindrance to the spread of this variety of Acadian French in that there is “a false sense of shame that many people have regarding their French” (Tisch 1959: 55). In part this is due to the treatment of students in the classroom, at a time when punishment for speaking anything but

English was very much a problem. Tisch (1959) states the problem of language loss very well when he asks, “What is the greatest danger facing Louisiana-French today? Unquestionably English...” (56).

The literature for the next two decades was primarily dedicated to the descriptive aspects of French in Louisiana, as well as to the class and racial distinctions, brought on in part by the encouragement of the Center for Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL). CODOFIL was formed in 1968 and focused primarily on French education and preservation. For instance, in 1977, Dorice Tentchoff completed her dissertation “Speech in a Louisiana Community”, which focused on the Cajuns of Bienvenue and the language they utilized. Primarily descriptive in nature, she does give a brief history of the community and the Cajuns, but seems to be interested in pointing out that Cajun French is simply different from standard French, not inferior (Tentchoff 1977).

In 1978, Glenn R. Conrad put together a brilliantly thought out compilation of articles that tackles a myriad of issues in the Cajun community. This is the first time that researchers realized that little had been done to explain more than just the history of how the Cajuns arrived in Louisiana. The chapters deal with detailed histories of the Acadian’s move from France to Nova Scotia and their eventual exile by the English, and finally their arrival in Louisiana. Included are chapters on architecture, ecology, ethnography, folk songs, folklore, education and language. Mathé Allain’s (1978) chapter on the social construction of Cajuns explains how little had been done to describe the life of Cajuns before this 1978.

Allain (1978) tells of how she was handed this project by Glenn Conrad and states, “If I had been dismayed at being committed to the essay, I was dismayed tenfold at discovering the scarcity of material” (129). She briefly details the few publications and newspaper articles she

was able to locate in archives at the University of Louisiana in Lafayette, and how she eventually had to rely on her own observations to get any information on the family structure and beliefs of the Cajun people. The only chapter in this volume to deal with language is that of Hosea Phillips (1978). He explains there are three varieties of French spoken in Louisiana: 1) Louisiana French, “spoken by older persons who were educated in French in private schools” (Phillips 1978: 174); 2) Acadian French, spoken by the Cajuns and is considered the most widespread variety; and, 3) Creole French, also known as “gumbo French” or “Negro French spoken only by a small group of people. Phillips (1978) also points out that these varieties are largely only spoken and rarely written. He continues by giving a very brief phonetic description of the differences between the three, but includes little to no linguistic shift or cultural information.

By the early 1980s, “Cajun” had become a more popular concept and was becoming a big tourist attraction, due in part to a pivotal publication for the general public by William Faulkner Rushton in 1979, titled *The Cajuns* (a book found commonly on Cajun bookshelves today). Rushton (1979) wrote a to-the-point description of Cajun history, food, folklore and music for the popular media. Issues of language are left to an appendix. Although he claims that “The heart of the Cajun culture is its language”, he does little more than provide a history of the revival of interest in preserving this part of the culture (Rushton 1979: 289).

In 1984, the Reverend Monsignor Jules O. Daigle undertook the hefty project of producing a Cajun-English dictionary. His introduction, while brief, outlines the highlights of Cajun history and explains the differences between Cajun French and other varieties of French. At a time when many Cajun speakers of French believed they spoke “bad” French, Daigle (1993) explains that theirs was just a different variety of French, neither good nor bad, just theirs. He shows grammatical differences and changes in pronunciation between Standard French and

Cajun French and encourages the speakers of the Cajun variety to be proud of their heritage and their language, not ashamed.

Marjorie R. Esman, in 1985, took on what appears to be the first modern anthropological look at a single Cajun community in Henderson, Louisiana. She gives a detailed history of the Cajuns, along with outlining the importance of family and daily life. Esman (1985) describes gender roles, social interactions, religion, subsistence, politics and even leisure time. Although dedicated to a small, rural community, this first in-depth look at Cajun life is sadly one of the only ethnographic undertakings to date and does not deal extensively with issues of language, but rather with issues of ethnicity.

Surprisingly, what seems to have been written the most over the next decade are popular media books geared at revving up interest in the Cajun culture, both of the Cajuns themselves and the rest of the world. In the early 1990s, academic interest seems to have escalated and more has been written and researched regarding the Cajun culture, the Creole culture and the languages and history of each.

Current Literature

In 1991, Cecyle Trepanier, geographer, discussed the regional identity of Cajuns and Creoles in French Louisiana. She touches briefly on exactly what defines a Cajun, as well as the diverse history of the people living in Louisiana. Trepanier (1991) points out the shift from being called “Acadian” to “Cajun” and also addresses the issue of a shift from being called “Creole” to being called “Cajun”. At the heart of this discussion is again the topic of shame and identity. The shift from Acadian to Cajun brings with it a displeasure to the Acadians at the corruption of the word Acadian. She also points out that at one time, Creoles would have been insulted at being called Cajuns, but Cajuns would have been glad to have been mistaken for

Creole. The social hierarchy in the early 20th century was such that white Creoles were of high standing, whereas Cajuns were considered lowly farmers. Today this has changed as the truncation of “Creoles of Color” has created two differing groups of Creoles. Trepanier (1991) speculates it may have been easier to just let outsiders consider white Creoles as Cajuns.

The move away from issues focused only on identity and history really began with another edited volume by Albert Valdman (1997). The compilation includes articles on Cajuns and Creoles alike and many discuss issue of language and identity. Carl Blyth (1997) takes a sociolinguist approach to language shift and loss in Cajun French communities. He points out that to date most linguistic analysis has focused on older speakers of this dialect and believes that utilizing partially fluent speakers is also valid and much needed to get a complete understanding of the changes Louisiana French is undergoing. Blyth (1997) takes a relatively descriptive approach to show how cultural contact and personal attitudes may have affected the French spoken in Cajun Louisiana, focusing primarily on grammatical issues, borrowing and code switching.

Sylvie Dubois (1997) looks at how to study language in Louisiana most efficiently. Her focus is on data collected regarding the attitudes of speakers toward Cajun French and Standard French as a preliminary analysis of data later presented in much more detail (see Dubois and Melançon (1997) below). Karin Flikeid (1997) also lays out the structure of what she calls Acadian French in a detailed sociolinguistic article. She observes the many dialect differences based on regional location, as well as borrowing and code-switching influences. Overall, Valdman (1997) has brought together many of the main contributors to current research in Louisiana to show what is still missing in the data and to address issues of concern.

An interesting piece published in the Louisiana Law Review in 1997 by Roger K. Ward outlined the extensive changes to the languages in Louisiana based almost entirely on the changes in the laws and constitutions of Louisiana since it received statehood in the early 1800s. While meant to explain the legal language used in Louisiana due to its French-based legal system, Ward (1997) provides an unexpected, detailed history of the French language as it pertains to Louisiana's citizens.

Sylvie Dubois and Megan Melançon (1997) present one of the first quantitative studies analyzing attitudes toward ethnic identity and language in Louisiana. They interviewed over 1000 people from four parishes, ranging in age from 20 to 80, in order to address how people define Cajun and how language affects self-identity as a Cajun. Their results are clear and concise, based on strong methodology and extensive interviews. Dubois and Melançon (1997) find that while language can be a requirement for claiming the Cajun identity, it really varies depending on your age group. For the younger generations, Cajun ancestry and some form of French spoken by parents or grandparents is the most important. For older respondents, Cajun French is not only a requirement, but it must also be the first language spoken. The results of this study will be addressed in greater detail later in this paper.

The past decade has seen a few changes in the approaches to language change and loss in Louisiana. In her 2002 article on language death, Dominique Ryon searches for a functional reason behind why the use of French in Cajun Louisiana is declining rapidly. This article is an interesting take on language loss and death, using Louisiana as a case study for her theoretical point of view. Her main argument is that we should consider some cultures, such as the Cajuns, in the light of assimilation rather than language death. Perhaps this is just an attempt to discover a new way of looking and speaking about language change in general, but she makes a solid

argument for thinking about language in a different way. Ryon (2002) concludes that future research needs to take a new direction and emphasizes the importance of political, educational and economic impacts on language, utilizing Louisiana as a case study.

Kevin J. Rottet (2001), a French linguist at Indiana University, details many descriptive aspects of the varieties of French in the marsh areas of Louisiana in order to add to the lacking number of “case studies of dying languages” (5). The hope here is to aid in the search for a comprehensive theory of language shift and death. He provides a detailed explanation of the current lack of research in the area, as well as definitions and explanations of what language shift and death really are and what may be the overall impacts on a culture group.

Also in 2002, Jacques M. Henry and Carl L. Bankston, III published a book on the ethnic identities of Cajuns from a sociological position. In each of the chapters, they attempt to define what exactly a Cajun is, despite the multitude of possible answers. They look at the insider point of view, the tourism industry and the people who have been transported into the state. They consider the stereotypes of Cajuns and show how the family unit has changed over the years, as well as a brief foray into the ever-changing use of the French language and how that has effected the identities of those in Louisiana (Henry and Bankston 2002).

Since 2002, the literature on Louisiana in general, and language specifically, has been increasing rapidly. No less than six major books have come out, addressing social, political, economic and linguistic impacts on language and identity. For instance, Shane K. Bernard (2003), the historian and head archivist for the Tabasco Company, addresses a much needed, updated historical perspective in a book based on his dissertation. He takes up the history of the Cajuns beginning in World War I and brings their history up to the turn of the 21st century. He

addresses many issues of economics, language and identity, with focuses on politics, tourism and Americanization.

Jacques Henry and Sara LeMenestrel (2003), two leaders in Francophone Louisiana research, edited an excellent volume on conducting fieldwork in Louisiana, primarily from an anthropological frame of reference. The authors take a “how we found it” perspective regarding Louisiana and their research there. The most important points are the discussion on post-colonial issues for anthropology, the inclusion of self in the study, how researchers should define “the field” (physical boundaries, events and actions, symbolic, transnational, and virtual), the issues of being an insider versus an outsider and take into consideration the “natives” use of and reaction to research. After all, we are looking at a post-colonial, modernized American population that is largely literate and very interested in their own heritage. The remainder of the book is extremely useful as well. All of the authors that contributed to this work are either Francophones themselves, or are actually from Louisiana. Topics covered include folk medicine, music, and the impacts of tourism. While language is not explicitly discussed, issues of identity are.

Carl Brasseaux (2005), a history professor at the University of Louisiana in Lafayette, provides a detailed overview of the histories of the four major groups in Louisiana – the Creoles, the Cajuns, the French and the Houma Indians. While Brasseaux (2005) has addressed these histories in other publications, this is a “down and dirty” chronology meant for the general public. The information is highly accessible and puts the overlapping histories in perspective.

It is important to note that this is not an exhaustive list of past and current literature on Louisiana, the Cajuns, or the varieties of French spoken in Louisiana. It is instead a variety of examples of what has been written and researched over the past century, provided to allow a

brief understanding of what has been addressed in the research and literature. Very little has been done to date to try to understand how and why language changes and what effects that may have on ethnic and cultural identities, and none has been found that can be said to utilize evolutionary perspectives to try to answer those questions. For the most part, historical accounts are the most popular form of research, due in large part to the interest of an Americanized group trying to understand where they have come from and the importance of their culture. Linguistic research seems to have been limited primarily to the realm of descriptive linguistics (in order to understand that it is only different, not inferior) and efforts to preserve the culture and language that are viewed as dying. While Cajun French may indeed be on the road to language death, the culture is still very much alive, as evidenced by the rich history, the tight-knit communities and the marked English within the Cajun communities.

CHAPTER FOUR

CAJUN LOUISIANA: YESTERDAY AND TODAY

Louisiana is an excellent case study for examining evolutionary and cultural processes simply because it has a diverse history, with many culture groups and languages having passed through its corridors over the past 300 years (Brasseaux 2005). We must remember that in addition to the various French settlers in Louisiana, there are a number of Native American groups that have lived and remain in the region; other outside influences have also come from the Spanish, the Germans, the Laotians, the Vietnamese and the Anglos that have led to the Americanized culture that makes up the residents of Louisiana today (Bernard 2003; Brasseaux 2005; Kondert 1990). The focus in this project will be primarily on the language and history of what is now known as the Cajun community, but a full understanding of the Cajuns requires some background on the entirety of the history of Louisiana.

Cajuns, Creoles and the French

It is perhaps necessary, before beginning on a complete history of Louisiana, to explain the differences between Creoles, Acadians, Cajuns and the French. The majority of the population to first take holdings in Louisiana were the French aristocrats and military, as well as those slaves brought in to work the plantations and help settle the colony. Those of Francophone heritage who had been born in the colony were never considered the same in status as those born in France, even if they happened to be siblings. As is typical with many colonial settlements, those individuals born outside of their European country of origin were referred to as “Creoles”. In Louisiana, specifically, they came to be known as “White Creoles” in order to be distinguished from the incoming slave population, who were referred to as “Creoles of Color” or “Black Creoles” (Brasseaux 2005). The word Creole itself holds many different meanings and

will change depending on its context (see Chapter 5 for a discussion on Creole as a linguistic issue).

