

CHAPTER 27
*Français, Acadien, Acadjonne: Competing Discourses
on Language Preservation Along the Shores of the
Baie Sainte-Marie*
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Languages are used to communicate, but beyond that, they often, as has been spelled out effectively by Pierre Bourdieu, have symbolic power. That is to say, a language gets you understood by some people but also gets you identified as a particular kind of person. In multilingual communities, such as parts of francophone (French-speaking) Canada, since the late twentieth century there have been struggles not only between French and English but between different varieties of French, each claiming to be superior on some ground. A local variety spoken in part of Nova Scotia (acadjonne) claims to be the original eighteenth-century variety of French, while other forms of French (Acadian) have evolved away from the original variety. Ironically, even the “standard” forms of Canadian French, such as those spoken in Quebec, are often regarded as nonstandard by those who take the French spoken in France as the ideal form—something made official by entities such as L’Académie française. In this chapter, we follow some debates about which language is “best” in a complex and self-conscious community, where language minorities battle among themselves.

Reading Questions

- What are the languages spoken in Baie Sainte-Marie? What is the status of each variety?
- What is the difference between bilingualism and a French- or English-only policy, whether political or educational? Why would individuals defend one or the other?
- Trace the different kinds of “purity” in the debates described by Boudreau and Dubois. What is the role of English in debates about varieties of French?

INTRODUCTION

Behind every discourse on an **endangered language** there are not only a definition of what that endangered language is, but also various social and cultural issues attached to that definition. This supports the ideas that language and the criteria defining boundaries between languages are ideological constructions, and that discourses on **language endangerment** are fertile ground for understanding the issues at stake. Furthermore, discourses on language endangerment

and **preservation** almost invariably recreate the same type of power struggles between speakers that the preservation is supposed to eliminate.

In the following chapter, our main goal is to shed some light on how linguistic debates in general and the question of language survival in particular become ideologized and politicized in conjunction with the symbolic values attributed to languages and linguistic varieties, and to show that the major stakes in these debates carried out on the terrain of language are indeed social. We will attempt to describe the different **language ideologies** that prevail in the region where we conducted our research, i.e. the municipality of Clare in southwestern Nova Scotia (otherwise known as the Baie Sainte-Marie; see below for a brief description). To do so, we will of course have to refer to language ideologies in Canada as a whole and in **Francophone** minority communities in particular. We will

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then examine the broad social conditions that have led to the destabilization of a traditional **hegemonic** discourse on language by a discourse of contestation in the Baie Sainte-Marie area, and the consequences that this shift has had so far on the construction of Acadian identity in the region. Our data comes from **ethnographic** observation of community events, analysis of documents regarding community events, and debates and interviews with key producers of discourse on language and identity; notably, in this case, those involved in education, the arts, community organization, community associations, community radio and key sectors of economic activity. We will then focus on how various actors from both sides of the debate appeal to discourses concerning threats to the survival of their language, how they define the variety that they defend as being the legitimate one and how they define themselves as legitimate stakeholders in the power struggle. Special attention will be paid to the strong influence that standard French has on speakers' representations of French, of their variety and of their own linguistic competence.

Since 1996, both authors are part of a research group examining how minority Francophones in Canada,¹ and in particular Franco-Albertans, Franco-Ontarians and Acadians, build discursive spaces in which they can articulate their '**francité**', why they do it, what is at stake when they do it, what are the consequences for those included in these processes and for those who are excluded from them, and, finally, how social categories based on language are constructed. A three-pronged approach based on ethnographic field work was developed: we collect documentation on the community under study (books, music, media reports, etc.), do ethnographic observation and interview key social actors.

All the participants interviewed spontaneously broached the subject of the public use of the French local **vernacular**, a **marked** variety called *acadjonne* which creates controversy and debate within the community. Some of them defend it, others categorically reject it. The debates concerning this language variety inevitably touch upon language survival and resonate in many sectors of the community. We became interested in language ideologies as a means to understand how language acts as a catalyst for social and political debates. Indeed, language ideologies shed light on power struggles taking place on broader levels, and the ones described in this chapter illustrate that the minority experience and reaction to what appears to be domination by the English-speaking population is ambivalent and certainly not uniform (Blommaert 1999).

CONTEXT

Canada and Its Two Official Languages

Canada has two **official languages**, French and English. The number of Canadians who in 2001 stated having French as their first language is a little over 6.7 million (23 per cent of the general population), of which almost 5.8 million (85 per cent of all Canadian Francophones) live in the province of Québec (Census of Canada 2001). The other 950,000 are unequally distributed among the nine remaining provinces,

in what is generally called in Canada 'official language minority communities'. Francophones therefore constitute an important majority in Québec while maintaining a minority status elsewhere, except in New Brunswick, the only officially bilingual province, where Francophones make up almost 33 per cent of the population. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (adopted with the *Constitution Act* of 1982) guarantees various rights for official linguistic communities, such as the right to be educated in the minority language in schools managed by the minority community.

Minority French-speaking communities outside Québec define their '**francité**' (Heller 2002; Heller and Labrie 2003) in the context of categories of similarity and difference, that is, through defining relationships with a range of relevant others: the dominant **Anglophone** society, Québec and its State-territorial model of '**francité**', other Canadian Francophone minority communities and the larger world of '**la francophonie**'. These relationships also shape their representations of French and its varieties, and of bi- or multilingualism. As we will see, these relationships are key to understanding how people in the Baie Sainte-Marie position themselves.

