

Dissertation Proposal: The relationship between ethnicity and subject pronouns in Louisiana French

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Data and code available at <https://osf.io/sy7uq/>.

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South Louisiana



A good place to explore fractal recursivity (Irvine & Gal, [2000](#))

Major Ethnic Groups

Era	Creoles	Cajuns
18th century	Europeans born in the New World	Descendents of Acadians
19th century	Free people of color	–
20th century	Black South Louisianians	White South Louisianians

French is still spoken by both groups

- Creole sources: Fortier (1884), Neumann (1985), and Susberry (2004)
- Cajun sources: Brown (1988), Giancarlo (2019), Johnson (1976), Neumann (1985), and Smith and Phillips (1939)

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Subject Pronouns

Variable	Description	Variants
(1sg)	1st person singular	<i>je, mo, ø</i>
(2sg.T)	2nd person singular T form	<i>tu, to</i>
(2sg.V)	2nd person singular V form	<i>vous, tu, to</i>
(imp)	Impersonal pronoun	<i>on, tu, vous, to</i>
(3sg.AF)	3rd person singular animate feminine	<i>elle, li</i>
(3sg.AM)	3rd person singular animate masculine	<i>il, li</i>
(3sg.IF)	3rd person singular inanimate feminine	<i>ça, elle, li</i>
(3sg.IM)	3rd person singular inanimate masculine	<i>ça, il, li</i>
(expl)	Expletive pronoun	<i>il, ça</i>
(1pl)	1st person plural	<i>nous, nous-autres, on</i>
(2pl)	2nd person plural	<i>vous, vous-autres, zo, tu</i>
(3pl.F)	3rd person plural feminine	<i>elles, ça, eux, eux-autres, yé</i>
(3pl.M)	3rd person plural masculine	<i>ils, ça, eux, eux-autres, yé</i>

Previous Research

- (3pl) differed between Cajuns and Houma Indians (Dajko, [2009](#); Rottet, [1995](#))
 - Other pronouns were examined but not significant for ethnicity
- (1sg) has been examined but not for ethnic variation (Carmichael & Gudmestad, [2019](#); Gudmestad & Carmichael, [2022](#); Klingler, [2005](#))
 - As has (3pl) but, again, not for ethnic variation (Byers, [1988](#); Klingler, [2003](#); Neumann, [1985](#))
- Subject pronouns have been examined in other varieties in numerous ways (Lambert, [1967](#); Schoch, [1978](#))

Research Questions

- RQ1: Do subject pronouns vary in Louisiana French between Cajun and Creole speakers, and what role does race play in this variation?
- RQ2: How does the homophily or lack thereof in the ethnic make-up of personal networks among French speakers in South Louisiana relate to variation in subject pronoun usage?
- RQ3: What do Louisiana French speakers participating in this study have to say about ethnicity and race?

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Sample

- Snowball sampling (Brown, 1988; Giancarlo, 2019; Rottet, 1995)
- 30 participants \times 1 hour each \rightarrow 1,750 tokens per variable on average
- Participants identify as Creole or Cajun



Social Variables

Social Variable	Levels
<i>Ethnicity</i>	Creole, Cajun
French Background	naturalistic, institutional, personal
Gender	man, woman, other answer
Birth Year	continuous numeric
Residence	parish
Raised	parish
Profession	blue and white collar
Education	some school, high school graduate, college graduate
Race	singular White, singular Black, border, protean, transcendent (Rock- quemore & Brunsma, 2007)

RQ1 Analysis

RQ1: Do subject pronouns vary in Louisiana French between Cajun and Creole speakers, and what role does race play in this variation?

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Pronoun} \sim & \text{Social Variables} + \\ & \text{Verb.Type} + \\ & \text{Network.Ethnic.Homophily} + \\ & (1|\text{Participant}) + (1|\text{Following.Verb}) \end{aligned}$$

- Binomial or multinomial logistic models based on the levels of the pronoun
- Variance inflation factor (VIF) for auto-correlated factors
- Akaike information criterion (AIC) for model selection

RQ2 Analysis

RQ2: How does the homophily or lack thereof in the ethnic make-up of personal networks among French speakers in South Louisiana relate to variation in subject pronoun usage?

French.Frequency \sim Alter.Type + (1|Participant)

Stat	Stat	Test	<i>N</i>
Mean ethnic homophily of francophone alters	Mean ethnic homophily of non-francophone alters	Paired <i>t</i> -test	60
Mean ethnic homophily for Creoles	Mean ethnic homophily for Cajuns	<i>t</i> -test	30

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- Better understanding fractal recursivity
- Better understanding the role of race in the general US on understanding of local social categories
- Add to the descriptive literature on heritage languages

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- 5 **References**

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Questions and comments?

General Characteristics

- Explicit progressive aspect expressed with *après* (Papen & Rottet, 1997)
- /ʒ/ produced as [h] (Carmichael & Gudmestad, 2019)
 - [h]'ai [h]amais man[h]é ça.
 - 'I've never eaten that.'
- [r] where most varieties have [ʀ] or [ʁ] (Blainey, 2013)
 - ap[r]ès 'after'
 - [r]aison 'reason'

Likely Collapsed Variables

(3g.IF)
ça, elle, li

(3g.IM)
ça, il, li

(3g.I)
ça, li

(3pl.F) (3pl.M)
elles, ça, eux, eux-autres, yé ils, ça, eux, eux-autres, yé

(3pl)
ils, ça, eux, eux-autres, yé