The next influx of population was primarily the Acadians, or Cajuns, who were also from France originally, but came to Louisiana via Nova Scotia. They were not considered Creoles, but in more recent years, some White Creoles have taken on the ethnic designation of Cajun to ease the difficulties of explaining ethnic backgrounds and to distinguish themselves from the Creoles of Color. This mix of ethnic identities has created a racial tension that is still played out today.

From France to *Louisiane*

In order to appreciate the significance of French in Louisiana, a brief understanding of the history of the French language in general is necessary. By the 17th century, the elite of France had determined that a standardized language was a necessity in order to properly communicate with one another and maintain their national identity. As a result, under the rule of Louis XIV, The Royal Academy of France was founded in 1633. One of their main tasks was to develop the French language and create a grammar and dictionary for the general populace. The goal was to have only this language taught in schools and for everyone living in France to conform to its usage. Many problems arose out this, however. Many of the words and expressions chosen by the Academy were those of the elite groups, leaving the “common” tongue to extinction. Many words with origins other than Latin or Greek were obliterated and those words that were common were “fancified” (Tisch 1959).

It is important to note that this process of developing a standard French began in 1633 and that settlers from various regions of France had already begun to journey to Nova Scotia and the lands of America (Appendix A). During the 16th and 17th centuries, settlers from the west

coast of France (Figure 2) began migrating to Port Royal, Nova Scotia in an attempt to escape the religious warfare that was tearing France apart. The first wave of settlers was a small group of Huguenots trying to establish a new colony in the Bay of Fundy. They were largely unsuccessful due to small numbers and harsh conditions, and in 1613, English privateers destroyed the colony and eventually Scottish Calvinists took their place (Brasseaux 2005).



Figure 2: Western coastal area of France (c. 1755), settlers who left for Nova Scotia are from highlighted parishes (Anjou, Poitou, Angoumois, Saintonge, Aunis)

In 1632, France officially took control of the area again, and successfully established a colony with nearly 300 willing, Catholic settlers. They were able to expel all but a few of the Scottish settlers and began to excel with their agrarian lifestyle. The area became known as Acadia and thrived under the Company of New France (Brasseux 2005). In 1654, the British again demanded control of the island of Nova Scotia (Figure 3). The French-Acadians remained on their lands and passively resisted the Crown of England. They wished to remain neutral in the fight against their homeland France, despite repeated demands from England to swear allegiance to the Crown. The Acadians continued to thrive and their populations grew to 18,000 people by 1755. However, the year 1755 also marked the beginning of the Grand Derangement, when the British ordered the deportation of all Acadians. Regardless of resistance by the Acadians, they were eventually dispersed along the eastern seaboard from Massachusetts to Georgia to “detention centers” in the British colonies. Nearly half of the population died and attempts to escape grew rapidly (Brasseux 2005).

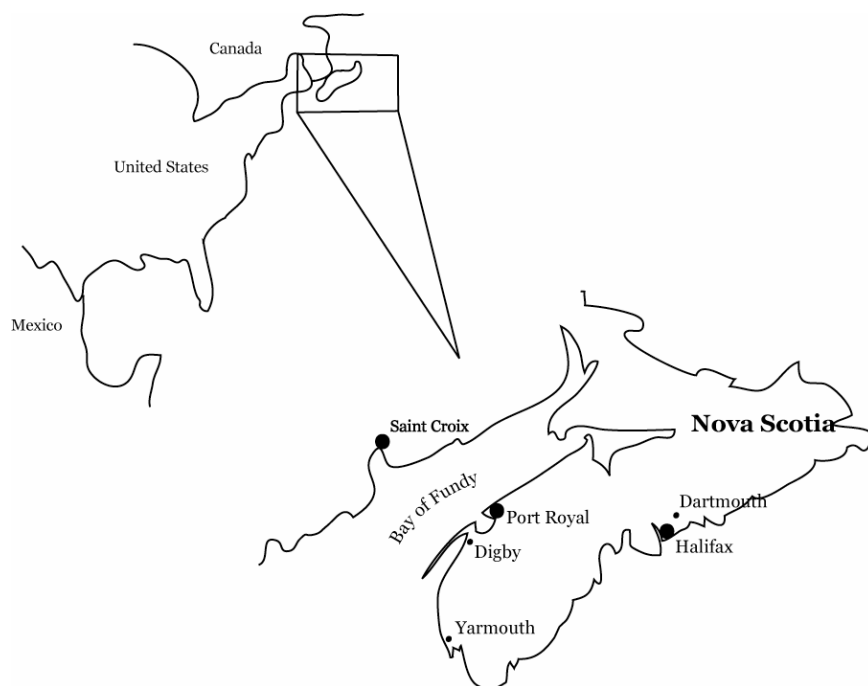


Figure 3: Nova Scotia

During this time, the French colonization of Louisiana had been marginally successful with military settlements and plantation owners coming in to settle. Rene Robert Cavelier, a fur trader from France, had traveled down the Mississippi in 1682. He claimed the Lower Mississippi River area for France and named the country for King Louis XIV, calling it *Louisiane*. France did its best to colonize this new area by sending criminal and indigents to populate the territory, but quickly realized their mistake because these were not “model” citizens with which to build a new territory on foreign soil (Ward 1997). After rethinking their options, France began offering concessions to wealthy citizens, including land, livestock and supplies, for those willing to go to the New World and settle the new colonies in Louisiana (Ward 1997).

The largest influx of the French into Louisiana began around 1720, with the building of the French military holdings (Brasseaux 2005). Despite harsh conditions, many of the military personnel opted to remain in Louisiana, mostly because of the possibility of being granted land ownership, something that was not possible to any but the aristocrats in France (Brasseaux 2005). New Orleans quickly became a booming trade-center and the sugar plantations began to grow even more popular.

Financial strain on France caused Louisiana to become a burden by 1785, when the Acadian settlers arrived. The Acadians had regrouped in New Orleans from their detention centers along the Eastern seaboard, with the hopes of aid from their homeland France. Unfortunately, France was not stable financially and offered no help, except to allow the Acadians to settle anywhere in Louisiana they desired (Brasseaux 2005). The Acadian exiles arrived in five waves and, after an initial loss of population due to the heat and harsh environments of the swamps, marshlands, and prairies, the remaining population was able to survive by growing sugar cane, utilizing the flora and fauna in the fresh and saltwater areas, and

generalized farming, eventually occupying the majority of Southern Louisiana (Brasseaux 2005; see below for a detailed discussion).



Figure 4: The Twenty-Two Parishes of Louisiana (reprinted with permission from Shane K. Bernard (2003) from *Cajuns: Americanization of a People*)

Due to financial struggles, France ceded Louisiana to Spain in 1762, with little effect on the Acadians (Brasseaux 2005). They were able to maintain their own cultural identity and the Spanish, also claiming financial strain, ceded Louisiana back to France by 1803. Less than one month later, Napoleon sold the land holdings to the United States in the Louisiana Purchase (Brasseaux 2005). Louisiana was accepted into the Union and ratified their first constitution in 1812 (Ward 1997).

The original Louisiana constitution changed rapidly over the next 100 years, as did its language, as Louisiana fought with the idea of becoming American and of claiming English as the “official” language in law and the public. Concern over being accepted by the United States

was at the forefront, although a bilingual stance was promoted repeatedly in subsequent constitutions (Ward 1997; Appendix B). By the 1850s, the Acadians were a strong Democratic presence in Louisiana and influenced the use of French as the official language in Louisiana (Brasseaux 2005). In spite of their efforts to hold on to the French language, in 1868 English only schools were established and all remaining French provisions were removed from the constitution. In 1879, the Democratic Party once again was in power in Louisiana, and they reversed the English only education ruling, allowing for primary education to be taught in French, but left the final decisions up to the individual parishes (Ward 1997).

The biggest change came in 1921, with the absolution of all French language laws and the reinstatement of English-only education. Throughout all of these changes, the Acadians continued to fight to maintain their identity as Acadians and to speak French. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, the atrocities of corporal punishment in public schools had come to light and were being fought against. The state Legislature passed Act 409 to authorize the Center for Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL) and exposure to the French language and culture was allowed once again in schools. A French-Louisianan Renaissance had begun (Ward 1997). In 1974, the most recent version of the Louisiana Constitution was written. Although not French specific, it did have a general statement for all culture groups, giving all people rights of language, history and culture and acknowledged the right to promote and preserve their language (Ward 1997).

According to Carl Brasseaux (interview, July 27, 2005), the economic status of Louisiana has always been difficult. As primarily agrarian people, the Cajuns suffered from weather problems and lived mainly in a bare subsistence pattern, completely dependant upon their crops after arriving in Louisiana. Brasseaux further points out that as America advanced

technologically and prospered at the turn of the 20th century, Louisiana fell far behind (interview, July 27, 2005). By the time of the Great Depression, people in Louisiana were desperate and would take any job that became available. In 1938, both a major oil discovery on lands between Baton Rouge and New Orleans and the success of the Golden Triangle area of Texas created many jobs for the Cajuns. At this time, many of them still spoke French as a first language and were forced to learn English in order to get work.

Cultural Influences in Louisiana

The Cajuns of Louisiana have come into contact with many other groups, which has added to the diversity of the area. The original inhabitants of Louisiana were several groups of Native Americans, each with their own unique culture and language. Very little has been written about these groups because they were assimilated quickly into the colonial powers with which they came into contact. The power of the French to assimilate other cultures was so great that the Houma tribe actually considers their variety of French to be their native tongue (Brasseaux 2005). Read (1931) lists the four language families present in Louisiana at time of contact as the Tunican, the Siouan, the Muskogean and the Caddoan (76). He also gives a brief description of the Mobilienne creole that was a mix of French and the languages of the Choctaws and other southern tribes. Many words present today in the Cajun and other French dialects of Louisiana are borrowed words from these language families, particularly words for plants, animals and place names unique to the area.

There have also been other groups to immigrate into Louisiana: the Germans, the Laotians and the Vietnamese. German settlers arrived in Louisiana in 1721, under the colonization incentives from France, and eventually settled what is known today as the German Coast of Louisiana off the Mississippi River south of New Orleans (Kondert 1990). They were

rapidly assimilated by the French colonists, even taking “Gallacized versions” of their names, for example Zehringer became Zeringue and Dubs became Toups (Kondert 1990). Laotians and Vietnamese settlers came into Louisiana on the heels of the Vietnam War in the 1970s. They found a niche for themselves in the fishing industry, cutting into many of the jobs the locals had already established there. There has been a little ethnic tension, but overall these immigrants from Southeast Asia have acculturated well (Brasseaux 2005).

In the post Civil War era, Brasseaux points out that Louisiana was hit hard by weather and floods, worm infestations and yellow fever, not to mention a failing bank and real estate business (interview July 27, 2005). By the 1920s, Louisiana was in a deep economic depression, more so than the rest of the country, due in part a major hurricane in the late 1920s, followed by major floods in 1927; people were more desperate than ever before and were becoming more cash needy. In 1934, according to Brasseaux, a large oil strike in the Basco fields opened up roustabout jobs, in which people did not need education or skills to get; men could earn five times in the drilling business as what they could in farming (interview July 27, 2005). Then, with the start of World War II, a major shift in the culture of Cajun Louisiana began as many young men ventured away from their isolated communities to become interpreters and soldiers and women began to work to support their troops in war (Bernard 2003).

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the outside world began to take notice of Louisiana and the Cajuns. The term “Cajun” became more popular as tourism encouraged outsiders to partake in the interesting foods and music. The Americanization of the Cajuns came into full swing as television and mass communication became more common (Bernard 2003). Large urban areas began to boom around the universities in Baton Rouge, Lafayette and Lake Charles as parents realized their children needed an education to get out of economic poverty. Louisiana was no

longer the isolated, backwoods part of the country it had once been (Bernard 2003; Brasseaux 2005).

In 1971, at the peak of revitalization of the Cajun culture, the Louisiana state legislator defined twenty-two parishes of Louisiana as officially “Acadiana” with the intent of it becoming an economic district under the heritage of Cajuns (Figure 4). This newly named “Cajun Country” unfortunately excluded a few areas with heavy concentrations of Cajun culture, due to oversights on the part of The International Relations Association of Acadiana (TIRAA), who convinced the state legislator to make this designation (Bernard 2003).

By the 1980s, the economy in Louisiana had fallen sharply again, and people were fighting to survive as the oil industry failed. However, a renewed interest in the people and food of Louisiana began with Hollywood portrayals of the “backward locals” and tourism grew; with it came a drive to preserve the culture and language of the Cajuns (Bernard 2003; Brasseaux 2005; Dubois and Melançon 1997). Along with this push to tourism, an interesting ideology surrounding what a “true” Cajun really is came about.