The minority status of the French language in Canadian communities outside Québec has generated over the last 50 years, both inside and outside these communities, an intense debate on the efforts needed to 'save' them from language attrition and assimilation (**language transfer**) to English, the dominant language, and, therefore, to guarantee their reproduction and durability. In this debate, the survival of the community is intimately linked to the maintenance of French as the language of use among its members. Questions raised in this debate invariably touch upon issues of legitimacy, exclusion and representations of language: which variety of French spoken in these communities should legitimately be saved; who is legitimately empowered to determine this and who is excluded from the debate; how and by whom are the discourses on legitimacy constructed; what discursive strategies do protagonists develop around the power struggles taking place in these communities as they pertain to the circulation of discourses on endangerment?

The Acadian Community of the Baie Sainte-Marie

The Acadian community where we conducted our ethnographic work is made up of a dozen villages strung along the eastern shore of the Baie Sainte-Marie in southwestern Nova Scotia, where Acadia was originally founded by French settlers in 1604. These villages, the first Acadian villages in the Maritimes to be resettled by returning Acadians after the British deported them between 1755 and 1763, have recently been amalgamated into one larger municipality, called Clare, which has a population of approximately 9,000 people, 67 per cent of whom have declared French as their first language (Census of Canada 2001). The French-speaking population of Nova Scotia today makes up about 4 per cent of its total population. The main economic activities of the Baie Sainte-Marie region are the fishing and forestry industries. The narrative of the Deportation (called 'le Grand Dérangement' by Acadians) and of the return of the

exiled Acadians to this area is constructed, reproduced and claimed as collective memory through various storytelling, cultural and community events and annual celebrations, e.g. the 'Joseph and Marie Dugas Festival' named after the first couple who resettled from Grand Pré, where they had been deported, to Belliveau Cove in 1768.

In recent years, language issues have generated debate within the community. For instance, in the 1980s, after the Charter of Rights and Freedoms was adopted, the right to manage education was effectively handed over to the minority community, which until then had had to operate in the form of **bilingual education** within the constraints of English-dominated school boards. This triggered a debate between those who lobbied (eventually successfully) for a change to French-only (so-called 'linguistically homogeneous') schools, and those who had felt comfortable with the status quo, or who at least wished to preserve bilingual schools, fearing that all-French schools would jeopardize their children's competency level in English (Ross 2001). Canada's linguistic duality is characterized by dual education systems, a system for Francophones where subjects are taught mostly in French and another for Anglophones where subjects are taught in English except for second language classes. Because of their minority status outside Québec, Francophones have a very high rate of bilingualism throughout the Anglo-dominant provinces, whereas Anglophones are not generally bilingual (Heller 2003: 70–74, 106–12).

In the 1990s, the Baie Sainte-Marie's francophone community radio station, which had been struggling to survive, started to broadcast programmes and to advertise in the local French vernacular, which increased its popularity and its ratings, making it one of the most successful community radio stations in the country (Boudreau and Dubois 2003; Dubois 2003). Up until then, only standard French and English had been heard on the airwaves, either through public radio stations (which are operated by a federal agency) or through various public radio stations. To this day, the public use of this variety is a bone of contention within the community, as well as outside it, as we shall explain in the following pages.

It is generally accepted among descriptive linguists who have studied the Baie Sainte-Marie variety that the French spoken in the region represents the oldest variety of French spoken in North America (Flikeid 1994). Among its salient features are the widespread use of archaic forms, which have survived since the colonization period, as well as English forms which were introduced into this variety because of the community's close contact with the surrounding dominant English community and its isolation from other Acadian communities over long periods of time. Because contact with other Francophone communities has increased since the middle of the twentieth century, speakers of this variety are acutely aware of the differences in their speech when confronted with speakers of other varieties of French, be they Canadian, Québécois, French or from other parts of the francophone world. Paradoxically, these same features which are stigmatized by defenders of the **standard** and by

some speakers themselves become symbolic of the quest to construct a new Acadian language, *acadjonne*. In reaction to the values attributed to the standard, which is seen by some members of the community as the only variety appropriate for teaching and for broadcasting, defenders of *acadjonne* have developed a discourse of survival around these features.

Proponents on both sides of the debate want the same thing: the survival of the community as a French-speaking community. At the heart of the debate is the issue of which variety of French is best suited to guarantee the community's survival: the standard variety traditionally used by the educated and moneyed elite, or the local variety which has just recently been introduced during the 1990s into the public **linguistic market** through the community radio station. Like all public debates in small communities, this one goes beyond the community radio where it originated, and has since been taken into other areas such as education, economic development and associative organizations.

LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES

Before describing the main economic, social and cultural changes which occurred in the Baie Sainte-Marie region and which made a heated language debate possible, we will briefly present the language ideologies which prevail.

Language ideologies are usually defined as a set of beliefs on language or a particular language shared by members of a community (Watts 1999; Milroy 2001). These beliefs come to be so well established that their origin is often forgotten by speakers, and are therefore socially reproduced and end up being 'naturalized', or perceived as natural or as common sense, thereby masking the social construction processes at work. Ideologies become political when they are embedded in the social principles on which a community organizes itself institutionally (Watts 1999).

In this region of Nova Scotia Acadia (as elsewhere for that matter), the ideologies of language that circulate may sometimes compete with each other, while at other times or in certain linguistic markets, one of them may become dominant, but all of them exert pressure on linguistic and non-linguistic issues. In this section, we will present briefly the ideologies that are generally shared by other Canadian francophones; then we will discuss an emerging competing ideology of language which seems to us to be entirely endemic to the Baie Sainte-Marie community.

The ideology of bilingualism posits the social, cultural and economic advantages of being bilingual as an individual and as a country. Canada has developed a positive image of itself as a bilingual, therefore tolerant and progressive country, and its most ardent defenders are various government departments, the media and the Francophone communities themselves. For example, the official site of Nova Scotia's Tourism Department bids tourists to visit the Baie Sainte-Marie region (which is part of the 'Evangeline Trail' tourist area) this way:

The Municipality of Clare, often referred to as the Acadian Shore, hugs Baie Ste-Marie (...). Route 1 passes through twelve picturesque French-speaking villages (...). The bilingual inhabitants along this shore are descendants of the first European settlers, who came from France in the early 1600's (http://novascotia.com/en/home/planatrip/travel_guides/downloads.aspx).

Another website attracts the attention of would-be tourists by pointing out the particularities of the local vernacular: 'The spoken language still rings of 17th century French with a new world twist including Mi'kmaq Indian and English words' (www.evangelinetrail.com/churchpoint.html). But in reality, bilingualism as it is practiced in Nova Scotia is more ideological than it is real; at the very least, it is an **asymmetrical bilingualism**. Indeed, the only truly bilingual populations are the Acadian ones, who speak English fluently with very little linguistic markers. A visitor to the province of Nova Scotia would be hard-pressed to 'see' and 'hear' bilingualism, as well as to get service in French anywhere other than in the Acadian communities. In fact, in ordinary daily activities, one is led to believe that the ideology of **monolingualism** is at work here, since the Anglophone majority expects that Acadian French-speakers use English in all public activities, an expectation which does not allow Francophones to exercise their right to use French if they wish to do so.

Another ideology which acts upon language behaviour is the ideology of the standard, which is linked to the perception of language as an essentialized object, that is as a rigid and unchanging system. Despite the fact that it is difficult to define what the standard language is, the idea of its existence is well established in the minds of French speakers and influences how they judge languages, speakers and their own performances.

Lodge (1997) reminds us that French is one of the most **standardized** languages in the world, and that its speakers have developed strong representations of a unified language with little room for diversity and variation. Furthermore, various studies on French speakers in peripheral regions (peripheral here meaning not in France) have also shown that the idea of a standard is part of the linguistic imagination of Francophones all over the world (see Francard 1993; Francard *et al.* 2001). Because standard French is regarded as prestigious, those who speak vernacular varieties most often accept the symbolic dominance of 'legitimate speakers' since they too aspire to acquire 'an imagined standard language' in order to have access to the economic and social capital associated with standard languages and to a wider range of linguistic markets (Bourdieu 1982).

The ideology of the standard exerts pressure on linguistic practices and on the construction of identity. First, Francophones from minority communities in Canada who have lived in an anglophone dominant environment inevitably show in their linguistic practices the traces of this close linguistic contact through English **borrowings** and **calques**.

In addition, they have often maintained archaic or older French **lexical** and **syntactic** forms.

They are acutely aware of the distance between their variety and the standard. **Linguistic insecurity** is commonplace in Acadia (Boudreau and Dubois 1991, 2001), and we have found in other studies that some Acadians go as far as to invent various personas to escape negative reactions from other Francophones. For example, in a call centre in Moncton (New Brunswick), where we conducted research on how linguistic skills were used in the new economy, we interviewed a Francophone voice operator who, when dealing with Francophone callers from outside the Maritime Provinces, claimed she was an Anglophone learning French to avoid being criticized by those who preferred dealing with someone speaking a more standard French rather than someone speaking with an obvious southeast New Brunswick accent.

The last ideology presented here, and the one that we posit is unique to the Baie Sainte-Marie within the Canadian context, is the ideology of the **dialect**. Indeed, we discovered in this community ardent defenders of the dialect who aspire to make it the legitimate language of the community and who have managed to open up the linguistic markets to the local variety by taking control of the community radio. The justifications for their stance regarding this variety are partly historical in nature, claiming that the vernacular was the language spoken by their ancestors when they reclaimed the province at the end of the eighteenth century. According to Watts (1999), when this ideology is acted upon, dialects are then used in the education system (at least in their spoken form) and in certain media, such as radio and television, which is the case in the Baie Sainte-Marie. Language ideologies are therefore linked to the myths that circulate within a community about language (Watts 1999: 72-4). Myths are transmitted and disseminated through shared stories that contribute to the (re)construction of a given cultural group (i.e. the storytelling about the return of the deported mentioned above), and are usually endowed with an explanatory force that can historically frame various group behaviours, including language behaviour and practices. We will see further how the myth of the origins of the Baie Sainte-Marie community is construed today by some of its members as an answer to the various discourses on languages that circulate in the region, and especially how it is being used in the discourses on the survival of French in southwestern Nova Scotia.