The Identity of “Cajun” and the Ecology of Louisiana

What truly defines a Cajun? Is it lineage? Is it language? Is it just being able to cook gumbo (or know what gumbo is)? Louisiana today is a mix of cultural backgrounds because of its diverse history and Americanization (Bernard 2003). Many groups have come into the state over the past century and all add to the remarkable variety of culture in Louisiana. As a result, there are many definitions of exactly what constitutes a Cajun. These range from only those who are direct descendants of the original settlers from Nova Scotia being able to claim the Cajun name to the belief that one must only be related to someone from Louisiana. Many believe the ability to speak Cajun French and the knowledge of how to cook the right foods are required,

while some think there just has to be an understanding of the joy of life and importance of family (Bernard 2003; Brasseaux 2005; Dubois and Melançon 1997). “Laissez les bon temps roulez [sic]” [Let the good times roll] is a common phrase that defines much of the outward feelings behind being Cajun.

As part of this fluctuating definition, the outside world has subjected the Cajuns to “conflicting stereotypes”, with which nearly every publication on the Cajuns begins (Esman 1985: 1). The first presents Cajuns almost as noble savages: devout, hardworking, fun-loving and full of virtue, yet backwards and quaint. The second is simply that they are lazy, uneducated and will never amount to much more than slovenly peasants (Bernard 2003, Brasseaux 2005, Conrad 1978, Esman 1985). With the tourism industry taking an interest in Cajun culture, the culinary aspects, music and traditions of the people of southern Louisiana have come under closer examination; everyone wants to know more about them.

Perhaps because of their challenging history, or their strong Catholic ties, family is of the utmost importance. Large gatherings at holidays are not uncommon, and sometimes these gatherings occur just because it is time to have one (Esman 1985). Much of the culture is centered on food, music, dancing, telling jokes and being together (Boudreaux 2003; Esman 1985). One young participant, Clarence, explained that his family actually had to remodel and add on to his grandparents’ house because the floor would no longer hold up the entire family at once, and they had grown tired of having Christmas celebrations in shifts.

A central problem in defining “Cajun” is that, until the late 1970s, “Cajun” was seemingly ephemeral. According to Mathé Allain (1978), no real anthropological perspectives had been employed to understand those living in Cajun country until she had a ethnographic project dumped in her lap. Allain (1978) had a difficult time finding anything in print on the

matter of Cajun identity and finally had to resort to personal experiences from living in the state for 15 years in order to come to any conclusions. Before the 1970s, the typical Cajun was a farmer and fed his family by supplementing garden crops with hunting and fishing. Community was a necessity and it was not until the introduction of fancy new technologies (dishwashers, electric stoves) that women began to cook and clean only inside the home instead of outdoors where they could talk to neighbors as they worked (Allain 1978). Even today, the process of defining what a Cajun is remains difficult at best.

One informant, Charles, explained to me that the best way to describe a Cajun was to describe what is not Cajun. As we sat on the front porch of a house that he and three of his friends were painting, in the middle of July in Lafayette, he claimed that his father said it best, “people who are willing to give up their bowl of gumbo to taste this American hot dog” are not really Cajun. Charles further explained to me that Cajun is “the way you live, the way you think, your ethics, you know? It’s a general lifestyle. Like, here we are sittin on the porch, in the summertime, no air conditioning, whereas you have some little coonasses, the other ... contrary word, sittin in the air conditioning. Coonasses are the people... they don’t really embrace the culture that they have grown up in...or they’ve lost really the elements of being Cajun.”

Social Relationships

In 1978, Allain claimed that “Family life has ... remained largely unchanged” (139). She, and other researchers, have pointed out that the family units are physically and emotionally close; they are extended families that live near one another and gather regularly, often on a daily basis and at least for Sunday dinner (Allain 1978, Bernard 2003, Esman 1985). Early towns in southern Louisiana were comprised of extended family groups; people often married their cousins and families commonly had at least 12 children (Esman 1985). They often had large

gatherings involving massive amounts of food, alcohol, music and dancing (Allain 1978). Furthermore, men and women had a strong division of labor and there were “well-defined male and female roles” (Allain 1978: 140). Men tended to fish, hunt and even prided themselves in their cooking, whereas women were left to the housekeeping, cooking and the raising of children. Allain (1978) points out that women’s roles are not strict because they would, on occasion, fish or hunt with their husbands for leisure. These typical gender roles did not infer that “Acadian women are dominated, submissive, or compliant!” (Allain 1978: 140). For instance, many women have been known to take over the family farm or business when needed, and they were a power to be reckoned within the family (Allain 1978).

Allain (1978) points out that this sense of community, with the lack of a generation gap due to the closeness of family, is what made the Cajuns an enduring culture capable of absorbing any and all outside influences. Esman (1985) agrees with much of Allain’s (1978) assessment. In her ethnography on the community in Henderson, Louisiana, Esman (1985) points out that nuclear families made up the majority of the town, a typical Western make-up. Although the family living in a given house may be only the parents and children, the dependence upon extended family is far-reaching. Generally, families will avoid putting older parents in nursing homes and all members of the extended family (siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandparents) will come to the aid of any individual at any time, given they have the means to help (Esman 1985:40-41). Even those members that cannot afford financial help will come with physical labor, emotional support, or even offer to find someone else who can offer the specific expertise needed.

Henry and Bankston (2002), sociologists, warn against making generalizations about the makeup of the typical Cajun family. They argue that they are not the typical extended family in

that they have little to no communal farming and married children do not live with their parents (Henry and Bankston 2002). A gendered division of labor can also be considered skewed because men do a good deal of cooking (Henry and Bankston 2002). However, Esman (1985) points out that this is mostly outdoor cooking of meats and seafood and women do the majority of cooking and cleaning tasks around the home. While children used to stay close to home to gain secondary educations, children today go far away to school (Henry and Bankston 2002).

Henry and Bankston (2002) do concede that the Cajuns have unique culture features because kin relationships, religion, and food are important, but point out each of these are also important to other groups. They attempt to caution the reader and researcher that the Cajun identity has become somewhat romanticized and ask us to consider the issues of illiteracy, male domination and racism (Henry and Bankston 2002). They mention the transmission of culture briefly by addressing the problem of children not learning French, how to cook, or how to hunt and trap (Henry and Bankston 2002). If a child does not learn these things, are they really Cajun? The short answer is yes; they can be because the Cajun identity is too variable to place specific boundaries upon (Henry and Bankston 2002).

The size of Cajun families was traditionally thought of as larger than the typical American or Western family, but today it is about the same size, according to the 1990 Census data (Henry and Bankston 2002). While the difference in average family size was only about one child, an argument can be made that Cajuns consider themselves to have unusually large families because of the importance of members outside of the immediate nuclear family (grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins), as well as the close proximity of living arrangements (Allain 1978; Esman 1985; Henry and Bankston 2002).

Marriage is extremely important to Cajuns, in part because they often marry other Cajuns (Henry and Bankston 2002). Esman (1985) explains that Cajuns, even today, tend to marry at a relatively young age and most of them still live near the homes of one of their parents (Esman 1985: 40-41). This is due in part to the initial geographic and ethnic isolation of the Acadians; even if they married a non-Acadian, they still married a Francophone (Henry and Bankston 2002). This level of endogamy (marriage inside the group) is declining today as more Cajuns push out of their comfortable south Louisiana areas to go to school or to work (Henry and Bankston 2002). Henry and Bankston (2002) suggest that the role of religion in this largely Catholic community, an isolated geography, a strong system of moral and value retention, the turning of outsiders into insiders, and homogamy (the tendency to marry those who are economically and politically similar) are major reasons for this high level of endogamy.

Politics

The issue of politics has been virtually ignored in the literature on Cajun identity. In a brief review of Louisiana law terminology, Ward (1997) describes the Acadians and later Cajuns as primarily Democratic, but explains they held very little power in the state Legislature until the 1970s. Esman (1985) discusses about a general mistrust of government locally in Henderson, Louisiana; however, it has lessened on a state level overall, in part because Edwin Edwards was elected the first Cajun governor in the history of Louisiana. Edwards was so popular that not only did he stay in office for the maximum term from 1972-1980, but he was elected again in 1983 (Esman 1985). Bernard (2003) also discusses the beauty of Edwin Edwards running under the “Cajun Power” slogan for his campaign. T-shirts and posters sporting a red fist (akin to the “Black Power” slogan of the 1960s) holding a crawfish were very popular during his campaign and well after (Bernard 2003).

Religion

When they left France, the second wave of settlers to Nova Scotia were in part fleeing a long and costly religious war between the Catholics and the Huguenots (Brasseaux 2005). Most of those settlers were Roman Catholic and remain such in Louisiana today (Brasseaux 2005; Esman 1985). In fact, one reason the Acadians were expelled from Nova Scotia was their refusal to convert from Catholicism to the Anglican Church (Esman 1985). She further explains about the community in Henderson: “Church groups might be the strongest interest groups in town” (60). All children there are baptized, sent to religion classes and confirmed; “in most communities the church is the most conspicuous building in town (sometimes rivaled by a city hall or courthouse), and it is the one that commands the most respect” (Esman 1985: 61).

While church attendance may not be common among adults, they still claim to be religious; many homes have religious icons spread around the house and yards (Esman 1985). The main community organizations in Henderson are related to the church, for both men and women (Esman 1985). However, people breaking away from the Catholic church is not unheard of. For instance, the popular Bible Church in Henderson has a large and loyal congregation (Esman 1985). Bernard (2003) points out that there was an expansion of “Bible belt fundamentalists” in the 1970s (124). Many people wanted access to the Pill and other contraceptives, as well as to be able to divorce and remarry, none of which was allowed under the tenants of the Catholic church (Bernard 2003). While the number of Catholic churches in Lafayette area double from 1965 to 1999, the Protestant churches quadrupled (Bernard 2003).

Brasseaux (2005) argues that “the role of religion in the Cajun and Creole communities – too long the province of the Catholic clergy or church employees – requires objective reevaluation, and the migration of thousands of Cajuns and Creoles into Protestant evangelical

and Christian fundamentalist sects awaits scholarly examination and analysis” (151). Despite the fact that many of the holidays and celebrations appear to revolve around religion, such as Christmas and Mardi Gras, there does not seem to be a great deal of literature on the subject of religion in Cajun communities.

Subsistence and Ecology

Today the population of Louisiana is roughly 4.5 million people in approximately 2000 square miles of land (US Census 2004). The environment of Southern Louisiana is extremely diverse with four distinct areas : the levee lands, the prairie, the swamps, and the marshlands (Comeaux 1978). As a result, Malcolm Comeaux (1978) argues that there was a definite development of “four unique Cajun subcultures” (144). Historically, in France and Nova Scotia, Acadians were agrarian and mostly lived in marshlands the in Canada (Comeaux 1978). They learned to build dykes while in France from the inhabitants of the Low Countries (Comeaux 1978). There they grew grains, wheat, oats, rye and barley, flax, hemp for home use, garden crops (cabbage and beans), apples, and raised livestock. Cattle were raised for meat, milk, butter, hides and were used as draft animals (Comeaux 1978). They also raised pig, sheep, poultry and horses (Comeaux 1978). While in Nova Scotia, fishing, furs and wood collection became important as the Acadians became “well adapted to this harsh environment” (Comeaux 1978: 144). When the deportees finally arrived in Louisiana, it was to an “alien environment” (Comeaux 1978: 145).

Levee Lands

The levee lands are located along major rivers and bayous, mostly along the Mississippi River above the German Coast, as well as along Bayous Teche and Lafourche (Comeaux 1978). These are rich river overflow areas in which no crops traditionally grown by the Acadians in

Canada or France could survive (Comeaux 1978). They were initially “small independent farmers (*petits habitants*) producing enough for subsistence and little for export” (Comeaux 1978: 146). Their primary crops were rice, corn, and cotton, with imported vegetables, such as okra, as garden items. They raised cattle on occasion for protein and for a few other uses. The settlers even adjusted to not having apples to make hard cider by switching to beer (Comeaux 1978). Even hunting was utilized on occasion and frequently bear, small deer, and various bird species were taken in this area (Vert 1967).

As they struggled to adjust to their new environment, the Acadians in the levee lands were instructed in which crops to grow by the previously established French government. The Acadians elicited further help from the more experienced Germans already in the area (Comeaux 1978), who had learned from the Indians what would grow when they had first arrived (Kondert 1990). After the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the demand for more sugar plantations started to drive out the small farms of the Acadians. While some managed to hold their land, despite the expense of maintaining the levees to keep back the rising waters of the rivers and bayous, others simply stayed on as laborers (Comeaux 1978). Another small change in their lifestyle from that of Nova Scotia was a new type of house developed. These houses were made of easily accessible heavy timber, with mud and moss packed between the posts to seal them. Every house had a wide front porch to sit on in the evenings of the hot summers, as well as a steep, raised roof for drainage during the heavy rains (Comeaux 1978). Those that could not afford to stay in the levee lands moved to the swamp and the marshy regions of southern Louisiana to try to make a living.

The Swamps

The only swamp in Southern Louisiana to flood on a regular basis is the Atchafalaya Swamp. The other two primary swamplands are in the Lafourche basin and around Lake

Maurepas. The few Acadians who settled in the swamplands abandoned agriculture and gardening because of frequent flooding. Abundant water resources were available, including crawfish, many varieties of freshwater fish, turtles, and alligators (Comeaux 1978). They learned quickly that the old methods of subsistence employed in Nova Scotia were not as successful in the swamps and implemented new techniques learned from commercial fisherman from farther north on the Mississippi (Comeaux 1978). Along with catching fish for their families and for sale to others, they also sold game, such as duck, crawfish, turtles, crab, and frogs, in order to be able to buy vegetables and other necessities for fishing and living. Spanish moss was collected to sell as well (Comeaux 1978). One anonymous author in 1853 wrote a letter for Harper's Magazine outlining the abundance of prey any hunter could find in the Louisiana swamps. He lists, as top choices for eating or trophy mounting: alligator, "fresh water shark" (gar), red flamingo, egret, trumpeter-swan, blue-heron, wild-goose, crane, snake-bird, pelican, ibis, osprey, white-headed eagles, fish, reptiles, and insects (Anonymous 1967).

Flood season was welcomed by the swamp dwellers because of the increased supply in game and fish that could be caught and sold (Comeaux 1978). Many Cajuns chose to abandon the heavy timber homes of the levee lands and built "crude structures" that were easy to replace after a harsh season (Comeaux 1978). However, they still had to have the small boats and pontoons to get around in the swamps to follow the fish. Many opted to adopt houseboats instead, and began a rather nomadic lifestyle as a result. Today, due to changes caused by increased levees being built and a decrease in the populations living in the swamp areas, there has been a shift from subsistence hunting to tourism in this part of Louisiana. Those that could not handle the unpredictable, difficult life in the swamps moved further east into the prairie and marshlands.

The Prairie

The prairie of Southern Louisiana is a large grassland region punctuated by large wooded areas. It was divided by early French and Spanish colonies into two main sections, named for the native populations: Opelousas to the north and Attakapas to the south (Comeaux 1978). The methods of subsistence brought from the levee lands and swamps were not suitable to life on the prairies, but the Acadians that moved there compensated by living near the streams and wooded areas, as well as raising livestock and growing crops (Comeaux 1978). Because of the minor differences between the eastern and western areas of the prairie, they “can be divided into two cultural zones, the corn-and-cotton section and the rice-and-cattle section” (Comeaux 1978: 152). The corn-and-cotton section to the east was the most productive, which consisted not only of regularly rotated crops, but also abundant pasture areas for cattle and horses (Comeaux 1978). The Acadians were also able to grow sweet potatoes and had garden crops of okra, melon, and beans (Comeaux 1978).

To the west, “hard claypan” sediments underlie the topsoil, which restricted the number of supportable settlements, until an explosion of immigrants from the Midwest US in the 1880s moved down because of the promise of good cattle land (Comeaux 1978). Rice was grown as a secondary “bonus” crop in the areas that did not have sufficient grasses for grazing cattle (Comeaux 1978). Today it is not uncommon to also see rice farms with crawfish traps in them. Eventually this area was taken over by Anglo ranchers and rice growers but it still maintains a very Cajun flavor, even today (Comeaux 1978). The early Cajun settlers decided to keep the heavy timber style house with its large porch and steep roofs, similar to those in the levee lands.

The Marshlands

The marshlands are a large, flat area that are under water most of the year and is dominated by natural grasses (Comeaux 1978). They are usually divided into the Deltaic Plain to the east and the Chenier Plain to the west (Comeaux 1978). The Deltaic Plain is referred to as the “floating marsh (*flotant*)” (Comeaux 1978: 156). Because it is not firm, it does not support cattle ranching, but provides plentiful hunting, trapping, fishing and shellfish collection (Comeaux 1978). While some traditional crops were able to be grown, the proximity to New Orleans gave great trading opportunities. People would take their surplus from hunting, trapping and fishing to the market in New Orleans and trade for necessities, such as material goods and vegetables. As a result, the population of the area is amazingly dense in comparison to the Chenier Plain, even today (Comeaux 1978).

The Chenier Plain, on the other hand, is firmer with isolated, small sandy areas that are suitable for grazing cattle (Comeaux 1978). Some of these sandy areas sustain oak tree growth, which are used for wood. Trapping and fishing on the Chenier Plain are found only in Cameron, one of the southern most communities on the marsh (Comeaux 1978). This plain was avoided at first because of the bountiful mosquito population, as well its isolated and small size of habitable areas. Again, the traditional homes found in the levee lands and prairies were abandoned. Instead, large frame houses made from imported, sawed lumber were constructed in sparse distributions on the landscape (Comeaux 1978).

While many Cajuns today still rely on fishing, shellfish collection, hunting, farming and gardening, the abundance of wage and labor jobs have increased with the discovery of oil (Bernard 2003; Brasseaux 2005). Tourism, oil, factories, construction, and a myriad of other hourly position are gaining in importance as the Cajuns move toward a more Americanized

culture (Bernard 2003; Henry and Bankston 2002). Based on personal observations, the “traditional” house styles have become typical American homes. In many areas, prefabricated homes seem to be popular, but there are also many brick and frame houses as well. Esman (1985) points out that despite the move to hourly wages and labor jobs, the Cajun attitudes about work remains;

“The idea that work is necessary but unpleasant, done because there is no other choice but not valued for its own sake, differs markedly from the Protestant work ethic that prevails in other parts of the United States. Work to a Cajun is neither a virtue nor an end in itself, nor is it something that one should want to do. It is a necessary evil, a means to an end, a way to stay alive (and, today, to afford the luxuries that money can buy). It is not expected that one will like one’s job – in fact, one is expected to complain about working” (90).

Regardless, the money earned in blue collar pursuits tends to be much higher and more compelling than what can be earned in farming and hunting (Henry and Bankston 2002).

Folklife

Good food, good music, good stories, a card game and a joke or two seem to be essential for any Cajun gathering. According to “Boudreaux’s Cajun Party Guide”, any good Cajun will start a party off with a couple of jokes and stories to entertain the guests before serving up a big pot of gumbo or boiled crabs and crawfish with potatoes and corn (Boudreaux 2003). Boudreaux (2003) goes on to explain how to play *bouree* (a cut-throat version of poker) and what is appropriate, Cajun style music for a party.

A good sense of humor seemed to be important to all of my interview participants, as well as the other people I spoke with. On more than one occasion, I was told that any good Cajun would know at least one Boudreaux and Thibodaux joke, which was usually quickly followed by that person’s favorite one. Boudreaux and Thibodaux are the stereotypically dumb, backward Cajuns that everyone knows at least one of. They are sometimes cousins, sometimes

alone or sometimes with their wives in the jokes. Told to me by one participant (and later by members of my family) was the following:

Boudreaux and Thibodaux were out huntin duck in the marsh one mornin. It was cold and foggy and der were no ducks anywhere to be seen. Boudreaux and Thibodaux were jus sittin der wit dey guns up, waitin for dem duck to come by. All of a sudden, out of de sky come dis big, silver, round disk and it slowly lowered down and settled on de marsh.

Boudreaux look to Thibodaux and say “Man, whatchu tink dat is?” and Thibodaux say, “Mais, I don’ know!”

Then a door on dat round silver disk, it slowly open up and Boudreaux say to Thibodaux, “Man, whatchu tink dat is?” and Thibodaux say “Mais, I don’ know!”

Then this little creature start to walk slowly out dat door and Boudreaux say to Thibodaux, “Man, whatchu tink dat is?” and Thibodaux say, “Bou, I don’ know, but put on a pot o rice!”

The Cajun English accent and French flavor words (*mais* [but]) are important to the telling of Boudreaux and Thibodaux jokes. Even if a person does not have a marked Cajun English accent or does not speak French, they will certainly bring out their best impression of one for these jokes.

On the subject of folklore, Dana David (2003) introduces a very underrepresented portion of the folkways of many rural Cajuns. Cajun *traiteurs* (treaters) are generally found in rural areas and “treat” people’s illness with prayer (David 2003). The process originally consisted of three rounds of prayer with 10-15 minute intervals, but today it has condensed to a single prayer session (David 2003). There are no payments involved, but gifts may be accepted by a *traiteur* (David 2003). Because the *traiteur* generally prays over a member of opposite sex, both men and women participate in the custom (David 2003). This is an ambiguous and private occupation that is not spoken of often (David 2003). David (2003) makes no mention of ties to religious beliefs or Catholicism in her description of this rare and rapidly disappearing folkway.

Naming Practices

It seems as though everybody wants to know your name when you are in Cajun Louisiana. All of my participants, as well as other people I spoke with, asked for my family names within a few moments of meeting. At first, I did not think to give my genealogy, but realized quickly that it was in my best interest to go back a couple of generations to my own Bonvillian, Dupin and Fontenot background. Ties to the community and to each other are seemingly easily discerned through names, despite the fact that Fontenot and Landry are about as common in Cajun communities as are Smith and Jones in American communities (Esman 1985). Place names are generally French or Indian, and business names have shown greater success when they have something considered typically Cajun tied to them (Bernard 2003). Common phrases and names are even “Cajunized”, such as “Geaux Cup” (“Go Cup”, a drive-through daiquiri shop) or “Phideaux” (Fido).

Cajun French and Cajun English

Language in Louisiana is a very diverse and interesting topic of discussion. As we have already seen, historically the French spoken in Louisiana has been considered an archaic variety because the settlers that moved to Nova Scotia were never informed of the standardization that took place as a result of the Royal Academy proceedings in the early 17th century (Tisch 1959), but we must be careful to not assume that means that Cajun French *is* 17th century French, because it is not (Daigle 1993). When the exiled Acadians arrived in Louisiana, their French counterparts already there considered them low-status, in many ways because of their seemingly outdated mode of speech (Brasseaux 2005). Contact with the native populations in Louisiana, the Spanish, the Germans and the English eventually created a very different economic and

social situation in which the Acadian French evolved into what it is today (Brasseaux 2005; Daigle 1993; Dubois and Melançon 1997; Phillips 1978; Rottet 2001).

The use of the French language in Cajuns homes has been steadily declining since the turn of the 20th century (Figure 5). The percentages of speakers in Figure 5 are only an indication of how many speakers born in the given years speak French today. Shane K. Bernard states that from this information we can estimate the percentage of French speakers in the corresponding years (letter to author March 2, 2006). As we can see from the information provided by the 1990 Public Use Microdata Samples, the percentage of French speakers in the Cajun community declined from 82.95% in 1906 to 3.31% in 1985¹.

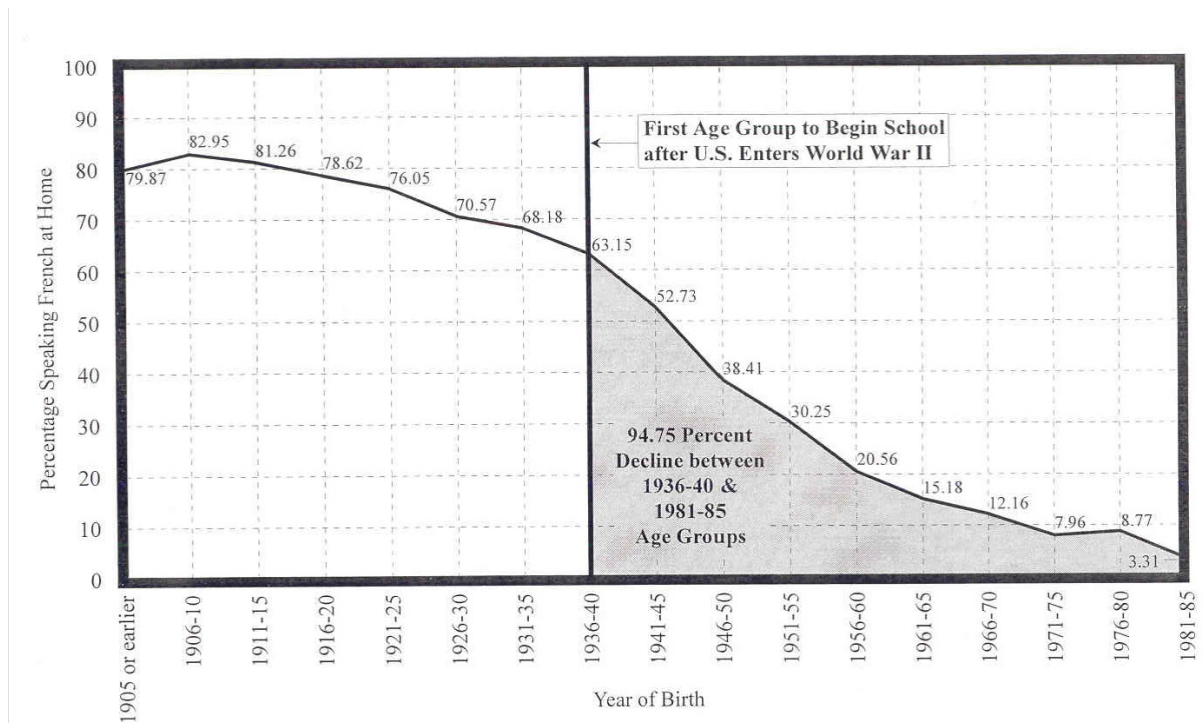


Figure 5: Percentage of Cajuns Speaking French at Home, 1990 (used with permission from Shane K. Bernard).