CHANGING SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN THE BAIE SAINTE-MARIE

There have been many changes over the past 30 years in the Baie Sainte-Marie that can explain the current linguistic debate. The conflict over the increased use of French in the region's schools which emerged in the early 1980s lasted for almost 20 years, divided the community and set the scene for what was to come. The school conflict had indeed polarized

the community into two major camps: those in favour of linguistically homogeneous schools where all subjects are taught in standard French and those in favour of maintaining bilingual schools, where only some of the subjects are taught in French in mixed classes (see above). The move towards homogeneous schools was based on the widespread belief that the vitality and the preservation of the Francophone minority communities depends largely on the community's access to French-only institutions, schools being the most important. This belief is largely circulated by the most 'ties' traditional educated elites, whereas other groups within the community support bilingual education as a means to upward social mobility. The lines between groups were therefore drawn before the current conflict around the radio station emerged in the late 1990s, in an entirely new context in terms of the community's position within the Canadian 'Francophonie' and within a more globalized economic environment.

In 1994, Acadians organized the first 'Congrès mondial acadien' (CMA – World Acadian Congress), a large popular gathering which unfolded over a period of several weeks, included many types of activities such as large family reunions, concerts, conferences, etc. and has been held every five years since. The 1994 CMA, held in Moncton (New Brunswick, about a six-hour drive from the Baie Sainte-Marie) has come to be regarded as a watershed moment in Acadia's history and in Acadians' awareness of their specificity in the Maritime Provinces and in Canada in general. The CMA's objective was to gather the Acadians from the *diaspora* (which refers to those of Acadian descent who live outside of the Maritime Provinces) and from all of Acadia in one place: approximately 500,000 people attended and the event generated much enthusiasm. Most importantly, the CMA resulted in the creation of all types of transprovincial and transnational networks – cultural, academic, political and economic – which have not only persisted but have flourished. The second Congress was held in 1999 in Louisiana, and the third, in 2004, in the Baie Sainte-Marie itself. Thus, at the time of our fieldwork, many members of the community were increasingly understanding themselves in the context of discourses, institutions and networks connected to this particular discursive space. The discourses, institutions and networks in question are largely constituted around ideas of language, identity and culture.

If Acadian culture has enabled Acadians to take part in successful cultural exchanges among Canadian Francophones, and between Francophone Canada and connected areas in the United States (notably Louisiana and parts of New England), it has also enabled them to participate in international exchanges, especially within the 'francophonie internationale'. Acadian artists perform regularly in Europe, and a variety of institutions and networks have developed to facilitate this. For example, since 1996, Moncton has been hosting a regional 'Franco-fête', an annual event in various parts of French Canada, spread over several days, whose purpose is to showcase Francophone artists in the fostering of a market for Francophone artistic and cultural products.

Several artists and musicians from the Baie Sainte-Marie are now known throughout Acadia, North America and parts of Europe.

Globalization has also enabled traditional businesses from the region to branch out into international markets: one family fish processing business has become in recent years a multinational business exporting its products all over the world, while another small shipyard has specialized in the building of luxury yachts, which again are sold internationally.

Globalization has enabled Francophones from peripheral areas such as the Baie Sainte-Marie to establish links and networks with other communities and interests. These outlying communities have thus been able to redefine their identity and their place in the world without going through traditional channels, such as the State or other agencies dominated by their Anglo-Canadian compatriots. Increased contacts through networking and through increased mobility have deeply modified not only their relationship with the State and with the Anglo-dominant society but also their perception of themselves and of their language.

DISCOURSES ON THE SURVIVAL OF FRENCH IN THE BAIE SAINTE-MARIE²

In the following section, we will attempt to answer the questions raised in the introduction, that is who constructs the discourses on legitimacy, what discursive strategies do protagonists develop around the power struggles taking place, who benefits from the debate and why, and what the repercussions are for Acadians and for other French speakers around them. While our corpus includes a wide variety of forms of data on the debates surrounding linguistic variation and identity in the Baie Sainte-Marie, we will focus here on interviews with key actors in a specific debate surrounding the community radio, which concerns the public use of the local dialect on the airwaves. When we arrived in the region for our fieldwork, we were unaware of the deep divisions within this community caused by the radio station. The use of English words in predominantly French utterances is what offends the majority of participants in the study who oppose the public use of *acadjonne*, while the use of older archaic forms is more easily accepted. We have heard radio ads using the words 'shirt' for *chemise*, 'pants' for *pantalon*, 'chicken' for *poulet*, etc., which is a source of concern for many participants.

The participants we quote here are those who expressed very strong stances on language as a way of gaining access to important social and economic resources, although they have very different views on how to get there; as such, they represent the extreme positions in the debate. At the outset of our research in the region, we were surprised and intrigued by the strong feelings expressed over the use of a local dialect, which seemed to us to be no more than another variety of language. We were soon to find out that language was at the heart of larger debates connected, on the one

hand, to the creation of social categories (who is a real and 'pure' Acadian), and on the other hand, to the redefinition of social structures at the heart of economic developments in the region (what French gets to be legitimized when it comes to attracting tourists in the region, how is acadjonne supposed to be seen as the *real* and authentic language).

The defenders and promoters of acadjonne come from different backgrounds; some are intellectuals like Marcel, who studied abroad and uses his knowledge to reinvent a language aimed at legitimizing what he sees as the 'real Acadian French'; while others, who are slightly more educated than the average and who have spent a large part of their lives elsewhere, defend it as they feel that acadjonne is the language through which they construct their sense of belonging in a tight-knit community. The defenders of the standard, such as Paul and Louise, who are members of the intellectual elite, truly believe that the only way for Acadians to have access to social status, good jobs and to be able to be a part of a bigger 'francophonie' is to speak a standard language, even one with some regional features. They feel that not knowing the standard will contribute to further building borders with francophones from elsewhere. Paul was educated by clerics who used standard French as criteria for deciding who belonged to the elite, thus creating social categories based on language, which Paul himself reproduces. Louise is a Quebecker who settled in the area over ten years ago and who believes that people who speak acadjonne are at risk of being trapped in a linguistic ghetto.

As mentioned above, the regional variety of French spoken in the Baie Sainte-Marie was for a long time and is to a large extent today a stigmatized variety. Louise relates that very few people in the Baie Sainte-Marie area were educated enough to teach in the local college. Therefore, a large number of teachers were imported from elsewhere, mostly clerics from Québec, who adopted a superior attitude. Louise, who mostly endorses the pro-standard stance, explains:

EXTRACT 1

Louise ils sont allés chercher énormément de profs au Québec qui disaient 'il faut montrer à ces gens-là à parler français' ou encore 'il faut parler un français standard' (...) les Québécois qui sont venus se sont posés comme des maîtres de la discipline et des policiers de la langue (...) ils (les Acadiens) n'avaient pas le droit d'utiliser les expressions acadiennes

Louise they brought in a lot of teachers from Québec who said 'we have to teach these people how to talk' or 'we have to speak Standard French' (...) the people from Québec who came claimed to be masters of the discipline and the language police (...) Acadians did not have the right to use Acadian expressions when speaking

When the community radio station was launched, the language used on the air was standard French. After a short

period, it almost went bankrupt. Marcel, a very active voice in the promotion of acadjonne explains that:

EXTRACT 2

Marcel

Marcel

toute l'élite du coin était là-dedans et puis ils ont décidé d'être normatifs et pis à la place de parler *akadjonne* / ils ont décidé de parler le bon français et puis la population l'a boudée all of the area's elite was involved in the station and they decided to use the standard instead of acadjonne / they decided to speak good French and the population turned away

What is interesting in this statement is the fact that Marcel, who moves fluently from one **register** to the next throughout the entire interview, makes ostentatious use of certain salient features of acadjonne, such as 'ils ont décidé' when speaking of the former management of the station. Marcel explained that acadjonne was always criticized in schools and Acadians developed a negative attitude towards their own language. When acadjonne became the dominant language on the community airwaves, the ratings rose and the station became the most listened-to station in the region.

As pointed out above, Francophones in the province of Nova Scotia are a small minority, but in this sub-region (Clare), they are the majority. Fortified by their unique historic legitimacy as the direct descendants of the first Europeans to settle in North America, a certain number of Acadians from this region have reclaimed these facts and made them the basis of their distinct identity. To legitimize their way of speaking, they promote the most archaic features of their variety.³ Marcel explains: 'notre mission c'est de conserver la langue de l'ancienne capitale et de continuer le rêve et la mission de nos ancêtres.' [*our mission is to conserve the language of the old capital and to continue our ancestors' dream and mission*.]

According to Marcel, not only does the language need to be conserved, but the ancestors' dream also needs to be pursued. Watts has explained that ideologies are born from the right historical circumstances (Watts 1999). The idea of deliberately bringing back to life this 'old language', as Marcel calls it, by increasing the awareness of what makes it distinct, progressively took hold after the CMA in 1994 and the 'Sommet de la francophonie', held in Moncton in 1999, two events which provided Acadians from all three Maritime provinces with a new legitimacy. Furthermore, the idea of constructing acadjonne as a distinct language is meant to lift it from anonymity, to give it a new beginning, but at the same time this idea gives much importance to the historical origins of the community, which are particularly valued by Acadians of the diaspora.

Conserving the archaic forms is one aspect of the intentional construction of acadjonne; another aspect is the acceptance and sometimes deliberate use of English words in French utterances, which, as we mentioned, is what offends the majority of participants in the study who oppose the public use of acadjonne, while the use of older archaic forms is more easily accepted. The arguments used

to re-invent a distinct and unique language are based on the idea of a need to distinguish the community from other Francophone communities; to distinguish its speech from other varieties; and, most of all, to distinguish it from standard French. As Marcel puts it, acadjonne is: 'un outil du stan-nerre / un outil ultra-moderne qui s'appellerait l'acadjonne / an ultramodern tool which would be called acadjonne and which would distance itself from standard French!'

Very active in this fight, Marcel states that Nova Scotia Acadians will never become French from France, Québécois from Québec nor Acadians from New Brunswick; they might just as well stress their differences by asserting their specificity, therefore their origins. This ideology has given rise to debates, and continues to do so, within the community, especially since ads on the community radio are written in acadjonne (mostly by Marcel). Up until then, because acadjonne (mostly to private spaces, there had not been much strife. From the moment that acadjonne was used outside of the family and informal markets, it was condemned by the defenders of the standard. These debates have since been taken into the schools, where once again there are stormy controversies taking place. Parents opposed to 'homogeneous' schools (see above), are now opposing teachers who attempt to eliminate mixed codes from their students' speech, acting out the ideology of the dialect. One of the participants in the study tells the story of his wife, who is a teacher in these schools and whose attempts at correcting her pupils' speech are often met with **resistance**: students say, 'c'est acadjonne Madame' [it's acadjonne ma'am]. Moreover, one of the disc jockeys working at the community radio station who was interviewed claims that more listeners phone in to complain that they do not understand some everyday standard French words than there are listeners who phone in to complain about the use of mixed codes. He alleges that not comprehending standard French is not the problem because in public meetings, these same speakers will speak up to express their opinions to those who have said what they had to say in standard French.