¹ The 1990 US Census information is used here instead of the available 2000 US Census due to conflicting views on the validity of population numbers regarding the residents of Louisiana.

Despite this rapid decline in French as a first or used language, there are still very marked features of English that can readily identify a person as Cajun. Henry (2003), a Louisiana researcher originally from France who has relocated to Lafayette, explains that he is often questioned on his claim to be from Louisiana. “When asked out-of-state where I am from, I answer ‘Lafayette, Louisiana,’ a statement generally accepted even if the other party reacts to my accented English. Except once in Orlando, Florida, where the Wal-Mart cashier bluntly told me ‘No, you’re not!’ She hailed from Crowley, Louisiana, and noted that my accent was French not Cajun” (Henry 2003: 158). In order to understand the distinct natures of Cajun French and Cajun English, we must first look at a descriptive analysis of each.

Cajun French

Daigle (1993) points out that it is important to remember that “Above all, Cajun is not ‘bad French’ any more than French and Italian are ‘bad Latin’”(xvii). Phillips (1978) argues that “Louisiana French is not a dialect” (176). He sees it instead as a unique common language that still resembles standard French, but has taken on “dialectal elements” (Phillips 1978: 176). There are small differences in pronunciation between parishes and towns, but overall Cajun French is the same throughout Southern Louisiana (Phillips 1978). Phillips’ (1978) arguments may seem counterintuitive when one considers that these small differences in pronunciation can be seen simply as dialects, as is Cajun French itself. According to Thomas Klingler (interview July 12, 2005), Francophone linguistics, and even many Louisiana scholars, are adverse to the idea of calling all forms of French in Louisiana by the term ‘dialect’. They would prefer they be referred to as ‘varieties of French’; however, the term dialect or language seems more appropriate to this particular study.

One problem associated with describing Cajun French is that it has “developed as a spoken language” and therefore no true written form exists, although most people defer to the standard French spellings of many words (Daigle 1993). However, we can determine that the phones used in both Cajun French and Cajun English are very similar to those used in standard French, with a few variations. For instance, the uvular ‘r’ that is typical in French is moved forward to a more alveolar placement in Cajun dialects; the voiceless glottal ‘h’ in French is generally voiced in Cajun French; and, the French ‘w’ that is pronounced ‘v’ takes on the English ‘w’ pronunciation. Vowels are still nasalized when they occur before or after a nasal, even in the Cajun English dialect (Daigle 1993).

The differences between Cajun French and standard French, on a syntactical and semantic level, are too numerous to get into detail here (for a complete discussion, see Rottet 2001). However, a few generalizations and common features of the grammar of declining languages can be pointed out. The first is that there tends to be a simplification of the Cajun grammar (Phillips 1978). There exists a preference toward using free morphemes over bound morphemes (Rottet 2001). There is also a preference for using analytic over synthetic structures, such as the case with the periphrastic future in French which requires the use of *va* plus an infinitive. Because this is always used for future tense, speakers must switch to English to express conditional statements (Rottet 2001). Another feature of declining languages is a loss of the irregular verb stem and replacement with a standardized conjugation or regular verbs instead (Rottet 2001).

A loss of the formal conjugation of verbs is also noted, as the formal pronoun indicates formality on its own (Rottet 2001). Another reason for the formal French norms to be lost is that English has replaced French in formal situations, and therefore children do not hear the formal

style to learn it (Rottet 2001). Another aspect of languages that are declining is that of borrowing and code switching, in which grammatical structures, as well as individual words, are incorporated (Read 1931; Rottet 2001). One participant, Charles, noted that the Cajuns really do not have a word for “truck” and sometimes do not use the verb “to drive” in French, so that the sentence “I drove my truck” becomes “Je drove mon truck” in Cajun French.

Another major aspect of dying languages is that they have come into contact with another language (or many other languages) and have borrowed words that have completely replaced ones from the original language. Cajun French, while most likely a dying dialect (European and Canadian French are alive and well), is a good case study for analyzing the changes that occur as a result of language loss. For example, many place names and nature words for items unique to Louisiana come from the languages native to the area. According to Read (1931), *atchafalaya* (long river), *bayou* (sluggish stream that is smaller than a river and larger than a coulee), *pichou* (a wild cat, similar to a cougar), and *plaquemine* (the fruit of a persimmon tree) all come from Choctaw and Mobillian languages. One particularly interesting argument is over the word *teche*, which has long been said to have German origins in that it is a corruption of the word *Deutsch*. Numerous words (particularly for food) have African origins, such as *couche-couche* (a corn-meal cereal) and *gumbo* (*gombo*) (the word for okra that has now come to mean thick soup). Finally, the influence of the few decades of Spanish rule has added a few words such as *lagniappe* (small gift) and *pirogue* (small boat) (Read 1931).

Cajun English

Cajun English is a particularly marked dialect of English in which many aspects of Cajun French have been maintained (Phillips 1978; Rottet 2001). Shana Walton (2004) points out there are five distinct features of Cajun English that are unique to the dialect: 1) interdental fricatives

turn to dental stops ('that' becomes 'dat', 'thing' becomes 'ting'); 2) there is no aspiration on stops, even in initial position; 3) there is a strong nasalization of vowels, even when nasals are absent in a word; 4) stressed syllables are spoken with flat intonation; and, 5) there is almost always a phrase-final stress. Walton (2004) also points out that there is a great deal of influence from the other regional dialect, Southern English, and this further stigmatizes the speech of Cajuns. It has already been pointed out that, from personal observation, even those speakers who do not have the "typical" Cajun English dialect, at least have it in their linguistic repertoire and utilize it in telling jokes and stories. How does this relate to the Cajun identity?

Perhaps because of the marked dialect of Cajun English, the strong identity of the Cajun community is able to remain intact. In reference to the financial trouble in the 1970s of CODOFIL, a group concerned with the maintenance of French in Louisiana, Bernard (2003) states, "Most ordinary Cajuns had already redefined their ethnic group as English-speaking, a trend horrifying to those who argued that the Cajun lifestyle would perish without its dialect" (125-26). In other words, by the 1970s, Cajuns were already thinking of themselves as Cajun, with or without the benefit of speaking any French.

Dubois and Melançon (1997) address the issues of how closely related the Cajun French language is with the Cajun identity through a quantitative approach and determine what has long been assumed – how you define Cajun simply depends on who you are. They conducted a sociological study of 1,440 individuals from four major communities throughout Acadiana. Their sample crosscuts age, gender, and occupations and was meant to determine the importance of speaking French to the identity of being Cajun. What they found was that the majority felt it necessary to have Cajun ancestors, to speak some form of French and to have parents or grandparents who spoke French in order to be considered Cajun. A minority of participants felt

it necessary to actually speak Cajun, live in Louisiana, and to know Cajun French as a first language. Those in the minority tended to be from the older generations (Dubois and Melançon 1997).

Subsequent research has shown that, while speaking Cajun French is preferred, it is not an overwhelmingly necessary component of claiming Cajun identity (Bernard 2003; Henry and Bankston 2002). Many other factors, such as an appreciation for particular foods, loyalty to family, and regional knowledge are also important to defining what is Cajun. How can we best address the issues of why this group is able to maintain a cultural identity, regardless of the fact that they appear to be losing their ancestral language?

CHAPTER FIVE

LINGUISTICS, ANTHROPOLOGY AND EVOLUTION

Linguistic Anthropology

Many four-field approach anthropology programs require their students to take a linguistics-based course in order to be exposed to and understand how language and culture are entwined and affect one another. Linguistics in general is a very diverse field and anthropological linguistics is not an exception. Researchers analyze the phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics of a language to determine what, if any, correlations exist between thought and linguistic processes as expressed through culture. Ethnolinguistics, communication studies, gender studies, cross-cultural studies, language acquisition, bilingual abilities, code-switching, language death, language shift, the innate properties of language and many more topics are all under anthropological linguistics. Even the analysis of language used in linguistic research is up for grabs (Greenberg 1968).

As a result, anthropological linguists pull from a multitude of disciplines in order to attempt to explain even the smallest detail of language and how it relates to the human condition. Linguistic anthropologists have at the heart of their research a “concern with the linguistic production of culture” (Bucholtz and Hall 2004: 369). Explicitly evolutionary approaches to anthropological linguistics have come back into vogue in the past twenty years, with research on creole languages, language acquisition, linguistic modeling and language shift and death issues at the forefront in understanding how language changes over time (Bickerton 1990, 1995, 2006; Christiansen and Kirby 2003; Fitch 2000; Hill 1978; Jackendoff 1999; Knight, Studdert-Kennedy and Hurford 2000; Pinker 1994, 2002; Tomasello 1999).

Early Studies in Evolutionary Linguistics

The 19th century brought about some of the most important changes in the movement toward linguistics being a natural science and evolutionary theory was quick to be applied to linguistic pursuits (Koerner 1983; Robins 1967). One of the most important contributors to general evolution theory was Charles Darwin. According to Stephen J. Gould (1987), Darwin's crowning achievement was "establishing the fact of evolution, and proposing a theory (natural selection) for the mechanism of evolutionary change" (23). His model for the biological evolution of species became the basis for many subsequent models of evolution, including that of language change. Darwin (1964) was able to formulate what he felt was a logical progression from simplicity to complexity of physical form among the species he observed. However, modern linguistic evolutionary theory developed out of the work of scholars who were contemporaries of Darwin, such as August Schleicher and Max Müller.

According to Konrad Koerner (1983), Schleicher was a "leader in comparative and historical Indo-European research in Europe" (ix). A German linguist, he was a contemporary of the intellectuals such as Marx and Engels, and was deeply influenced by Darwin. Schleicher pulled heavily from the sciences, especially geology and botany (Koerner 1983). He utilized terminology such as *sprachengeschichte*, 'language history' and *sprachentwicklung*, 'language evolution.' He argued that linguistics should be seen as a branch of biology because "humans possess a biological machinery that regulates the acquisition and use of language" (Seuren 1998: 84-5). He was the first to use a Darwinian approach to discuss evolution in regards to language and to argue that language is a natural organism with a life of its own (Seuren 1998). In his first publication on the subject, Schleicher (1863) writes, "Darwin's views and theory struck me in a much higher degree [than just for plants or animals], when I applied them to the science of

language” (15). He pleads with the naturalists of his day to “take more notice of language than they have hitherto done” (Schleicher 1863: 17). He utilizes Darwin’s main tenants to show that language, like biological life forms, has a struggle for life, a branching of families (species), and can grow, change, and even become extinct. Schleicher (1863) further links what are known today as Indo-European languages to German, e.g., French, Norse, English, and Russian in a lovely example similar to that of a modern biological cladogram, and is much in line with Darwin’s ideas of relatedness among species.

In a later work, Schleicher (1863) addresses language origins and second language acquisition. He proposes that one cannot learn a language outside of one’s native language family (e.g. English and Chinese) and speak them both equally well, simply because the organs involved will not allow it. The ear will not hear the differing sounds as well, the tongue will be unable to pronounce and the brain will be unable to decipher at least parts of the foreign language. In this work, he also argues that language is the “prime criterion for a scientific classification of humanity” (Schleicher 1863: 78). He also attempts to tackle crania size and shape and “other racial traits” (Schleicher 1863: 78). Also important to note for modern language evolutionary theory is that Schleicher (1863) believes that language evolved depending on “certain conditions” – namely the environment in which early hominids were living. In other words, the conditions had to be just perfect for humankind to develop not only the brain capacity, but the complex anatomy, as well, in order to speak. Although some of his assumptions would be considered outdated today, he certainly took linguistics in an evolutionary direction with his ideas.

Max Müller, a contemporary of Schleicher, also saw linguistics as science, and language as a faculty unique to humans (Seuren 1998). He argued in a positivist manner and insisted that

only solid fact should be considered, that theorizing was not credible, “the science of language has nothing to do with mere theories, whether conceivable or not. It collects facts, and its only object is to account for the facts...” (Müller 1861:205). Although Müller utilized similar ideas and processes, he was adamant about not being associated in any way with Darwin, because Müller felt he was using evolutionary explanations as they apply to language before Darwin came up with the idea (Robins 1967).

Not all linguists agreed with these German researchers and many were very upset at the idea of language being touted as biological. They felt scholarship should remain with grammar, semantics, and syntax (Robins 1967). Although religion was taking a lesser role in many areas of academics, some could not get past the Christian dogma of the Tower of Babylon in which God gave humans language and split that language into the many languages present in the world (Robins 1967). It is important note that, in this period of development, linguistic theory was becoming ever more specialized and had a great deal of variety in its approaches, much like other sciences at that time (Robins 1967).

Modern evolutionary linguistics has been built on divergent ideologies of how language should be considered and researched (Bickerton 1990, 1995, 2006; Christiansen and Kirby 2003; Fitch 2000; Hill 1978; Jackendoff 1999; Knight, Studdert-Kennedy and Hurford 2000; Pinker 1994, 2002; Tomasello 1999). Today, most linguists analyzing language evolution are considering only the origins of language and how best to model the processes for language acquisition (Bickerton 2006; Christiansen and Kirby 2003; Fitch 2000; Jackendoff 1999; Knight, Studdert-Kennedy and Hurford 2000). Many have overlooked the long sought after reasons behind different aspects of language, such as language loss and death, in order to focus on the origins of language (Hill 1978).

Contemporary Evolutionary Linguistics

Traditionally in linguistics, language change over time has been dealt with from a historical point of view, looking at how parent languages change, generally in the context of contact (Greenberg 1968). In the past two decades, however, evolutionary linguistics has risen in popularity and taken a turn toward the heavy modeling of primate (human and non-human) cognitive processes in an attempt to understand the origins of language (Dunbar 1996; Fitch 2000; Knight, Studdert-Kennedy and Hurford 2000; Tomasello 1999; Whiten 2002). The idea that language evolution must somehow be tied to a Darwinian perspective of evolution seems to be nearly standard in the evolutionary linguistic literature (Christiansen and Kirby 2003; Fitch 2000; Hill 1978; Jackendoff 1999; Knight, Studdert-Kennedy and Hurford 2000).

Derek Bickerton (2006) discusses the main points in evolutionary linguistics in order to help other linguists understand the changes in terminology and research parameters. He points out that the biological aspects of language have stopped, but that the “cultural change (sometimes misleadingly described as ‘cultural evolution’)” have remained (Bickerton 2006: 2). Bickerton (2006) is very clear to make a distinction between language *evolution* and language *change* due to different timescales, factors and courses.

Bickerton (2006) argues that there are several central problems to consider in language evolution: how did symbolic units and syntax evolve and what is the relation of phonology to these? What was the “initial selective pressure” to move toward language and was this move gradual or abrupt? Were signs or speech the beginning of language, or did language come out of a “prior means of communication”? And finally, “did language begin in one place or several?” (2006: 2-5). He pulls on research from evolutionary psychology, behavioral ecology, anthropology and linguistics to explain his opinions on each of these topics. Bickerton (2006)

explains that for syntax and symbolic units to have arisen, there must have been a need, beyond simple recognition or expression of needs, to communicate with one another in a complex manner.

Furthermore, he makes a valid argument that “as soon as we start thinking in evolutionary terms, we have to start thinking why any development would have been selected for, and what would have selected for it” (Bickerton 2006: 3). In light of the initial selective pressures and speed of development of language, he expresses concern over the current hypotheses in evolutionary thought that call for a beginning in meaningless sounds. Why, then, would humans have developed the physiological aspects necessary for more complex speech? He offers a co-evolutionary explanation in which the physiology responds to the demand for more complex utterances; as a result, phonology would be a “secondary phenomenon” (Bickerton 2006: 3).

Answering questions of how and when language developed, according to Bickerton (2006), are lesser or even non-issues. For instance, his response to the question of “did language begin in one place or several?”, Bickerton (2006) states that it just does not matter. Languages are going to develop and diverge in “weird and unpredictable ways” regardless of where they begin, in part due to the innate capabilities of humans to produce and understand language (Bickerton 2006). This may actually be a problem with applying evolutionary theory to language, because language does appear to have a tendency to change without predictable patterns.

Other research and literature show that the primary goal of evolutionary linguistics appears to be modeling the origins of language. For instance, Martin Nowak and Natalia Komarova (2001) have attempted to create one such mathematical model that would explain the

process of language evolution. Their idea builds upon natural selection in that communication began with a few choice signals. Those who used these signals fared better at finding food, cooperating with one another, and mating. As a result, they passed on this trait to their offspring. Over time, the majority of offspring who were able to communicate with one another were selected for and were able to make the next leap forward to speaking and signaling. The speaking/signaling individuals then passed this trait on and so forth until a speaking, gesturing, hearing, and decoding individual was born and hence we have modern human communication (Nowak and Komarova 2001).

Many researchers take multidisciplinary approaches and utilize both behavioral ecology and evolutionary psychology in their pursuit of understanding how humans acquire, process and use language. Unfortunately, many of these studies fall short because they are too focused on the cognitive and linguistic origins of language and do not consider what happens with languages after they have developed and make contact with other languages. For instance, we should be able to use the information from language death studies in conjunction with Bickerton's Creole Continuum to do a cross-comparison of dying languages to see what systematic, reductive natures exist in creolization and decreolization of language that are similar to those processes in language acquisition and draw inferences about innate linguistic abilities and factors.

Contemporary Language Evolution Case Study: The Creole Continuum

Derek Bickerton (1990, 1995), a noted linguist and creolist, analyzes living languages in order to determine how they are able to change and grow, and eventually die. He proposes the Language Bioprogram Hypothesis as a way to test the idea that language is biological, innate, and universal in humans (Bickerton 1981). A comparison of language acquisition in children and the process of creolization, he felt, would explain the innate capacity humans possess for

language; in fact, this research should eventually lead to a full understanding of the actual origins of language itself (Bickerton 1990, 1995). Bickerton (1990, 1995) focuses primarily on pidgin and creole languages as “transparent” in order to look at this innate property of humans. He further proposes that there is a specific skeletal grammar that all creoles share. If he is correct, then we should be able to look to creole languages as a way to map and understand the innate, cognitive processes grammars can provide.

Creoles are those languages that developed out of necessity, primarily during colonial expansion into regions not yet Westernized. Generally, they formed from a *pidgin* or *lingua franca* that was used initially for trade and other day-to-day survival matters on plantations and in other colonized areas. Creoles must have three or more languages at their root, but there will almost always be a *superstrate*, or parent, language. The majority of superstrates appear Indo-European, although exceptions do exist (notably Bahasa Indonesia, Bahasa Malay and Kiswahili) (Bickerton 1990).

A pidgin is not deemed a creole until it has been taken on by a generation as a first language. In other words, a pidgin is learned and given a grammar by the children of the pidgin speakers to make it a first language (Bickerton 1981). Bickerton (1981) argues this is one reason creole languages can give us a deep insight into the roots of language and the processes languages go through: creoles are young languages with grammars akin to child-like patterns paralleled in language acquisition and are changing in real time, so they can be watched and analyzed as they change. Children have innate patterns that they follow when learning the language of their parents. These stages are the same regardless of the language the child is exposed to. They begin with a babbling, prelinguistic stage and move rapidly to one-word structures, then to two-word structures and finally to sentences (see below for a detailed

discussion). Interestingly, children go through phases that follow the underlying structure rules of the adult language until they have perfected the patterns of the adults.

As they grow up, children of pidgin speakers pass through the stages inherent for language acquisition, but the resulting grammar of a creole maintains the child-like grammar because the children do not have adult grammars from which to learn. The children themselves spontaneously invent their creole language with little to no input from adults; because these children did not have a normally structured language to learn, they had to rely on the innate grammatical structures they were genetically imprinted with (Adone 1994).

Bickerton (1981) further proposes a continuum of sorts in which every creole has common characteristics that change on a graded scale. The closer the creole is to the Language Bioprogram, the simpler it is to learn (Bickerton 1981). How close a language is to the Bioprogram depends on historical and demographic information surrounding the development of the individual creole. Despite the scale, he believes that the innate mechanisms are still predictably different and unique in comparison to the parent language. Bickerton (1981) describes twelve distinct grammatical characteristics that are innate in child grammars during language acquisition and are therefore present in fully developed creole grammars, which differentiate them from their parent language (Adone 1994). Interestingly, many of these aspects, such as word order shifts, formation of negations and formation of questions are much the same as that found in languages that are being lost. Bickerton (1981) further explains that decreolization is the process that creoles transition through to become more like one of the parent languages. This process takes time, and culture contact, but is also likened to child language acquisition because many of the permanent changes that occur in the grammar are still child-like

in nature. In order to understand these processes, we must look at child language acquisition in greater depth.

Evolution of Language in Life Course: Language Acquisition

Language develops in stages, until it eventually resembles the “grammar of the adult language” (Fromkin and Rodman 1998: 319). As Stephen Pinker (1994) describes it, “If we divide language development into somewhat arbitrary stages, like Syllable Babbling, Gibberish Babbling, One-Word Utterances, and Two-Word Strings, the next stage would have to be called All Hell Breaks Loose” (269). Studies of child language acquisition from all parts of the world have suggested that this process and these stages are universal in nature. The stages are divided under two blanket categories: prelinguistic experimentation and linguistic utterances (Fromkin and Rodman 1998).

Infants respond to linguistic stimuli from birth; all babies have all sounds of all languages, but over time the brain learns to contrast these sounds with those that are not utilized in the linguistic register of the people around them. By about six months of age, babies no longer are able to determine differences between sounds that are not phonemic in their parent’s language, such as /r/ and /l/ in some Asian tonal languages (Fromkin and Rodman 1998: 320). During this process, a “babbling” period begins and shows not only the ability to respond to outside linguistic stimuli, but also an experimentation with producing those sounds that will be needed to communicate later (Fromkin and Rodman 1998; Pinker 1994).

The linguistic category is much more involved and encompasses the passing from babbling sounds to complete sentences. At about one year of age, children begin stringing sounds together to mean the something. The age at which a child goes through each individual stages differs from child to child, as there are no specific ages for each stage or lengths that they

must continue through. The next stage is the one word = one sentence (holophrastic sentences) stage. Words such as 'not', 'up', and 'dog' are utilized to mean a myriad of actions and statements. For instance, 'up' can be taken to mean 'pick me up' or 'get up'. This stage consists of generally monosyllabic utterances. One very important note about this stage is that children can recognize and understand more complex words and constructions than they speak; they are able to respond to adults speaking full sentences. As a result, the extent of their grammar at this stage is difficult to know for certain (Fromkin and Rodman 1998; Pinker 1994).

Stage two occurs by about two years of age and consists of two-word constructions. There are no real syntactic or morphological markers utilized in their language as of yet. Children use pronouns rarely at this stage (although 'me' appears to be used to refer to the self). Children put two-word strings together to denote possession, action and statements of fact such as, 'Annie's socks' or 'banana good'. The first important concept to consider here is that of telegraphic speech. This consists only of a main message, generally made up of open-class content words such as nouns and verbs. Children are missing function words at this point, such as 'to', 'the', and 'can', so that more complex constructions come out as 'don't eat chip' and 'I got glass juice' (Fromkin and Rodman 1998; Pinker 1994).

By the time they are at this point in stage two, children do have syntactic and hierarchical constructions that are similar to those found in the adult grammars. They carefully follow the word order constraints of their parent's language, i.e. subject-verb-object (SVO) languages would not allow a construction such as 'Mommy banana give', but rather 'Mommy give banana' (Fromkin and Rodman 1998). It is interesting to note that as children get closer to the full-on adult language, they begin to use more and more function words, as well as inflectional and derivational morphemes. Their speech becomes that of their parents, initially, despite the fact

that they hear and learn through all manner of “noise”, such as false starts, errors and interruptions (Fromkin and Rodman 1998: 328). This changes as children get older and are exposed to the speech of their peers (Pinker 1994).

Language Loss and Death

Nancy Bonvillain (1997) defines language death as “the end result of a process in which a language is no longer spoken; the language dies as an active means of communication” (362). She explains that many cultures will opt to abandon their first language for the dominant language of a contact group when they have been invaded; or, that immigrants to a new country will give up their native language for the language of the area they have moved into in hopes of assimilating well (Bonvillain 1997). Other scholars have argued about the validity of the term “death” in relation to language. For instance, Rottet (2001) points out that language *decline* or language *decay*, language *obsolescence*, language *suicide* and *thanatoglossia* are all terms that have been used to refer to what happens to a language when contact with another culture and language occurs (he leaves out the issue of *lingua francas*, pidgins and creole languages).

The underlying position of each of these arguments regarding language shift is that a language has to be absorbed, abandoned, or simply disappears. Rottet (2001) points out that language death can occur in many different ways; a language can die quickly and immediately with the genocide of an entire group, or it can move slowly and be assimilated into another language. This last appears to be the case with Cajun French in Louisiana, and Rottet (2001) considers this a *linguistic shift* or *language shift*.

Dorian (1981) explains language shift as “an aspect of sociocultural change, intimately linked to phenomena like urbanization, industrialization and secularization, though – interestingly – not predictable from any of them” (4). She further postulates that the “reductive

aspects of language death” have led to comparison with pidgins and language acquisition, language shift and insights into earlier extinctions (Dorian 1981: 3). Furthermore, we can assume that sociocultural factors, not linguistic features, are what determine the difference between a healthy language changing and a language that is becoming extinct.