EXTRACT 3

Leo ils vont dire 'moi je comprends pas le français (standard)' / c'est pas vrai / ils vont aller dans une réunion pis quelqu'un va s'exprimer dans un français standard et si il dit quelque chose qu'ils n'aiment pas / ils ont compris (...) ils vont à l'église le dimanche et puis si le prêtre dit quelque chose que ils sont pas d'accord euh je t'assure qu'ils vont pas dire qu'ils ont pas compris le français

Leo they will say 'me, I don't understand (standard) French' / it's not true / they'll go to a meeting and if someone says something in standard French and if it's something they don't like / they understood (...) they go to church on Sunday and if the priest says something they do not agree with euh I can assure you that they will not say that they have not understood

The problem is therefore not one of comprehension, but one of resistance. We see here that the comprehension argument is a discursive strategy used to (re)position oneself within the 'francophonie' and to (re)define what is meant by being Acadian. This is comparable to the situation of German Swiss illustrated by Watts, who tells of a mother who says to her child who wishes to buy a book written in German: 'No, don't be silly dear. That's written in Standard German. You won't be able to understand' (Watts 1999: 85). Contrary to the situation in Switzerland, l'acadjonne is rarely written, though it is currently used in songs and has been portrayed in a film (*Les gossipeuses*, 1978), to denounce the parochial mentality of some of the characters in the film. But, in both cases, the comprehension argument is put forward as a discursive strategy to resist the hegemonic influences of those who support the use of the standard.

These discourses on language are linked to strategies to save the language. Some proponents of the dialect think that if the people in the Baie Sainte-Marie were to become confident in their language, they would be better positioned to resist Anglicization and assimilation. However, the public defence of acadjonne has erected yet other language barriers between speakers. Some participants have claimed that speakers who use standard forms are now **stigmatized** and rejected. Even Marcel, a militant of acadjonne, who attended university outside his community and is capable of using various linguistic registers, says that the typical Acadian:

EXTRACT 4

Marcel adore entendre un Québécois parler québécois, un Français de France parler son français, le Néo-Brunswickois parler avec son accent, le Chéticampain le Louisianais, il adore ça // mais si il y a quelque chose qui fait tenir les cheveux à pique sur la tête c'est quand ce qu'il y a un des leurs qui s'en va en dehors pis qui s'en revient et puis tout d'un coup qu'il peut plus parler dans l'Anse ou Meteghan [two villages along the Baie Sainte-Marie] ou une affaire de même / la langue acadjonne pour un Acadjon de la Baie c'est de quoi de sacré

Marcel loves to hear a Quebecker speak québécois, a Frenchman speak his French, a New Brunswicker speak with his accent, a person from Chéticamp or from Louisiana, he loves that // but if there is something that makes his hair stand on its ends it's when one of theirs goes outside then comes back and all of a sudden can no longer speak in the Cove or in Meteghan or something like that / the acadjonne language for an Acadian from the Baie is sacred

In this case, maintaining regional structures that were stigmatized in the past instead of using standard forms displays loyalty to the community. Marcel himself reports that he has been excluded, but endorses nonetheless the restrictions

of this stance and has even become one of its most ardent defenders:

EXTRACT 5

Marcel beaucoup de fois je me ferais radorisé⁴ / t'as dit la poubelle / c'est la garbage can // j'ons tout le temps dit la garbage can (...) es-tu en train de te comporter comme un traître

Marcel I have been told to straighten up many times // you said poubelle / it's a garbage can / we have always said garbage can (...) are you being a traitor

The opponents of the ideology of the dialect say they are worried by the social and cultural restrictions put on the members of the community by the widespread use of acadjonne. They feel that using a variety that is too far from standard French may lead to the creation of a linguistic ghetto. Paul, a proponent of the standard, believes that the Baie Sainte-Marie lost its bid to host the *Jeux de l'Acadie*, an annual sporting event in which all Acadian schools of the three Maritimes Provinces have participated since 1978, because of the language issue (which of course we can't confirm).

EXTRACT 6

Paul l'acadjonne c'est une langue de communication pour ici / ça disparaîtra jamais dans les foyers / mais pour les jeunes qui veulent se lancer sur le marché du travail // de fait nous étions la région française de la Nouvelle-Écosse // pendant des siècles // pis aujourd'hui c'est Halifax qui est la région française de la Nouvelle-Écosse avec le Carrefour du Grand Havre // c'est Halifax qui est la région / on ne l'est plus on ne l'est plus ici (...) parce que: il y a trop d'anglais // il y a /// ben on dit: // les finales des Jeux de l'Acadie ont eu lieu à presque toutes les régions / de l'Acadie // deux ou trois ans passés // Clare ici la municipalité / a fait un gros effort pour avoir la finale ici // ils ont dépensé même dix mille dollars là juste pour préparer un document / pour aller le présenter pour attirer les Jeux de l'Acadie ici / Edmundston les avait déjà eu: // ils sont allés là et la décision c'est que les Jeux iraient à Edmundston /// pis ils se demandaient pourquoi /// à quelques-uns uns j'ai dit: 'regardez les deux personnes qui sont allées là pis écoutez-les s'exprimer' / pis les Jeux de l'Acadie c'est pour promouvoir la langue chez les jeunes / et / simplement en les écoutant parler ils ont dit 'on peut pas aller là' /// ils l'ont pas dit (rire) le comité au Nouveau-Brunswick l'a pas dit // mais c'est facile à voir on avait toutes les facilités ici avec l'université pis l'école / tout ce qu'il fallait / et puis la municipalité avait dépensé de l'argent les Jeux étaient jamais venus ici // mais les Jeux sont pas venus ici // alors c'est ce que je vous dis que: // on ne s'attire pas en voulant promouvoir euh / l'acadjonne comme on l'appelle

Paul

acadjonne is a language of communication for here / it will never disappear from the homes / but for the young people who want to go into the job market // in fact we were the first French region of Nova Scotia // for centuries // but today it is Halifax that is the first French region of Nova Scotia with the Carrefour du Grand Havre (name of the French school in Halifax) // it is Halifax that is the region / we are no longer it here (...) because there is too much English // there is /// well it is said // the Jeux de l'Acadie finals have taken place in almost all the regions of Acadia // two or three years ago // the municipality of Clare made a huge effort to have the finals here // they even spent ten thousand dollars just to prepare a document / to go present to bid for the Jeux de l'Acadie here / Edmundston had already gotten them // they went there and the decision was to give them to Edmundston /// and then they wanted to know why /// I told a couple of them 'look at the two people who went there and listen to them speak' / well les Jeux de l'Acadie exist to promote the language with the young people / and / simply to listen to them talk they said to themselves we can't go there /// they didn't say (laugh) the New Brunswick committee didn't say // but it is easy to see that we had all the facilities here with the university and the school / all that was needed / and the municipality had spent all that money because the Games had never come here // but the Games did not come here // that's why I tell you this // we do not attract by wanting to promote acadjonne, like we call it here

Extract 6 summarizes the position of those who oppose the use and promotion of acadjonne. They fear that speakers of this variety will be barred access to activities taking place in the 'Francophonie' and to the job market. In opposition to the regional variety, Paul speaks of his conception of what is Acadian French:

EXTRACT 7

Lise qu'est-ce qui vous choque dans les la publicité / de la radio communautaire

Paul c'est pas français / c'est que c'est / on prend des mots anglais ou même on // on invente des mots // tu sais

Lise avez-vous des exemples

Paul je devrais en avoir à conter tu sais là pis je peux pas y penser

Lise vous avez dit quelque chose d'intéressant vous avez dit qu'ils pensent que c'est de l'acadien mais ça ne l'est pas vraiment / qu'est-ce que c'est pour vous l'acadien

Paul l'acadien: / c'est le français classique // du dix-septième siècle // alors si dire: / si pour du pain je vas dire du 'ponne' (pain) ou à matin je vas dire 'à matonne' (matin) / nous sommes les seuls Acadiens au monde maintenant Nouveau-Brunswick

Lise

Paul

Lise

Paul

Lise

Paul

To es
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- Lise vous êtes pas des Acadiens ni l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard ni Chéticamp // tu sais parce qu'on est on est les seuls qui parlent comme ça alors si on dit si on dit que ça c'est de l'acadien /// ça veut dire qu'on /// on est on est les seuls Acadiens au monde
 Paul what is it that offends you about the advertisement on the community radio
 Lise it's not French / it's that it's / English words are used or even new words are invented you know
 Paul do you have any examples
 Lise I should have some to tell but now I can't think of any
 Paul you said something interesting you said that they thought that it was Acadian but it isn't really / what is Acadian for you
 Paul Acadian / it's classic French // from the 17th century // so to say / if for bread I say *ponne* or for morning I say *à matonne* / we are the only Acadians in the world today now New Brunswick you are not Acadian neither is Prince-Edward Island nor Chéticamp // you know because we are the only ones who speak that way therefore if we say that that is Acadian /// then that means that /// we are the only Acadians in the world

To establish a link between Acadian French and French spoken in France during North America's colonization indicates a fixed and rigid conception of language and a certain nostalgia for the origins of the French language considered to be 'pure, clear and elegant' (Joseph 1987: 158; Walter 1988: 100–14). Language here is seen as detached from real language practices, which explains Paul's difficulty in accepting the particular status given to a regional variety by the community radio station.

This debate on language shows that, in the context under study, the simple choice of using one word over another is filled with significance which cannot be grasped by linguistic analysis alone. The choice to say *ponne* instead of *pain* (bread) is not only an act of identity: it is also taking a stance in relation to a social and political project constructed around the **reappropriation** of a language, which is seen as the core of the construction of community identity. In this case, the choice to use *acadjonne* is politically charged and a source of conflict among members of the community.

What is interesting to note here is the fact that positive values attributed to the 'language of the ancestors' are common to both camps and are at the heart of the arguments used for justifying completely different views on language. For the defenders of *acadjonne* (participants who feel excluded from social structures revolving around the standard), the Acadian language goes back to the beginnings of the colony, and its speakers are the 'purest' of representatives of that state of language which should be conserved even if it means adding English words in order to adapt the language to modern times. For those who oppose *acadjonne* (the intellectual elite, who exert symbolic power through their use of the legitimate language and who are most aware of

the cultural capital gained through the standard, and artists who are now travelling to other parts of the Francophonie and want to diversify their linguistic resources), the Acadian language is also connected to eighteenth-century French as it is imagined, and it cannot be modified without losing its characteristic 'purity'.