Factors such as not having a written form, social stratification levels (e.g. speakers of East Sutherland Gaelic all share a “fisherfolk” background), language contact, transmission of grammar and lexicon from fluent compared to semi-fluent speakers, and the loss of “self-appointed monitors of grammatical norms” are all possible causes of language loss (Dorian 1981: 154). Hill (1978) also suggests dying languages go through systematic changes, but further postulates that those processes are similar to what languages that have become pidginized go through and therefore looks at the linguistic structures of dying languages and not just the sociocultural factors involved. Can the processes of creolization, decreolization and language acquisition give us insight in the innate properties of language and deeper understanding of the language loss process? We may approach the answers to this and many other linguistic questions by utilizing an integrated evolutionary anthropological methodology that considers biology, culture and language and how each interact and influence the other.

CHAPTER SIX

APPLYING THE THREE EVOLUTIONARY APPROACHES, AN INTEGRATED EVOLUTIONARY MODEL, AND FUTURE RESEARCH ON LANGUAGE LOSS

The beginning of this thesis outlined the need for an exploration of language loss through an evolutionary framework. Utilizing neoevolutionary paradigms in an analysis of Cajun history and ethnography allows for an exploration of language loss. Cajun Louisiana certainly lends itself well to integrative approaches to language change, partially because the Cajuns have been through many periods of physical relocation, shift, and contact, yet have been able to maintain their ethnic identity, regardless of shifts from Cajun French to English. While many linguistic texts and articles address the issue of language change through time and focus on the problems underlying language death and identity maintenance, an integrative approach offers a holistic method that encompasses both linguistic and evolutionary approaches.

An integrative approach employs evolutionary psychology, behavioral ecology and evolutionary cultural anthropology models to examine language shift and loss. Evolutionary psychology allows us to explore the functional aspects of language, as well as those human universals that may have been selected for in the EEA. Behavioral ecology gives us the tools to determine what costs and benefits, in particular in social and demographic contexts, may play a factor in why one group may allow a language to die. And finally, the theories of evolutionary cultural anthropology bring the mechanisms of transmission, marker traits and how cultural ideology can influence identity. But why use evolutionary theory at all?

Hewlett and Hewlett (in press) point out that there are three main strengths to an evolutionary approach. The first is that evolutionary approaches look at the individual rather than the group to understand human behavior. In this way, individuals are considered “active

agents” in their environments (both natural and cultural) and can therefore influence how changes occur in those environments (Hewlett and Hewlett in press). The second strength is that evolutionary theory allows for researchers to consider biology, culture, and ecology together, and the interactions between each. Finally, evolutionary theory allows for the integration of other, non-evolutionary approaches, in this case, linguistics.

The foundations of several neoevolutionary theories that are used in anthropology were presented in Chapter 2, as well as basic information on how each treats issues of language. It is important to stop at this point and consider again the possibility that no one evolutionary or linguistic research method has successfully integrated all aspects of culture, biology, and environment to come to satisfactory approaches to the human behavior of language, specifically issues regarding language loss. However, Hewlett and Lamb (2002) have introduced an integrated heuristic model that incorporates the three neoevolutionary approaches discussed previously. Their model emphasizes the importance of how the different approaches influence each other and how an understanding of all three evolutionary approaches is necessary to make predictions about specific behaviors.

Hewlett and Lamb (2002) are careful to distinguish between biology, culture and environment and caution that researchers must “clearly define and distinguish these factors” (264) before formulating and testing hypotheses in the three neoevolutionary paradigms because there must be a separation of each “from the behavior one wants to understand” (Hewlett and Lamb 2002: 264). The strength of this heuristic approach is that people from different evolutionary backgrounds are able to communicate and share information within a common framework, which may allow “for synthesis and theoretical development” (Hewlett and Lamb 2002: 264). Hewlett and Lamb (2002) are careful to point out that not all theoretical approaches

may be integrated in this way; the approaches need to be evolutionary, in part because evolutionary theory focuses on the ultimate questions, as well as on the individual. I do not believe this excludes utilizing data gathered under other paradigms; certainly, an integrated approach could include the incorporation of traditional linguistic methods in order to fully bring linguists into the discussion and further the advancement of linguistic research.

We may address several questions regarding language loss in Cajun communities in Louisiana by utilizing an evolutionary approach, which has yet to be done in the field. For instance, what causes language loss in close-knit communities like those in Louisiana? Why do the people allow their native language to be replaced by another language? What factors play into this process of language loss? How complete is the loss? Who is most likely to lose their language and who is most likely to retain it? I will focus on three main problems in regards to language loss in Cajun Louisiana: why language loss has occurred, what the consequences of that loss have been, and what can be done in the future to prevent loss of languages.

What conditions are most likely to have caused or encouraged language loss in Cajun Louisiana?

The reasons behind language loss in Cajun Louisiana are varied and have intricate ties to individual decision-making regarding the costs and benefits of maintaining French, and are also linked to cultural transmission mechanisms. If the costs of speaking French outweigh the benefits received for speaking it, then the Cajuns would be most likely to switch to speaking English. The costs did indeed get too high to compensate for speaking French. People were and are unable to get jobs if they do not speak English, education was and is only in English, and the language of politics and law eventually became English as well. Once a generation realized that

the cost was too high and began speaking English, the transmission of culture and language remained in English. However, the costs of switching to English were the potential of losing a part of their identity and in-group status with other Cajuns. Regardless of whether parent generations spoke French, children learned English through a variety of venues, such as their schools, their peers and other adults in the community. What exactly are the costs and benefits to speaking a particular language? The tradeoffs associated with speaking French have changed with Cajun history and can be grouped into three primary categories: economics, education and reproduction.

Economics

When the Acadians first arrived in Louisiana, the territory was owned by France. As they began to spread through more of southern Louisiana, they were able to maintain their community ties and speaking French was not costly at all, as education and daily life continued to be in French. As Anglo plantations and businesses moved into the area, English became more important. It was not until the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 that English became the official language of Louisiana, and more business and education began to be conducted in English. By the turn of the last century, about 80% of the population was speaking French as a first language, but by 1985, only about 3% were (Bernard 2003).

If an individual is presented with the choice between speaking English and making more money, or speaking French and struggling to earn a living, that individual will be more likely to speak English, provided the opportunity to learn English is provided. By the end of World War II, Louisiana was well on its way to becoming Americanized (Bernard 2003). Jobs were difficult to find and farming was not a lucrative business. Carl Brasseaux believes that Louisiana had been in a major economic slump since well before the Great Depression (interview July 27,

2005). As major oil finds became more abundant beginning in the 1930s, so did the jobs associated with working in the oil fields. A man could earn nine times the income working in the oil fields than he could tilling and harvesting the farm back home (Bernard 2003). As a result, more men opted to move themselves, and many times their families, to urban areas, such as Baton Rouge and Lafayette, and work in the oil business. However, the better wages came with one important trade-off; in order to work in the oil business, one had to speak English (Brasseaux interview July 27, 2005).

Conformist transmission, or frequency dependant bias, in which people want to imitate the traits of successful members of a group, may also play a large part in this transition from French to English in the economic arena. As more people went to work for hourly wages and came out of the swamps and off the farms, the more successful the local economies became. People may have been emulating the success of their neighbors. If someone saw the person down the block able to better support their family, the more likely they would have been to learn English to procure stable, lucrative employment as well.

Vertical transmission, or parent to child transmission, also plays an important role; especially if parents realized their children would need to speak English and not French in order to be successful. This may be one explanation for why many people report in their interviews that their parents spoke fluent Cajun French, but not at home or in front of the children. The one exception was as a “secret” language to talk about something the adult did not want the child to know about. This would not be sufficient exposure to French to transmit the language to the younger generation.

Education

A number of official changes in the language of instruction in educational institutions have occurred over the course of the ten constitutions ratified by Louisiana over the last century (Appendix 2). Until the 1920s, there are very few records outlining exactly which language, French or English, was used to conduct the classroom. However, beginning with the Louisiana Constitution of 1921, we know that English-only education was approved and encouraged for all public schools (Ward 1997). While the Louisiana Legislator did not condone corporal punishment for speaking French in school, there are interviews that detail the severity of some cases in which students were physically and verbally abused for speaking French instead of English (Ward 1997). My own participants all mentioned either their own experiences with punishment, ranging from detention to all out beatings, or the experiences of family members or friends from older generations.

The imposition of language in education brings up an interesting discussion point. How and when language is being transmitted to the younger generations is a major factor to consider in language loss. There are critical ages at which language learning occurs; it is generally accepted that around 10 years of age is a threshold; if a child has not learned a language by this age, they will have difficulty learning it at all (Pinker 1994). Further research concentrating on the biology of language learning is needed in order to fully address the issue of critical ages of language acquisition. All that would be needed is one or two generations not learning French at home or at school to drastically lower the number of people speaking French.

Furthermore, if the evolutionary psychology camp is correct, then humans may have evolved a fear response to those in more powerful positions. If this holds true, then only one generation being scared to use French due to physical, emotional or verbal abuse would be all

that was necessary to completely wipe out the native language of a group. This appears to be a major factor in the loss of French in the Cajun communities. Over at least two generations, students were punished for speaking their native language. As a result, many did not speak French at home when they had their own children. This meant that the vertical transmission of language from parent to child was primarily in English. We can see from Bernard's (2003) graph (Figure 5) that the decline in French spoken in the home as a first language declined rapidly after the 1930s. In addition, if children do not learn French at home, and they do not learn it at school, then there are few places they will be able to learn it. In fact, even today, there are no public schools that are taught in French and only one French immersion program that is, but it is taught in Standard French, not Cajun French (Bernard 2003). Those private schools that teach in French are expensive and only teach students up to the eighth grade.

This information leads us to the fact that there simply does not exist enough in-depth information to address the impact of education on language in Louisiana. One possible avenue to fill the void in this area would be to design a research plan that incorporates public records and interviews. The archival records would hopefully reveal exactly how much of public education was conducted in French and how quickly the switch to English-only education happened. There should be differences between rural schools and urban schools, simply because early in Louisiana's history the more rural areas would be less likely to have teachers available who spoke only English, due in part to isolation from the larger community. I doubt there would be written records of punishments for speaking French, but there may be class curriculums that would give an insight into differences in what was being taught and how.

Participant interviews would be able to supplement the written record with first hand accounts of how students were treated in the classroom. This would allow a myriad of responses

to determine the degree of punishment based on geographical areas, as well as on the timing of these punishments. To reiterate, we should expect to see those generations that are most severely punished to be the first generation to grow up and not teach their own children to speak French. In essence, language loss and death could be well on its way in the matter of a single generation. This leads us to consider life histories as another feature impacting language loss.

Reproductive Success

It is important to keep in mind that the economic and educational motivations of individuals can be seen in light of reproductive success; if better paying jobs or speaking English are necessary to survival, they are likely necessary for obtaining high quality mates as well. For instance, if higher reproductive success is a benefit of speaking French, then we should see maintenance of the French language in Louisiana. Unfortunately, there is not enough data to really understand if language loss has effected reproductive success. One participant, Marie, mentioned that she wished her husband spoke French so her children would have learned it, but that she married him anyway, and they had three lovely children. There are some older Cajuns who are adamantly against what they consider “mixed marriages,” which consist of a Cajun individual marrying a non-Cajun person. What is interesting about this attitude is that in practice, Cajun men and women do tend to marry other Cajuns. Henry and Bankston (2002) report that more than 80% of marriages are endogamous, even in geographical areas that have a low percentage of Cajuns in the population. They postulate that part of this is due to the complete assimilation of other cultures into Cajun communities, such as with the Germans, and the “making of outsiders into insiders” (Henry and Bankston 2002: 131). Historically, the Cajun groups were so strong in the southern parishes of Louisiana that any incoming groups were simply made a part of the family and became Cajun themselves. Other than the use of limited

census data, there have not been any in-depth studies to show the actual reproductive success of Cajuns; certainly none have addressed the issue of language loss in regards to that success.

One potential way to analyze the actual reproductive success of individuals would be to utilize legal documents, such as birth, death and marriage certificates, along with baptismal and confirmation documents from churches. Fortunately, the French government tended to keep meticulous records, as did the Catholic Church. We should be able to look at a few factors to determine who was actually marrying whom, what language they most likely spoke, and how many children, grand-children and so on they had to determine any links between lineage reproductive success and the languages that were spoken.

By taking a random sample, over a wide geographic range in the 22 parishes of Acadiana, of at least 100 (hopefully unrelated) families and tracing their lineages back, we should be able to draw inferences regarding how important speaking French would have been at any given generation to the overall success of the family.

For instance, if marriage certificates are entirely in French until 1850, then we may assume that a majority of the population spoke French as a primary language. Furthermore, we should be able to map the changes in the legal documents to see when English really became a primary language in Louisiana. If we combined this information with demographic information on families, such as who they married, if they married up (hypergyny), the number of children they had, their income and education levels, we should be able to better understand if the switch to English really matters to reproductive success. For example, if we find that a family has completely abandoned French, but is able to support more children than a family that holds on to French, then we should be able to say that overall reproductive success is affected by language and that this may be a factor to consider when determining why language loss occurs. I would

anticipate that there may be generational differences in reproductive success, but that entire lineages would not be effected overall by the language they spoke. In other words, one generation may have few children, but if others have more children, then the overall success of the lineage will average out to an overall higher reproductive success. Furthermore, we should see that women are able to move up the social scale by marrying men in better economic positions. If this holds true, then we can consider that language loss may be due in part to women marrying men who no longer speak French (whether or not they are Cajun).

Economics, education, and reproductive success certainly effect language loss in Louisiana. When an individual is given the choice between speaking French or speaking English in the workplace, the jobs that pay more are going to determine what language is being spoken. Educationally, imposition and one-to-many transmission in the form of punishment affect what language children are learning. While we cannot yet speak to the exact reproductive success of the individual or family lineage, we can certainly see there is potential for using this information to show that there is no reproductive advantage to speaking French.

What impact does language loss have on ethnicity in Cajun Louisiana?

Why would a group such as the Cajuns, with their strong ethnic identity, allow their native language to be replaced? Why would they not simply become bilingual instead? Or simply fight to keep what is a supposedly important part of their heritage intact? This goes back to the question posed in Chapter 3, “What is Cajun?” If we assume that culture and language are completely tied to one another, then we should expect to see a group that has lost its native language will also have lost its culture and ethnicity. However, just the opposite has occurred in Louisiana. For all of the nostalgia of many people who want to revitalize Cajun French, there

just does not appear to be the need to keep it – the emotional attachment to the language is simply not enough to outweigh the benefits of becoming a fully integrated, Americanized culture.

Americanization has been another factor that has greatly affected the Cajun language. As Louisiana came further into the 20th century, Cajuns began attaining the luxuries afforded by better jobs and advancing technologies. Televisions became a staple in the Cajun home, as *veillées* (visits in the evenings with neighbors) went by the wayside (Brasseaux 2005). Media such as television, the internet and radio are all forms of one-to-many transmission, in which the spread of a language can occur quickly because one medium is “getting the word out” to many people simultaneously. If the primary language used in mass media is English and not French, then we expect to see the English being transmitted rapidly. In the case of Louisiana Cajuns, we see this happening, as there was a 94.75% decline in French as a first language in Louisiana between 1936 and 1985 (Bernard 2003; Figure 5) that coincides with the introduction of television and the onset of major contact with the rest of the United States due to World War II.

Despite this assault on Cajun French, the Cajun ethnic identity is still strong, most likely because of a focus on familial ties, cuisine, music, jokes, and other cultural factors. Just because Cajun French is no longer spoken in the home and on the street does not mean that Cajuns are not roaming around being Cajun. I would argue that part of this is due to the maintenance of their marked English. As pointed out in Chapter 3, many people that do not normally speak Cajun English are at least able to do so on occasion, such as when telling jokes, which speaks to the transmission of at least the Cajun dialect of English.

In order to fully comprehend the ties between language and ethnicity in Louisiana, we would need to first understand what marked language really is and what life history effects there

are. Marked language studies, such as those by Lambert (1952), would give insight into the attitudes of the general population (see also Lambert et al 1990; Lambert and Taylor 1988). Lambert (1952) took detailed recordings of local people both with and without marked accents in Canada and played those recordings back to other members of the community and recorded detailed responses to each dialect in turn to determine that there were correlations between how a person is perceived and how they speak. Does having marked English make someone more Cajun than not? Dubois and Melançon (1997) also address this issue with an in-depth study on what makes a Cajun a Cajun, and how language ties into identity, but they do not address markers other than speaking French itself. They do not consider that ethnicity can be maintained outside of language. Further research concerning the exact dynamics of marked Cajun English are necessary to understand the differences between generations, class, and gender.

Life history effects could provide a great deal of information and would be more useful than just answering ethnicity and language questions. For instance, understanding a person's entire life, what happened to them specifically that caused them to keep or give up Cajun French, how they feel about their Cajun identity and the identity of others, what has caused changes over their life in their language use and ethnicity would give insight into other paths of research to pursue; especially if these life histories were broken down by age group. We would be able to see exactly what factors most affected people in the 1930s as compared to the 1990s, or any other time period. It is important to point out at this time that no developmental perspectives on language loss have been addressed in Cajun Louisiana. Consideration of children, as well as adults, as active agents in their own language decisions is important to fully comprehend the contributions of all generations during their entire life history and the impacts of each on language maintenance and loss.

What, if anything, can be learned from Louisiana to prevent language loss in other groups around the world?

In rare cases, outside of the older generations, there are those who not only maintain their ethnic identity, but also work to keep Cajun French alive as well. One small but growing group would be Cajun musicians. The Cajun music movement is another topic unto itself, and the research entirely too detailed to completely outline here, but there is a definitive importance relating to music in the Cajun world. First, the distinct sound of Cajun music is a combination of traditional French folk and drinking songs, African slave music, and Native American songs, with Spanish, German, and American influences. Today, much of the music is marked by the predominant use of the Cajun accordion (Ancelet 1989). Mostly importantly, the majority of the lyrics sung are in Cajun French. Participants stated that singing in French was vital, as was being able to talk to the “oldtimers” in French. Speaking Cajun French and playing Cajun music is a way to identify with one another.

A flip side to the evolutionary research presented here would be the potential to utilize one-to-many transmission and other models to help *preserve* Cajun French in Louisiana. Efforts began in the 1960s to revitalize the culture and the language through awareness programs, heritage centers and immersion education. Funding for each of these has become extremely low and as a result preservation efforts have considerably slowed. If one-to-many transmission is truly rapid and efficient, we should be able to show that increasing the numbers of public television programs that are in Cajun French, increasing the radio stations that broadcast in French (right now there is only one), and increasing the numbers of French immersion programs would increase the numbers of people speaking French, even if it is not a first language.

We now see why taking an integrative evolutionary approach is important to further understanding why a culture group would allow their native language to be lost or replaced. For instance, if we look at economic influences on language loss, we must consider not only the history of what has happened, but also understand the costs and benefits, conformist transmission and evolved, universal responses to the powerful in a group. If the cost of maintaining a native language is that one cannot find a job, then that person will likely choose to speak the language that will get them work. If the most successful people in a group are speaking English, then the response should be for the individual to conform and speak English in order to ensure their own future success.

However seemingly appropriate an integrative approach is, we must still consider the fact that a multidisciplinary, integrative approach can appear to be a daunting and time-consuming task. However, it is not so far-reaching an expectation to have the biological, environmental and cultural aspects of any behavior in the background of any study. Each of the evolutionary approaches outlined can be consistent with political, economic, psychological, sociological and linguistic methodologies and paradigms. There is no need to consider them as mutually exclusive; in fact, the focuses, methods, and approaches of each may be different, but can be integrated for a holistic approach to behavior analysis. A major concern at this point should be exploring the possible utilities of an integrated evolutionary approach to understanding language loss and to take those approaches and ideas to the field to generate more in-depth studies for future comparison.

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APPENDIX A: BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF ACADIAN/CAJUN AND LOUISIANA HISTORY – 1500 TO PRESENT

1500 to 1600	France in religious warfare between Protestants (Huguenots) and Catholics
1500 to 1600	Huguenots make the final attempt to establish a New World Colony with 125 willing settlers; after a bad winter in Ile St. Croix, Pierre du Guay moves the remaining 35 settlers to Port Royal (Nova Scotia); begin fur trade under a 10 year monopoly granted by France
1607	Huguenot settlers evacuated because 10 year monopoly is revoked by France
1613	English privateer, Samuel Argall, attacks and destroys Port Royal; he continues the fur trade from Cape Sable
1628 to 1629	Scottish Calvinists take Port Royal
1632 to 1654	Acadia a proprietary colony under the <i>Company of New France</i> ; at least 55% of the immigrants are from Centre-Ouest provinces of Poitou, Aunis, Angoumois and Santonge (Anjou) Provinces (South and Southeast of Brittany); 47% are from La Chaussee; 76% are laborers (general agrarian); the settlers appear to have had good relations with the Micmac Indians
1632	Port Royal again officially under French rule due to the Treaty of St. Germain-en-Laye; 300 French settlers (from Western coast of France and Catholic) lay claim to Port Royal, expelling all but a few of the Scots
1654 to 1755	Acadian population grew from 300 people to approximately 18,000 people
1654	British seize Acadia
1682 9-Apr	Rene Robert Cavelier (fur trader) claims Lower Mississippi River country for King Louis XIV, names it Louisiane
1682	France ships criminals and indigents to populate territory initially, but realized they were not "model" citizens and ended quickly; France offers concessions to the wealthy (land, livestock, etc) to go to Louisiane and live up to this year, the British were outnumbered by the Acadians, but demanding that they swear allegiance to the British Crown; the Acadians wanted to remain neutral and had been putting up a passive resistance; this year they finally agreed to the British terms based on a verbal agreement that they would be allowed to remain neutral in case of war with France
1730	
1755 31-Jul	order is given for deportation of all Acadians; they are dispersed to seaboard colonies from Massachusetts to Georgia (except Virginia, who refused to take their deportees due to an outbreak of smallpox; these people were sent to England and at least half died)
1755	Major Charles Lawrence (British) imprisons the delegates from Acadiana to serve as an example to the rest of the population when they continue to refuse to swear allegiance
1762 3-Nov	Louisiane is a drain financially on France; ceded to Spain in the Treaty of Paris (1762)
1763 to 1780s	Le Grand Derangement: sent to 'detention centers'; nearly 1/2 the population dies; some escape to Saint-Dominique
1764	French colonists are finally told that Louisiane has been ceded to Spain
1785	Acadians arrive in Louisiana

1800	Spain retrocedes Louisiana to France in the secret Treaty of san Ildefonso, also for economic reasons; but, they do not want the United States to have the territory
1802	disclosure of the retrocede occurs
1803 30-Nov	Official return of Louisiana Territory to France
1803 20-Dec	Louisiana Purchase
1811 20-Feb	Enabling Act (Federal) is created to allow the Territory of Orleans to create its own constitution and state government
1812 30-Apr	Louisiana accepted into the Union as a State
1812	Louisiana Constitution of 1812
1845	Louisiana Constitution of 1845
1852	Louisiana Constitution of 1852
1864	Louisiana Constitution of 1864
1868	Louisiana Constitution of 1868
1879	Louisiana Constitution of 1879
1898	Louisiana Constitution of 1898
1913	Louisiana Constitution of 1913
1916	Board of Education bans French teaching and speaking in schools
1921	Louisiana Constitution of 1921
1950 decade	American still in fear of the Cold War; children are still punished for speaking French (un-American!); older Cajuns call the Atomic Bomb the "Thomas Bomb"
1951	Textbook used that states that Cajuns are "an unsophisticated agrarian people...slow in adopting the 'American' ways" (The People of Louisiana); blame low educational standing in Louisiana on Cajuns; punished for using French, even as a 2nd language;
1960 to 1970	French Louisiana Renaissance begins
1968	Act 409 passed by Louisiana Legislature to authorize Center for Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL); allows exposure (in theory) into schools to the French language and culture
1974	Louisiana Constitution of 1974

APPENDIX B. LOUISIANA CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES REGARDING USE OF FRENCH

- 1812 Louisiana Constitution of 1812: debated and written in French; translated to English to send to Washington D.C.; English is sanctioned as the "official" language, but French is still to be used; "the language of the U.S. Constitution" is deemed most appropriate to be the "official" language, as an attempt to truly become part of the United States
- 1845 Louisiana Constitution of 1845: debates held in French and English; bilingual promulgation (public announcements); more legal issues are in English
- 1852 Louisiana Constitution of 1852: language issues are upheld as bilingual
- 1864 Louisiana Constitution of 1864: proceedings are voted to be held in French and English, but delegates refrained from speaking French; eliminated the bilingual promulgation; no French rights or issues are addressed at all; first mention of English-only instruction in schools
- 1868 Louisiana Constitution of 1868: required revision to include draft and rights to all citizens (including African American); Republican-dominated convention (English speakers), French rights are underrepresented; remaining few French provisions are removed; English-only schools are upheld
- 1879 Louisiana Constitution of 1879: power shift to the Democrats (Cajuns, French speakers); French is back in legal dealings, but only in bilingual publications; reversed English-only education; allowed for primary school education in French, decisions at the parish level
- 1898 Louisiana Constitution of 1898: expanded French education to all grades, still by parish
- 1913 Louisiana Constitution of 1913: maintained French laws
- 1921 Louisiana Constitution of 1921: Eliminated all French language laws and reinstated English-only education (punishment not condoned)
- 1974 Louisiana Constitution of 1974: change of laws on language; not French specific, but a "general blanket statement" for all people to have the rights of their language, their history and their culture; recognizes the rights of a group to promote their own language