Needless to say that the positions presented here are not clear-cut and any single individual's position on the matter is often quite ambivalent; in other words, the different discourses concerning the preservation of language sometimes overlap. In fact, on the question of the 'purity' of the language inherited from the ancestors, the two discourses converge, though they diverge considerably on the intended outcome: on the one hand, the aim is to promote the use of a regional language; on the other hand, it is to reassert the value of the standard. This convergence/divergence illustrates the power struggle between two groups who wish to gain social advantages on the terrain of language. Therefore, the value attributed to archaisms differs. The proponents of *acadjonne* seek to assert their identity and their distinctiveness through the concrete use of archaisms derived from a language imagined as being authentic, whereas those who defend the standard pay lip service to the value of maintaining archaisms, distancing themselves from the actual use of these 'old words' and conforming their practices to a fictional standard.

The most obvious aspects of this struggle centre around the language issue, but the real stakes reside in the unequal access to material and symbolic resources in the community. In other words, which group will obtain the funding to operate the community radio and thus to define the community image that is broadcast? Which variety of French will be valued in the various linguistic markets and in individual and collective identity building processes? The most legitimate discourse in the eyes of both groups is the one linked to the historical dimension that is often referred to by politicians and intellectuals alike who value the authenticity of the Baie Sainte-Marie community for various reasons: for example, as a way to promote tourism, as a way to obtain special cultural funding (i.e. the 400th anniversary of the establishment of Acadia), or as a way to participate in the debate surrounding the first French presence on North American soil.

CONCLUSION

The debate surrounding the 'coming out' of a particular variety of language, a variety which is doomed to be seen by outsiders as impure and contrary to the traditional 'bon usage', is as much about social issues as it is about language. The discourse on the preservation of French via *acadjonne* can be labelled as a discourse of resistance against the hegemony of standard French whose defenders once monopolized resources in media and educational realms. It challenges long-standing power structures which had been accessed until now only through standard French. However, well-intentioned promoters of the standard language are (aiming as they do at greater access to jobs, social

mobility, prestige), many speakers of Acadian French feel left out because of their way of speaking, characterized by **hybridity** and archaic features. In both cases, language and values attributed to language varieties serve as the bases for social stratification and processes of identity.

In this chapter, we have attempted to show that different groups of social actors from an 'imagined community' have multiple stakes and interests in preserving what they perceive as 'their' variety of French and how they develop different discourses in order to save the language from attrition. In other words, as we stated in the introduction, discourses on language endangerment recreate the power struggles between members of the community that exist already. Discourses aimed at defending a language vary in this case precisely because of the different representations that speakers have of what a language should be ideally, and also because these same speakers develop different language ideologies that shape their political and social actions aimed at preserving the kind of language they want to preserve, imagined as a 'pure' language or as a 'hybrid' one regardless of whether it is rooted in the seventeenth century or not. This case study illustrates that language issues are central to the shaping of a society, especially in minority settings.

TRANSCRIPTION GUIDELINES

1. The apostrophe is used to mark an elision, as it is usually used in French.
2. Capital letters at the end of certain words indicate pronunciation.
3. The slash is used to indicate pauses: one slash indicates a brief pause, two slashes a longer one, three slashes indicate a 4-second pause. The slash also indicates hesitation, such as *la mai/la maison*.
4. Brackets have three functions: (xxx) indicate incomprehensible parts; (laughter) or (ringing), etc. give additional information which cannot be transcribed; (...) truncated parts of the interview.

Notes

1. The research projects were *Prise de parole 1* (1996–1999) which was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) (main researcher: Normand Labrie; co-researchers: Jürgen Erfurt and Monica Heller) and *Prise de parole 2: la francophonie canadienne et la nouvelle économie mondialisée* (2000–2003), which also received funding from SSHRC (main researcher: Monica Heller; co-researchers: Annette Boudreau, Lise Dubois, Normand Labrie, Patricia Lamarre and Deirdre Meintel).
2. The translation of each interview extract presented in this section follows each extract.
3. We are not saying that these features were not used before. The fact that they recognize these features as archaic makes their use emblematic.

4. Note: the word 'radorser' is an old French word for 'to straighten up'. The 'j'ons' form in the extract, the first person singular conjugated as the first person plural, is a typical Baie Sainte-Marie structure used as a first person plural 'we'.

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Critical Thinking and Application

- Boudreau and Dubois point out a debate about whether people in Baie Sainte-Marie support standard (Canadian) French or the local variety of Acadian French. What is the basis of the arguments on each side?
- Why do some people claim not to understand standard French, while others claim that the first group in fact does understand it? What is at stake? Why would people claim not to understand a language that they do understand? Can you imagine other cases where this might occur?
- Some people argue that the study of language should be "descriptive," that is, stating the facts about how things are. In debates about which linguistic variety should be promoted and which left to its own devices, scholars often present sympathies for one or another variety. Try to establish a principle for when it is best simply to describe and when it is appropriate to "prescribe."

Vocabulary

anglophone	hegemonic, hegemony	mixed codes
asymmetrical bilingualism	hybridity	monolingualism
bilingual education	la francophonie	official language
borrowing	language endangerment	reappropriation
calque	language ideology	register
dialect	language preservation	resistance
diaspora	language transfer	standard
endangered language	lexical	standardized
ethnographic, ethnography	linguistic insecurity	stigmatized
francité	linguistic market	syntactic
francophone	marked	vernacular

Suggested Further Reading

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